

Siblings of the King: Living in the Will of the Father

Introduction

Yeshua states (Mark 3:35) that those who do the will of God are his mother, brothers and sisters. Yeshua refers to our obedience.

I think it is obvious that our actions in life are based on our true beliefs and feelings. What we believe determines how we live and the consequences are most significant.

If we believe that obedience to the Ten Commandments is not necessary and that we are free to apply the 'laws of love' however we see fit, then I think the consequence is quite clearly a world of relativism where some so-called Christian Pastors consider abortion a blessing from God!

If instead, as believers, we agree that we are called to a 'higher path', to having a heart so in tune with God and His commandments, then we demonstrate in our lives a holy (set-apart) example which acts as a light to this lost world.

It seems to me that the consequence of these two opposing views on the Torah of Moses can lead to very significant differences in our lives and witness.

So we have some important questions that have occupied theologians for many centuries.

The Torah: Abolished or Obligatory

Did Yeshua 'fulfil' or somehow put an 'end' to the Torah¹ of Moses.

Is the Torah of Yeshua, the commandments of our Messiah, something totally different and new, or are they somehow the same?

Is the Torah of Moses a Moral Code for the Universe?

To approach this issue again, I would like to start with Yahweh's purpose in sending His prophets and His final Messiah, Yeshua of Nazareth.

Yahweh send His prophets primarily to deliver His people, to be their Saviour and to call His chosen people, Israel back to righteous living and back to Him. The prophet Moses was sent as a saviour. The prophet Yeshua is of course the ultimate saviour.

Some of the messiah's (anointed ones²) he sent, like Cyrus (Isaiah 45) were sent to punish His people, but only as a father punishes his children. To discipline them so that they may mature and walk righteously before Him.

Why was the Messiah Yeshua 'sent' by Yahweh? What was his purpose and function, what changes did he bring?

¹ Torah (meaning instructions) is commonly used by Jewish people to refer to the Pentateuch (the 5 books of Moses) and to a lesser degree, instructions given throughout the Writings and the Prophets. At times it is also used as shorthand for the Ten Commandments.

² Messiah is the English transliteration from the Hebrew 'Mashiach' meaning 'anointed one' i.e. someone chosen specially by God for some purpose. This term is translated into 'christos' in Greek and then to 'christ' in English. The term occurs some 37 times in the Hebrew Scriptures (OT – KJV version- Strong's #H4886) and is not always a prophetic reference to Jesus the Christ. It is used to refer to the kings of Israel, the high priest, the patriarchs and Cyrus.

Yeshua is clear about his purpose in stating that he came to announce the good news of the Kingdom of God (Luke 4:43, Mark 1:38) and to destroy the works of the devil, namely sin (1 John 3:8).

But what do we learn from the prophecies about his coming. What can we learn from the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) about why he was needed, why he was created and sent by Yahweh?

We read in Exodus 20 that with the giving of the 10 Words³ the people were in great fear of Yahweh and did not even want to face Him or hear Him in fear of death⁴. We then read in Deut 18:15-19, how Yahweh, as a result of the people's fear of hearing directly from Him, promised to send a Prophet who would speak exactly what He willed, and declare clearly The Father, by his life and words.

It is interesting to note the clear connection with the 10 Words (Ten Commandments).

Note that Yahweh himself wrote out the 10 Words on tablets of stone that He carved; then after they were broken when Moses confronted the apostasy of the people, Yahweh again carves out the tablets and this time it is Moses who re- writes the 10 Words (some scholars argue that it was God's finger, although the plain and most straightforward reading would appear to be that it was Moses)⁵.

The people are still fearful and clearly not fully open to Yahweh's instructions, so how does Yahweh react? He now indicates to Moses that He will send a prophet who will be a perfect representative (even in perfect obedience to death) and speak out Yahweh's instructions to His people.

So the Messiah Yeshua is the third and final attempt by Yahweh to give His clear and unchangeable moral code. (The first giving of the 10 Words, the first two tablets were broken by Moses; the 2nd set of two tablets written this time by Moses were largely misunderstood and ignored.)

So here we can see that Yeshua did not come to in any way, shape or form, to remove or reduce the 10 Words. John's statement that the 'Word became flesh' should reverberate in us as we reflect on God's sending of a prophet to perfectly declare the 10 Words, His Universal Moral Code.

To say he fulfilled them is understandable as he lived them perfectly. To say he was an end of the Torah could even in a sense be true if we understand by end that this was Yahweh's final call to righteousness, His final call to humanity to live by both the physical and moral laws He had created for this present universe.

We also learn from Yahweh's foretelling of the coming prophet and Messiah, that we are to hear him; that is to listen and obey what he says or ultimately suffer destruction at the hand of God.

While Yahweh offers incredible forgiveness and grace through the Messiah Yeshua, if we fail to be obedient to Yeshua and walk the 'narrow path' we risk the destruction foretold in Deuteronomy 18 and our Messiah stating to us 'Depart from me, I never knew you'.

We also know from the prophecies that all families of the world will be blessed through him; that he will destroy the sons of evil; that he will bring healing; that he will display the glory of God, and that 'by his stripes' we are healed.

We also read many prophecies that tell us the Messiah will be a king and like all Jewish Kings, he is therefore himself bound to the commandments (see Deut 17).

³ The Ten Commandments or "aseret hadevarim," are often called the "ten words" or "ten utterances".

⁴ The 10 Words are described in Ex 20:1-17 but read on to v 21.

⁵ Note also that all the Kings of Israel were commanded to write out the Torah by hand, most likely to help them remember and lead by example.

Yeshua himself makes it most plain that he did not come to destroy or remove the Torah⁶, the commandments of God and yet we know that the world changed with his crucifixion, resurrection and ascension.

So, if the Torah remains, if the Torah (principally referring to the 10 Words) is a moral code of the universe and unchangeable while this universe remains, what was so significant about the crucifixion and resurrection of Yeshua?

The Significance of the Resurrection

I believe Yeshua came to bring a new priesthood and a new way of meeting with of relationship with God. Thus, what he really changed or removed was the sacrificial system. Along with this Yeshua clearly had issues with the Priests who administered the sacrificial system and with their 'Oral Torah' which was or had become a corrupted tradition of men, rather than a pure explanation and application of the Torah.

So if Yeshua was really the 3rd proclamation of the 10 Words, the true Torah of Moses, which is summed up in the 2 greatest commandments, the Shema and to 'love your neighbour as yourself',⁷ how does this fit with his own declared purpose to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God?

Yeshua said, repent for the Kingdom of God is near or eminent. That is, turn back to God, be obedient to Yahweh, to his 10 Words, because The Day of reckoning draws near.

No-one knows the day or hour of their death, but on the other side of our death we will all awake to the judgement and if we have repented and have lived the faith of our Messiah and put our trust in him, we will enter into His rest, into the Coming Age of joy, of walking face to face with our Master, the most exalted of all men, and face to face with our Creator Yahweh.

Yahweh had always intended that we have circumcised hearts and walk obediently and humbly before Him. Yeshua came and lived the example. He showed The Way, and by his sacrifice he also put an end to the sacrificial system, so that we may all see and honour The True Lamb of God, to whom all previous sacrifices pointed.

No longer were the temple sacrifices needed but Yeshua was now the perfect mediator between man and God (1Tim 2:5). The curtain that separated the common man from the Holy of Holies was now torn and fallen, revealing that man could seek Yahweh and find Him through His only begotten Son.

The Coming Kingdom is the ultimate fulfilment of the 10 Words, because in that Kingdom, the 10 Words will finally be seen and acknowledged, not just by the Jew, but by we Gentiles as the moral precepts upon which our lives and relationship with our God are founded.

⁶ Matt 5:17-18 *"Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets. I came not to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished."* What Jesus really does (here) is to bring out the fullness of meaning that is in the Law, and to show its spirituality and the wideness of its reach. He declares that the righteousness of His disciples must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. Their righteousness consisted largely in a punctilious observance of the external requirements of the Law; the disciples must yield heart obedience to the inner spirit of the Law, its external and internal requirements. 'Law in the New Testament' by Archibald McCaig

⁷ Have you thought seriously about why God wrote the 10 Words on two tablets and about the order and division of these tablets and their commandments? Firstly, we know Yeshua summed up the 10 Commandments in two: *Your Shall Love the Lord your God, with all your heart, mind, soul & strength ...*" and *"Love your neighbor as yourself"* (Matt 22:36-40). The two Tablets each had 5 commandments, the first containing 5 which point to God and indicate how we are to relate to God (honoring our Father and Mother is still part of this, as they - with God - together create us and are God's agent in our lives as we grow up). The second tablet contains 5 commandments that tell us how to relate to our fellow man. Thus, Yeshua's statement was a summary of the 10 Words. Even this summary can be further summarised as it is in Lev 19:18 (cited in Gal 5:14): "You shall love your neighbour as yourself, I am the LORD". We express our love of God through the observance of God's commandments and God reciprocates through His presence in our lives and in the world.

I jokingly suggested to one of my daughters that the real reason there was two tablets was because God carved the first one and started writing and then realized he had used too big a font and had run out of space and needed a second tablet! She took this somewhat seriously because she said God could have had a 'blonde moment'! After all, we are created in His image and we all have those 'blonde moments'!

Jew and Gentile

I think it most informative to consider the makeup of those who had the *'faith of Abraham'* and the *'faith of Yeshua'* in the early years of 'Christianity'. That is, even before the followers of Yeshua were given this name.

There is a significant amount of evidence that the followers of Yeshua were in many ways indistinguishable from other faithful Jews. In "Judaism A Very Short Introduction" (p 20) Norman Solomon states: *"... up to 50-60 AD there was **no dividing line between Judaism and Christianity, Jesus indeed never thought of himself as preaching a religion other than Judaism or Torah ... if you asked Jesus or his disciples what religion they were, they would have replied Jewish**".*

Even the Jewish historian Josephus, in 50-60 AD saw Israel as composed of 4 groups (paraphrasing):

1. Pharisees – live modestly in accordance with reason, respected elderly, believed in divine providence, freedom of will and personal immortality, Held in esteem by the people who were guided by them in prayer and sacrifice (Jesus was probably a Pharisee) – evolved into modern Judaism;
2. Saducees – (political and in many ways secular – the priests of Yeshua's day – self appointed); deny life after death, follow only explicit provisions of scripture, (live on through their children – therefore build empires);
3. Essenes – ascribe all things to God, virtuous, excessive purity, share property, neither marry nor keep servants (eg the man carrying the water jar during Passover)
4. Zealots – similar to Pharisees but exceed them in readiness to die for freedom from all rule save that of God.

Again, note that there were no 'Christians' as a separate group at this time.

History shows that a division obviously did occur. Perhaps this division was more a result of the behaviour or actions of the 'Christians' that we realise. Consider Romans 11:28.

The Greek text is: *"κατὰ μὲν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἐχθροὶ δι' ὑμᾶς, κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἐκλογὴν ἀγαπητοὶ διὰ τοὺς πατέρας"* and the literal translation says:

'On the one hand, concerning the good news they are hostile or enemies, because of you, but on the other hand, according to election, they are beloved because of the fathers.'

Look at all your translation and you will see that they put *'enemies (of the gospel) for your sake'*. This is a totally different meaning!

The meaning you read is that somehow God has made the Jews hostile to the message that Yeshua was the Messiah and to the simple message of the Kingdom, so that somehow the doors may be opened for us to grasp the truth and be grafted in. Instead, what the literal rendering gives us is the understanding that somehow the 'Christians' were presenting the message of Yeshua in a way that turned the Jews away from it (nothing has changed!).

Could this have something to do with the conduct of the Christians? Why else would he say 'because of you'?

If the current division between faithful Jew and Gentile, is a later development after the times of the disciples and the Apostle Paul (but perhaps already developing as per Romans 11:28), then the question of the degree of obedience to the Torah and in particular the 10 Words is much more readily answered.

Gaining Eternal Life

Another approach to this whole issue is to look at the answers of our Messiah Yeshua, when asked what was required of a person to be able to gain eternal life or life in the coming Kingdom, the Coming Age.

Two events are recorded where Yeshua is specifically asked, *"... what shall I do to inherit eternal life? ..."* (Luke 10:25-28 & Mark 10:17-21 below).

Luke 10:25-28 (NKJV)

²⁵ And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" ²⁶ He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?" ²⁷ So he answered and said, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbour as yourself.'" ²⁸ And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live."

Mark 10:17-21 (ASV)

¹⁷ And as he was going forth into the way, there ran one to him, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Teacher, **what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?** ¹⁸ And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good save one, *even* God. ¹⁹ **Thou knowest the commandments, Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor thy father and mother.** ²⁰ And he said unto him, Teacher, all these things have I observed from my youth. ²¹ And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou **shalt have treasure in heaven:** and come, follow me (also in Luke 18)

Let us tabulate these answers against the 10 Commandments:

No.	Yeshua's words in Mark 10:17-21	Ten Commandments
	Thou knowest the commandments,	<i>i.e. – all of them</i>
1		LOYALTY. <i>"No other gods.."</i>
2		FAITHFULNESS. <i>"No idols..."</i>
3	Do not defraud (<i>failure to honour God is to defraud him of his due</i>)	REVERENCE. <i>"Do not take the name of God in vain..."</i>
4		HOLINESS. <i>"Keep the Sabbath holy..."</i>
5	Honor thy father and mother	RESPECT FOR AUTHORITY. <i>"Honour your father and mother..."</i>
6	Do not kill	RESPECT FOR LIFE. <i>"Do not murder"</i>
7	Do not commit adultery	PURITY. <i>"No adultery..."</i>
8	Do not steal, Do not defraud	HONESTY. <i>"Don't steal..."</i>
9	Do not bear false witness	TRUTHFULNESS. <i>"No false witness..."</i>
10	go, sell whatsoever thou	CONTENTMENT. <i>"No coveting..."</i>

In both these cases Yeshua does **not** say, believe I died on the cross (or more accurately, believe I will die on the cross) and you will have eternal life. He does not say, my death will provide you with a way to eternal life simply by believing it.

His half-brother James, after all said (James 2:19), that even the demons believe that there is Obne God and tremble. Clearly, believing in God or in His most exalted agent, Yeshua, does not necessarily lead to salvation.

When Jesus states who his brothers and sisters and mother is, he says that they are those who *'do the will of the Father'*. (Matt 12:50).

He even said, do what the scribes and Pharisees say!

Matt 23:1-3 (NKJV): Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, ² saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. ³ Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, *that observe and do*, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.

Surely, what the Scribes and Pharisees actually said, when they spoke from the authority of Moses, that is, when they 'sat in Moses seat' and expounded on the OT, was instructions with regard to observing the commands of God and acting accordingly.

So far then, we have no suggestion that the commandments of the Torah, including the Ten Commandments (or 10 Words) are done away with.

Continuing with the comparison above, let us look at both Yeshua's and Paul's answers regarding the types of people who will not enter the Kingdom:

Matt 15:19-20 (NKJV):

For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. ²⁰ These are *the things* which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man."

No.	Yeshua's words in Matt 15:19-20	Ten Commandments
1	evil thoughts	LOYALTY. "No other gods.."
2	evil thoughts	FAITHFULNESS. "No idols..."
3	blasphemies	REVERENCE. "Do not take the name of God in vain..."
4		HOLINESS. "Keep the Sabbath holy..."
5	evil thoughts	RESPECT FOR AUTHORITY. "Honour your father and mother..."
6	murders,	RESPECT FOR LIFE. "Do not murder
7	adulteries	PURITY. "No adultery..."
8	thefts,	HONESTY. "Don't steal..."
9	false witness	TRUTHFULNESS. "No false witness..."
10	fornications	CONTENTMENT. "No coveting..."

To have evil thoughts is to turn your mind and heart away from God to others or other things which become as God to you. Thus 'evil thoughts' is a failure to show loyalty and faithfulness to God and to fail to act in a manner which displays holiness.

Rev 21:7-8 (NKJV): ⁷ He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. ⁸ But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

No.	Yeshua's words in Rev 21:7-8	Ten Commandments
1	Unbelieving, abominable	LOYALTY. "No other gods.."
2	Cowardly, idolaters	FAITHFULNESS. "No idols..."
3	sorcerers	REVERENCE. "Do not take the name of God in vain..."
4		HOLINESS. "Keep the Sabbath holy..."
5		RESPECT FOR AUTHORITY. "Honour your father and mother..."
6	murderers	RESPECT FOR LIFE. "Do not murder
7	sexually immoral	PURITY. "No adultery..."
8		HONESTY. "Don't steal..."
9	liars	TRUTHFULNESS. "No false witness..."
10		CONTENTMENT. "No coveting..."

What about Paul:

1 Cor 6:9-10 (NKJV): Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God

No.	Paul's words in 1 Cor 6:9-10	Ten Commandments
1	Drunkards	LOYALTY. <u>"No other gods.."</u>
2	Idolaters	FAITHFULNESS. <u>"No idols..."</u> .
3	Revilers	REVERENCE. <u>"Do not take the name of God in vain..."</u>
4	Unrighteous	HOLINESS. <u>"Keep the Sabbath holy..."</u>
5	Revilers	RESPECT FOR AUTHORITY. <u>"Honour your father and mother..."</u>
6	Unrighteous	RESPECT FOR LIFE. <u>"Do not murder</u>
7	Fornicators, adulterers, homosexuals, sodomites	PURITY. <u>"No adultery..."</u>
8	Thieves	HONESTY. <u>"Don't steal..."</u>
9	Extortioners	TRUTHFULNESS. <u>"No false witness..."</u>
10	Covetous	CONTENTMENT. <u>"No coveting..."</u>

Gal 5:16-25 (NKJV): ¹⁶ I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, ²¹ envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. ²⁴ And those *who are* Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

No.	Paul's words in Gal 5:16-25	Ten Commandments
1	selfish ambitions,	LOYALTY. <u>"No other gods.."</u>
2	idolatry drunkenness	FAITHFULNESS. <u>"No idols..."</u> .
3	lewdness, sorcery, heresies	REVERENCE. <u>"Do not take the name of God in vain..."</u>
4	Uncleanness,	HOLINESS. <u>"Keep the Sabbath holy..."</u>
5	Hatred,	RESPECT FOR AUTHORITY. <u>"Honour your father and mother..."</u>
6	Murders	RESPECT FOR LIFE. <u>"Do not murder</u>
7	Adultery, fornication, lewdness, revelries	PURITY. <u>"No adultery..."</u>
8	Contentions	HONESTY. <u>"Don't steal..."</u>
9	Contentions, dissensions,	TRUTHFULNESS. <u>"No false witness..."</u>
10	Hatred, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, envy	CONTENTMENT. <u>"No coveting..."</u>

Romans 1:28-32 (ASV): And even as they refused to have God in *their* knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting; ²⁹ being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity; whisperers, ³⁰ backbiters, hateful to God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, ³¹ without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, unmerciful: ³² who, knowing the ordinance of God, that they that practise such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but also consent with them that practise them.

No.	Paul's words in Romans 1:28-32	Ten Commandments
1	malignity; unmerciful:	LOYALTY. <u>"No other gods.."</u>
2	inventors of evil things covenant-breakers	FAITHFULNESS. <u>"No idols.."</u> .
3	Wickedness hateful to God haughty,	REVERENCE. <u>"Do not take the name of God in vain..."</u>
4	Unrighteousness without understanding, covenant-breakers	HOLINESS. <u>"Keep the Sabbath holy..."</u>
5	full of envy insolent disobedient to parents,	RESPECT FOR AUTHORITY. <u>"Honour your father and mother..."</u>
6	murder, strife	RESPECT FOR LIFE. <u>"Do not murder</u>
7	without natural affection	PURITY. <u>"No adultery..."</u>
8	Deceit backbiters	HONESTY. <u>"Don't steal..."</u>
9	Maliciousness whisperers,	TRUTHFULNESS. <u>"No false witness..."</u>
10	Covetousness, boastful,	CONTENTMENT. <u>"No coveting..."</u>

The Sabbath (Shabbat)

The only commandment that is not most explicitly referred is the 4th, the weekly Sabbath. The Sabbath (or Shabbat, as it is called in Hebrew) is one of the best known and least understood of all Jewish observances. But to those who observe Shabbat, it is a precious gift from God, a day of great joy eagerly awaited throughout the week, a time when weekday concerns can be set aside.

The importance of the Sabbath to Israel and to Yeshua 2000 years ago can be seen a little in the Jewish saying "**more than Israel has kept Shabbat, Shabbat has kept Israel.**"

Sabbath means to cease, to end, or to rest and involves two interrelated commandments: to remember and to observe. It's all about freedom. The Sabbath frees observers from our weekday concerns, from our deadlines and schedules and commitments. During the week, we are slaves to our jobs, to our creditors, to our need to provide for ourselves; on the Sabbath, we are freed from these concerns.

The Sabbath is the only ritual observance instituted in the Ten Commandments.

It was so much a part of Jewish life in the time of Yeshua and Paul that it probably needed no specific mention. Because the society observed it, it would have been quite natural for everyone to follow suit and therefore may not have needed any specific instructions.

On the other-hand, what word would Yeshua have used to describe someone who did not appropriately observe the Sabbath? Disobedient, unrighteous, unclean, covenant-breaker?? If so, then he did in fact speak on this issue.

Challenging scriptures and alternative views

So then, with the Hebrew Scriptures and the clear statements regarding the behavioural conditions for entry into the Kingdom, giving us the proper foundations and context, we are now ready to consider some of the challenging New Covenant writings that appear to stand in conflict to the very words of Yeshua, when he declared emphatically that he did not come to abolish the Torah. Before we do it is illuminating to consider the great number of New Covenant passages that speak favourably regarding the Torah and its continued relevance⁸.

⁸ There are a great many references in the TaNaK to the saints delighting in the Torah. The Psalms alone abound in them. For example: Ps.40:8; 119:6,35,47,70,77,92,174

See the references below for a few, with the more emphatic ones in bold:

Matt 7:12; **Matt 22:36-40**; Matt 23:23, Luke 2:24, 29, Luke 10:26, **Luke 16:17**, Luke 24:44, John 1:45, John 7:19, **John 7:49**, Acts 22:12, Acts 24:14, Acts 25:8, Acts 28:23, **Rom 2:13**, Rom 2:15, **Rom 2:18**, Rom 2:23, Rom 2:26-27, **Rom 7:12**, **Rom 7:22**, Rom 8:4, Rom 10:5, Rom 13:8, Gal 5:14, Phil 3:6, 1 Tim 1:8, Heb 10:16, **James 1:25**, James 2:8, James 4:11.

Against this wealth of supportive scriptures, the main passages raised by those who seek to question this understanding are Gal 4:22-41; Eph 2:15; 1 Cor 9:20-22; Gal 3:24-25; Rom 7:-6, and 2 Cor 3.

Why are these problems? Mostly, it appears because of poor translations of the Greek word 'nomos'^{9,10}.

Gal 4:22-31:

Almost universally commentators and most readers would be easily led to believe that the two covenants contrasted here are the Mosaic covenant and the New Covenant through Messiah Yeshua.

While this is a possible understanding, the issue is that it seems so at odds with so much of Paul's letters such as Romans and in particular Romans 9 where he speaks so strongly of Gentiles being grafted into the cultivated Olive Tree.

Are we to read that here in Galatians, Paul has had a change of heart and now wants to denigrate the cultivated Olive Tree and equate it to Ishmael's son-ship? This seems highly unlikely!

What some scholars instead argue is that this discussion is a comparison between 2 different groups of gentile proselytes and two different pathways or attempts to become son's of The Most High God.

Contextually, it is important to appreciate that the Apostle Paul in this letter, is primarily addressing Gentiles. Josephus [Antiquities, 16.62] testifies that many Jews resided in Ancyra in Galatia [but that] the majority in the Galatian churches were Gentiles.

A number of passages help establish this historical fact.

Gal 1:13-14 For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers.

Here Paul appears to be informing his Galatian listeners regarding his previous state and in using terms like 'among my people' it seems clear he is speaking to others who are 'not my people', that is to Gentiles.

Gal 4:18-19 It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose, and not only when I am present with you, my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!

Note here also that Paul refers to his readers as 'my little children' – as apostle to the Gentiles, this also indicates that those he is addressing are Gentiles.

⁹ "Because the word law is incorporated in the meaning of Torah, translators have opted for the simple solution to translate Nomos indiscriminately as law both in the Old and New Covenant writings" Torah: Mosaic Law or Divine Instructions by Frank Selch p 71

¹⁰ "The misleading translation of Torah as Law entered Western thought through the Greek text (the Septuagint)" Oxford Companion to the Bible Editors B.M Metzger & M.D Coogan, p421

Gal 4:8-9 Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?

Again, the phrase ‘formerly, when you did not know God’ would also appear to indicate that his listeners were not Jews and had therefore previously been ignorant regarding Yahweh.

I recommend that you read the whole of Galatians in one sitting and see that the context both before and after the challenging section of Gal 4:22-31 is focused on circumcision and, as already indicated, is speaking to gentiles about the issue of circumcision which is representative of ‘keeping the law’ (not just the written Torah but the Oral Torah as well) and becoming a Jewish proselyte.

In Galatians 4:22–31, the Apostle Paul makes a commentary on the story of Ishmael and Isaac.

22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. 23 But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise. 24 Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. 25 Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. 26 But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. 27 For it is written, "Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labour! For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband." 28 Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. 29 But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now. 30 But what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman." 31 So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.

Unfortunately, this Galatians passage is often misunderstood as a contrast between the new covenant and the old covenant, between Christians and Jews.

What I believe Paul is doing here is comparing Ishmael to the Galatian Gentiles who are accepting the dogma that they must undergo a ritual proselyte conversion through means of circumcision in order to be reckoned covenant members with Israel. Like Ishmael, Paul says that they are “born according to the flesh;” (Galatians 4:23) specifically, the circumcision of their flesh. That is, their entry into the Kingdom is via a ritual, via a work rather than via faith in the saving power and redemptive act of the Messiah.

According to the rabbinic dogma, a proselyte through ritual conversion is called a “son of Abraham.” Ishmael was indeed a son of Abraham, but he was not the promised son of Abraham. Instead, he was a son by nature and by law. Paul compares those Galatian proselytes to children birthed from the covenant at Mount Sinai, where the Torah (law) was given. They are sons of Hagar and “under the law” because they have predicated or based their salvation upon observing a “work of the law;” that is, circumcision.

In this analogy, the Apostle Paul compares Isaac to the believing Gentiles who predicate or base their salvation and covenant status upon faith. Isaac is the son of the promise and God’s chosen heir of Abraham. As such, these believing Gentiles are the sons of Sarah, Abraham’s “son by the free woman through the promise.” (Galatians 4:23)

They are sons of Sarah in that they have based their salvation upon faith in the promise of God.

Therefore, the two covenants being contrasted are not the New Covenant and the Old Covenant. They are the Abrahamic covenant and the Sinai covenant, both of which are parts of Torah.

Furthermore, the contrast is not between Jews and Christians, **it is between Gentile believers who choose to undergo ritual conversion to Judaism and Gentile believers who do not.**

Paul says of those who rely on faith, **“And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise.”** (Galatians 4:28)

Note that most of the older manuscripts and even most of the newest translations read ‘these women are two covenants’, NOT ‘these women are the two covenants’. The difference here is that the addition of the word ‘the’ implies a contrast is being made between the Mosaic covenant and the Covenant through the Messiah.

Note also the reference in the quote **“Rejoice, o barren one ...”** is to Isaiah 54. This is a psalm about the great restoration of the Jewish people to their God and to their Land.

For Paul to use this reference to the future blessing of Israel and then proceed to denigrate Israel just doesn’t make any sense at all (if the traditional understanding is employed).

If rather, Paul is speaking of how Gentiles who are ‘children of promise’ will share in this great blessing of Israel’s, because they have been grafted into the cultivated olive tree, then it makes sense that Paul would quote this uplifting and encouraging passage, particularly to any believers facing persecution as the Philippians were and as the Galatians at this time were also, most likely from Jews of the mind and zeal that was in Paul before his recognition of the Messiah (Gal 1:23).

The further reference to Gen 21:10 and the ‘casting out’ of the slave woman also seems perhaps harsh and if directed at Jewish people most inconsistent with Paul’s other epistles.

Instead, look at Gen 21 from where this quote comes. Here we see that this quote is a statement of Sarah which Abraham struggled with, yet God vindicated Sarah’s statement and also explained how He would still support and bless the son of the slave woman.

In the same manner, if this argument is valid, in quoting Genesis 21:10 and calling for the ‘casting out’ of those who call for circumcision, Paul is saying not to have fellowship with these people who would force both circumcision and the traditions of men onto these truth seekers and in so doing blind them from the freedom and love that ensures when the heart rather than the body; when the spirit rather than the flesh; is circumcised (or dedicated) to Yahweh.

Ephesians 2:11-18 (specifically v 15):

In Ephesians 1:1, Paul is speaking to both Jew and Gentile who now 'love God'. In Eph 2:11 though, he changes who he is addressing, to specifically address the Gentile believers who have become saints.

Here Paul speaks of a dividing wall or wall or partition. So what was it that made this dividing wall, this "wall of separation" or 'barrier of enmity" (enmity - a feeling or condition of hostility; hatred; ill will; animosity; antagonism)?

I submit that it was two issues brought about by the introduction of ‘Oral Torah’, the vast rules and regulations added to the original written Torah and its ordinances.

This is not to say that this large body of rulings is all bad. Rather, it appears that when Yeshua argued against the ‘traditions of men’¹¹ he was illustrating how the Pharisees twisted what was good and

¹¹ And he said to them, Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, “This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men. (Mark 7:6-8)

appropriate for their own ends and so in being hypocrites were not adhering to the heart-directed and spirit enabled desire to seek and obey Yahweh.

Take, for example the issue of 'circumcising a male child on the 8th day' vs not working on the Sabbath. (Jn 7:23). The 'Oral Torah' had established the principle that if a child's eighth day from birth fell on a Sabbath, then the circumcision took precedence and the man performing the circumcision was permitted to carry his medical implements (i.e. to do work), through the town on the Sabbath.

If however, the child was ill on the child's eighth day after birth, and the first day the child was well enough to be circumcised was the Sabbath the circumcision should not now be performed on the Sabbath. This rule was sensible and considerate and found a good compromise or solution to two potentially conflicting ordinances of Moses.

Yeshua does not appear to condemn this 'rule' at all, but rather to point out that those living by it were really hypocrites if they then tried to condemn Yeshua for healing, not just part of a man (the act of circumcision), but healing the whole man.

Here we see that it is the attitude of the heart that matters. Yeshua was not abolishing this rule for Jewish believers but illustrating the mindset that leads to this rule being followed but for the 'right' reasons (it the same way that Yahweh blesses the 'cheerful' giver. 1 Cor 9:7).

These issues then, that were evident were: 1) flesh (circumcision vs un-circumcision – the physical difference and barrier) and 2) the Torah (obedience to God's commands versus ignorance of God's commands, leading to a lack of obedience – the difference in actions).

By becoming part of the Body of our Messiah; by becoming His brothers and sisters, we become spiritually circumcised thus removing the 'flesh' issue.

By accepting 'Messiah's laws' we accept the 'completed Torah' and remove the barrier of the second issue because we now grow in knowledge of God's instructions and hence in Godly actions.

Thus, it is the enmity or separation that is abolished NOT the Torah.

Now if you turn to Eph 2:11-18 and read your versions, you may find that it appears to suggest instead that it was the Torah that was the barrier and therefore it was the Torah that was removed.

But look at everything else in this passage – how could the annulling or removal of the Torah reconcile Jews to Gentiles – surely, without the Torah they are no longer Jews! They (observant Jews) certainly wouldn't think so!

So here is a version translated from a number of Greek texts by Frank Selch:

"For he is our peace; the one making the both one; destroy the enmity in his flesh and the dividing wall which separates -, putting an end (to) the law of commandments in dogmatics; in order to create in himself one out of two into one (brand-) new man – making peace. And reconciling both in one body to God through the cross putting to death the enmity."

Matthew Janzen has a good insight on the 'dividing wall': *"... Paul alludes to a "middle wall of partition" between Jew and Gentile. This was a literal wall that Paul uses in a figurative sense to make his point. The Jews decreed, (they made a dogma), which stated that if a Gentile crossed over the wall separating the Court of the Jews from the Court of the Gentiles surrounding the temple, that they would be immediately killed. This was not a commandment of Yahweh. In fact, Yahweh never even commanded*

such a wall to exist. That dogma created a hatred between the two peoples which Messiah destroyed creating one new man and so, making peace.”¹²

So we understand the term ‘the law of commandments in dogmatics’ to mean the removal of the ‘traditions of men’ NOT any part of the Holy Scriptures, especially NOT the 10 Words.

Alternatively, just consider for a moment that here in Eph 2 the apostle Paul did mean the 10 Words and all that defines the Jewish people as God's chosen, was done away with to create the new man, why then does Paul go on to say in v19-22 that we (Gentiles) are now no longer strangers but fellow citizens of the household of God, etc. a household built on the apostles and prophets who spoke for and in the Old Covenant.

Paul is consistent here with Romans in alluding to our being grafted into God's people, not removing their identity.

Alternatively, if the 10 Words are no more, then we are not 'fellow' citizens, we have not joined anything, we have started an entirely new religion so we might as well throw away the Hebrew Scriptures (which is of course what most of Christendom has done, and this is at least consistent with their error), or make it all allegory or 'spiritual' (i.e let's have a 'Christ' of faith - you chose your 'faith' and your flavour!).

Gal 3:24-25:

Almost every translation starts out with ‘The Law (meaning Torah) WAS our schoolmaster...’ but the Nestle-Aland Greek is not in the past tense.

Almost all versions use the past tense. Why?

This appears a very clear case of translator bias. Why have so few translators picked this up – perhaps because of their own personal (Hellenistic) biases?

Some translations like the WEB are closer:

Gal 3:24-25 *So that the law has become our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.*

If so, then a more honest translation would perhaps be: *“The Torah is our schoolmaster to bring us to Messiah, that we might be justified by faithfulness. But after faithfulness has established itself (i.e. become a habit) we are now no longer under a tutor.”*

Surely, this is the essence of all the Messiah taught! He taught and called for obedience from the heart.

When we have been well taught by the Torah (meaning that the Torah is present today so as to instruct us today), we have, the partial fulfillment of Jer 31:33, we have a heart so in tune with God’s Torah, that we habitually are obedient, and thus are no longer under the tutor. We have (almost) ‘graduated from class’, but we have not rejected our teacher and His teachings! (Our complete ‘graduation’ will only come at the resurrection.)

If we look at the key verse, v24 (Greek: *ὥστε ὁ νόμος παιδαγωγὸς ἡμῶν γέγονεν*)

KJV	NIV	NASB	NKJV	NRSV	RSV	ASV
<i>...was our tutor</i>	<i>...was put in charge</i>	<i>...has become our tutor</i>	<i>...was our tutor</i>	<i>...was our disciplinarian</i>	<i>...was our custodian</i>	<i>...is become our tutor</i>

¹² <http://ministersnewcovenant.org/>

We see here that the ASV and NASB agree with the sense (from the present tense) that the 'tutor' is still here/present. The other translations appear to follow the lead of the anti-semitic KJV.

If we reads the passage from v.15 onwards, the context demands the present tense, for the key word of v.24, 'gegonen' (from the infinitive 'to become') is in the perfect tense, thus has become, bringing the entire phrase into the present tense. Logic says it and grammar demands that if one says, 'it has become' then 'it is'.

When I say that Virginia has become my wife, it means that she is my wife.

For further clarity on this issue, and since we are talking about Greek words, let us therefore look to the LXX for any precedent.

Gen.3:22 (NKJV) says, *'Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become ('gegonen') like one of us...'*

If we look to NT usage of the term, out of 31 occurrences in the Nestle Aland text, all, at the very least imply a present continuous tense; egs. Matt.1:22; Jn.1:3; Rom.11:5; Heb.7:22; Jam.5:2.

'Under The Law':

Also, Paul's use of the phrase "not under Law" is greatly misunderstood (Romans 6:14; Gal 5:18).

To quote Stephen Allen of HaDerech (<http://www.haderek.ca/articles/paul/underthelaw.htm>):

For many, the difficulty in understanding Paul has been exacerbated by inaccurate translations. For example, the KJV has for Romans 3:19, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." Yet, the Greek manuscripts do not convey this meaning at all. The English phrase translated "under the law" here should read "in the law", for the Greek text reads en to nomo, not upo nomon ("under law"). This verse addresses the question, to whom does the Torah speak. Contrary to the KJV, the Torah does not speak to those who are "under the law." The Torah speaks to those who live within its framework, to those who are "in the law." The English phrase "under the law" should not appear in this verse. Such poor and inconsistent translations mislead the innocent reader and make it very difficult for him to understand Paul's meaning.

Another example of a poor translation hampering understanding may be found in the NIV at Romans 2:12. The NIV has, "All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law." However, the KJV, in this case more accurately has, "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law." The NIV employs the phrase "under the law", yet the Greek text clearly reads en nomo meaning, "in law", not upo nomon, meaning "under law." The problem with man is sin. As stated in the Prophets, "But your iniquities have separated between you and your Elohim, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isaiah 59:2). Sin is the problem. And sin pertains to everyone, to those "without [knowledge or understanding of] Torah" (anomos, anti-Torah) and to those "in [connection with] the Torah" (en nomo). In one sense, those who have been blessed with the knowledge and wisdom of Torah are no better off than those who have been ignorant of it or than those who have opposed it. Everyone has sinned and fallen short of the glory of Elohim (Romans 3:23).

We find the first legitimate use of the English phrase "under the law", correctly derived from upo nomon, in Romans 6:14-15. "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? Elohim forbid." In the context of the chapter, Paul is explicitly clear in his denunciation of being "under the law" as an appropriate state for the righteous. He contrasts the condition with being "under grace." The word "under" carries the meaning of "controlled by" as in Romans 3:9 and 7:14 where Paul writes that all men are naturally "under" or "controlled by" sin. This is the condition in which we find ourselves.

The word also implies a burden or something to which we are in subjection or slavery. In this context, the phrase "under the law" (upo nomon) could be understood as being subject to the penalties of or punishment for violating Torah or being subject to a system of perverting the Torah into a legalistic system for supposedly earning or meriting one's own salvation.

Being in that situation is certainly burdensome and oppressive as indicated by the apostle Peter in Acts 15:10. It is far better to be controlled by or subject to grace – Elohim's favour and kindness – than to be controlled by or subject to sin, legalism, or punishment.

... Those controlled by the holy spirit have always been under grace, righteousness and holiness rather than under legalism and sin. Those who live according to trust, who strive not to serve sin, are not "under the law."

So now we can read Gal 5:18 (*But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*) and understand that Paul is not saying that the Torah is abolished or irrelevant! ¹³

To be further convinced of this note the verses immediately following v 18:

Gal 5: 19-21 Now the works of the flesh are obvious, which are: adultery, sexual immorality, uncleanness, lustfulness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, strife, jealousies, outbursts of anger, rivalries, divisions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these; of which I forewarn you, even as I also forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

These are a description of the sins that result from failure to observe the 10 Commandments.

So to be led by the Spirit, is to have been taught by Torah and to have the Torah placed in our hearts so that we don't need to get out the rule book when faced with a ruling on some behaviour, we will instinctively, automatically, know how to behave, how to respond in full obedience to Torah. That is we will display love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, and self-control.

In Rom 7:12-14 Paul says: *So the Torah is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. ... For we know that the Torah is spiritual.*

True obedience to Torah is taking on the mindset of Yeshua and being led by the Spirit.

There is another possible take on Gal 3:23-25.

As I have already highlighted, Yeshua brought a new priesthood, and as the new mediator between man and God, he effectively ended the Levitical Priesthood and the sacrificial system. Hebrews speaks very clearly on this. So it is quite possible than when we see the Apostle Paul referring to the end or 'death' of the law, he may well be referring to the sacrificial 'laws'.

With this perspective, some have translated these verses as below:

3:23 But before this Faith in Yeshua's sacrifice arrived, we were kept safe under the law of the Temple sacrifices ordained after the Order of Levi, and embraced by it, as a mother embraces her child to her breast, for the Faith which would later be revealed.

3:24 Therefore, the Temple sacrifices acted as our tutor to lead us to Messiah, so that we could become ultimately pardoned and acquitted through Faith in His sacrifice made after the priesthood Order of Melchizadok.

3:25 But now that Faith in Yeshua's sacrifice has now come, we are no longer under the tutor.

Whether this translation is reasonable, I leave you to judge, but I do see it as a very good fit with the overall reality of the revelation of the Messiah.

While I see Stephen Allen's explanation as very good, I think there is an even better understanding and it involves the very real possibility that this term 'under the law' was really created by the Hellenistic translators, especially those from the 1500's onwards (that is, after Papyri 46 – circa 170 CE and Codex Sinaiticus – circa 350 CE).

Uriel Ben Mordechai's excellent translation of Romans (and Galatians) from the earliest Greek

¹³ In fact as Stephen Allen points out on the website (URL above) referred to, to be led by the Spirit is to be 'in the law' or better 'in the Torah' and because, this understanding and practice was declared by Yeshua, it is even better to think of it as 'in the Torah of Messiah'.

manuscripts now available illustrates this.

Here's his translation of Romans 6: 14-15, first with his added words for clarity, and then with the direct translation:

Romans 6:14 -15

14 "For all intents and purposes, sin should not sway [or steer] you. Honestly, are you NOT [or 'should you NOT be'] under the control of Torah-Law, and certainly [or wholeheartedly] under the control of charity [i.e. kindness or decency]?"

15 What's the conclusion? Should we be sinning — so that [or 'and thus'] we are [clearly] NOT under the control of Torah-Law and [thus neither] wholeheartedly under the control of decent behavior?"¹⁴

And without amplification:

"For all intents and purposes, sin should not sway you. Honestly, are you NOT under the control of Torah-Law, and certainly under the control of charity? What's the conclusion? Should we be sinning — so that we are NOT under the control of Torah-Law and wholeheartedly under the control of decent behavior?"

I find this translation to be much more contextually appropriate and therefore more likely how the scrolls of Papyri 46 and Codex Sinaiticus were most likely understood by their readers at the time.

Some also see 1 Corinthians 9:20-23 *"20 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law."*, as arguing that somehow the Law or Torah is something to escape from, to no longer be obedient to, nor allow it to guide your actions.

Here is my understanding on this passage (excerpted from my book 'Defending the Apostle Paul: Weighing The Evidence'¹⁵):

"Perhaps one of the most challenging verses with respect to the Apostle Paul's character is 1 Cor 9:20. It is a most normal and natural tendency to assume on reading this verse that Paul is speaking about his behaviour here, his lifestyle; his obedience to, (or disregard for) Torah.

Let us assume for a moment that this reading is correct and that there is no redaction here, that is, that the Apostle Paul actually said this, and meant it in this way. In fact, let's even expand it to include the verses 19 through to 23 as below:

"19 For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them.

20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law.

21 To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law.

22 To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.

23 I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings. " 1 Cor 9:19-23

Under this understanding, Paul is a chameleon. He is one minute a Jew and the next not; one minute 'outside the law' and the next not; in fact, he is anything and everything he needs to be for expediencies sake. He therefore displays duplicity and dishonesty. He is not authentic and certainly not Torah-observant based on this reading and interpretation.

¹⁴ © Uriel Ben Mordechai, 'Above and Beyond', Jerusalem - see <http://above-and-beyond-ltd.com/store/books/if.html>. For some more on this understanding see my blog post here <http://luke443.blogspot.com.au/2015/01/redacting-romans-79-12-great-deception.html>

¹⁵ <https://www.amazon.com/Defending-Apostle-Paul-Weighing-Evidence-ebook/dp/B009TLLK0U>

If we had no other way of interpreting this passage, it would be a serious impediment to the introductory argument I have presented here about the righteousness and integrity of Paul. By itself, it may not tip the scales; but if there are many such statements, then there is a very serious question to be addressed.

Before I address this passage though, I must say I find it quite incredible that a number of biblical scholars will appear to recognize the problem of Paul's apparent expediency here, and in other places, and excuse it as acceptable to win people to Christ! It is not acceptable; it is never acceptable to dupe people into anything; even if it is good for them. Gaining good through dishonest means is never righteous.

So what's wrong with this reading? How should this passage be seen properly in context? There are two crucial elements to be understood.

Firstly, this declaration is rhetorical; Paul is explaining his rhetorical approach¹⁶ in debating the revelation of Yeshua as the Messiah and revelation of Gentile inclusion.

Secondly, we need to have some appreciation of the dialectic approach that the Pharisees and Jewish scribes used when debating Scripture.

Consider his audience here. While his letters were being read to both Jew and Gentile, Paul is trying to convince his God-fearing Gentile audience to remain Gentiles, and NOT to get 'circumcised'; not to go through the whole 'works of the law' process (Jewish proselytization rituals) and become Jewish.

Because, as he states in Gal 5:3, if they do instead become Jewish they will be obligated to keep the whole Torah; all 613 mitzvot.

"I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole Torah" Gal 5:3

Paul has made it very clear here that being Jewish means obeying the whole Torah. If his listeners, his Gentile audience saw that he, clearly a Pharisee and a Jew did not keep the whole Torah, his argument would have no support whatsoever. His behaviour alone would falsify to his argument! He wouldn't convince anyone, because they would clearly see his duplicity, his inconsistency in practice as his words would not match his deeds!

Chapters 8 to 10 of 1 Corinthians is essentially a section of rhetorical argument. From 1 Cor 8: 1-3, we see that he is addressing some 'knowledgeable' (but not knowledgeable about God) readers.

"1. Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that all of us possess knowledge. This knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.

2 If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know.

3 But if anyone loves God, he is known by God." - 1 Cor 8: 1-3

The Apostle Paul was clearly a great teacher. He was able to appreciate who his audience were; where they were at and work from that place of understanding or lack there-of, to the place he wanted them to end up. That is, he adapted his teaching; his writing and preaching to suit his audience. This is sometimes called 'rhetorical adaptability' but it simply means being a good teacher (today we may often do 'pre-tests' before we start teaching a topic to ascertain where are students are at, and then after teaching a

¹⁶ Prof Mark Nanos explains this far better and in much more detail than I present here. I highly recommend his article here - <http://marknanos.com/1Cor9-Leuven-9-4-09.pdf>

topic we give post-tests to see what they have learned. The results of the pre-test may alter what and how we will teach the topic; the approach; the depth and breadth, etc.).

Where do we see Paul indicating where his audience is at? Consider 1 Corinthians 3:1-3:

“1 But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Messiah.

2 I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, 3 for you are still of the flesh.”

He is here explaining that these Gentiles are still quite ignorant when it comes to the ways of God and His end-times plan. He is conceding that he will need to use a different approach to that he would use with say, fellow Pharisee’s for example; that is Jews who have been brought up in the ways of God; who have the oracles of God and are very much ‘spiritual people’.

Using this teaching style, this ‘rhetorical adaptability’, the Apostle Paul may start with ideas and concepts that they will easily understand, but ultimately he will lead them to very Jewish conclusions and to endorsing behaviours which represent appropriate communal, religious and moral behaviours for Gentiles living within Jewish communities.

So we can expect him to lead them to understanding that God is truly One; that to love the One True God is to then love our neighbour; that they are not to knowingly eat ‘idol food’, and so on (see the Jerusalem edict of Acts 15).

So the point being made in 1 Cor 9:19-23 is in summary; if Paul is arguing with Jews; he will use Jewish arguments, he will approach the debate with the standard Jewish dialectic¹⁷ for example. After all, he was a Jew, he couldn’t therefore ‘become (as) a Jew’. Behaviourally, he was either Torah observant or he wasn’t. He couldn’t just be so some of the time! “ – end quote.

2 Corinthians 3:

Look at v2-3: *You are our letter, written in our hearts, **known and read by all men**; being revealed that you are a letter of Christ, served by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tablets of stone, but in tablets that are hearts of flesh.*

In referring to these Corinthian believers, Paul’s tells us how they are his ‘letter’, that is how their community sees that they are followers of Messiah. He says that are ‘known and read by all men’.

How are they read? By their actions, by their lifestyle.

The true heart is expressed in action. Their obedience to Torah is what is seen and is what demonstrates their faith. As followers of Messiah they are not legalistically adhering to the ‘traditions of men’ but displaying the love of God, just as he decreed through His Ten Words, when he essentially said ‘if you love me, you will ...’¹⁸

Yes, Paul says the letter kills and the Spirit gives life. The letter, is NOT the Torah.

How can we be sure?

Because Paul kept the Torah and it had not killed him, and because in Rom 7:12-14 Paul says:

So the Torah is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. ... For we know that the Torah is spiritual,

¹⁷ Dialectic: The practice of arriving at a conclusion by the exchange of logical arguments, usually in the form of questions and answers.

¹⁸ See Torah: Mosaic Law or Divine Instructions by Frank Selch p 117-118

The 'letter' is the legalistic adherence to the Rabbinic Law, to the layers of rules and regulations placed on the Torah. The 'letter' is trying to gain salvation by works, not being obedient to Torah because of our faithfulness, our circumcised hearts.

Remember, obedience to Torah does not save us, it is rather the out-working of our heart-felt desire, as a result of our salvation and indwelling spirit of Yeshua, to serve our Father.

There are so many passages that so plainly declare our call to obedience to Torah such as Ps 1:1-2, Ps 119:1, 2 Jn 6, 1 Jn 2:3-5.

There also seem to be many as well where the translators have shown their bias against Torah such as Rev 22:14: *Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.*

Why do most translate the first phrase as 'Bless are those who wash their robes'¹⁹, if not to suit their bias and theological position? God promises a robe of righteousness, it is not one we provide ourselves, which this version would seem to imply.

Romans 7:1-6

Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? Thus a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.

Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.

For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death.

But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit.

The question here is, is 'the law' (greek: *nomos*) here referring to the Torah and specifically to the 10 Words? Look at the analogy with marriage. Who or what has to die for the wife to be free to re-marry? Yahweh! Yahweh is the 'husband' here, if the analogy is being compared with the Torah and Yeshua is the new husband.

This is clearly untenable.

In fact a number of scholars and translators (the ESV translators for example), see the 'law' of verse 1 as referring to Greek law on marriage, and thus the 'dead to the law' of verse 4 is being dead to the laws of men, or the traditions of men.

To repeat, the real answer here is that Paul is referring to the laws of men, which in Messiah Yeshua we are freed from.

Remember that the New Covenant is after all 'law' (Torah) given on better promises (Heb 8:6). The better promises being the new priesthood.

Again though, a huge part of the problem here that makes these few verses in Romans 7 seem, on the surface at least, so contradictory to the general message of both Yeshua and the Apostle Paul is the

¹⁹ It is only the Nestle/Aland text, which has '*washed their robes*'. Three other Greek texts, **Stephen's Textus Receptus (1550)**, **Scrivener's Textus Receptus (1894)**, **The New Testament in the Original Greek: Byzantine Textform (2005)** agree in the text, 'Μακάριοι οἱ ποιούντες τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ...' i.e. 'Blessed are the ones that are doers of his commandments...'. It is only the Nestle/Aland text, which agrees with the **Latin Vulgate** and puts '*washed their robes*...'.
Siblings of the King

possible redactions involved as well as the failure to approach the text with an Hebraic mindset.

Here also, I think Uriel Ben Mordechai's translation offers a more accurate and contextually consistent reflection of what it appears the Apostle Paul was presenting:

Romans 6:23 – 7:6

23: *The point is, the payoffs for the activity of sin include death. However, the endowment coming from G-d is unending life, by way of Mashiach Yeshua, our master.*

7:1 *Either this or you must be ignorant, brothers. I am addressing those [amongst you] who in fact know Torah, that the Torah is binding upon the individual only as long as time [for him] is advancing [i.e. the clock is ticking or moving forward].*

2: *As it happens, the wife [or married woman] of the husband, while he lives, is bound by a [marriage] contract [i.e. a ketubah]. However, if the husband will die, she is released from the marriage contract [lit. "the husband's ketubah"].*

3: *Surely then, with the husband [still] living, she will be referred to as an unfaithful woman if she will become some [other] man's partner [or companion]. ¶ However, if the husband will die, [then] she is released from the ketubah [or marriage contract]. She isn't going to become an unfaithful woman to some [other] male partner [or companion].*

4: *For that reason, you as well my brothers, are going to experience death, wherein the Torah, through the effort [or 'body'] of Mashiach, leads to unveiling [or becoming] that different [i.e. 'born-again' or 'new'] 'you,' raised out from amongst the dead, in order that we might yield fruit to G-d.*

5: *The truth is that while we remain in the physical body, the yetzer ha'rah [or evil inclinations] — via the Torah which works [precisely] to energize [or 'define'] it, relevant to the parts of our body — results in that which produces [in the end] the reality of death.*

6: *But in the end, sooner or later, we shall be cut-off [when we die], on the basis [or because] of the Torah, when we face death together with that which had restrained [i.e. owned or hindered] us [i.e. the body], so as to [then] serve by means of a superior inclination [i.e. Torah written upon the heart], and not [by way of] an older manner of code-delivery [written upon stone]. © Uriel Ben Mordechai*

This translation, while perhaps more difficult initially to digest and comprehend, has I believe many advantages as it shows a much more Hebraic and Torah-central perspective, and that is especially consistent with the emphatic conclusion a few verses later: "Therefore the Torah is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good." (v12).

Col 2:14-15.

ESV: *8 See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. 9 For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, 10 and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. 11 In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12 having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. 13 And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, 14 by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. 15 He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. 16 Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. 17 These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.*

WEB: *13 You were dead through your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh. He made you alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, 14 wiping out the handwriting in ordinances which was against us; and he has taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross; 15 having stripped the principalities and the powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.*

The context of this portion of Paul's letter to Gentiles, is clearly referring to the rules and authority of men. The 'handwriting in ordinances' (WEB/KJV) or 'record of debt' (ESV) is clearly a reference to laws of men not the Torah of Moses.

See the phrasing of v14 & 15 in the WEB version. Jesus nails 'something' to the cross that results in stripping (or overcoming) 'principalities and powers', or as the ESV puts it, this nailing to the cross results in the disarming of rulers and authorities.

In this context, there is no logic or sense at all that the 'divine instructions' of God are the 'something' that is nailed to the cross.

Often, our perspective so clouds our reading that we can only see a passage from one side. Firstly, as an analogy, many see the instruction to Israel at Sinai to 'keep the Sabbath' as restrictive and even legalistic, yet to these former slaves it would have been a joy to have a day off!

So similarly, when Paul says let no-one judge²⁰ you regarding the food laws and feasts, he is here speaking to a Gentile audience in a Greek world, so rather than this text arguing that the believer need NOT adhere to the food laws or observe the feasts, it is more likely that these believers in attending the local synagogues were now trying to follow these ordinances and their Greek community was wrongly judging them because of it.

For more on this passage, here is a short commentary by Frank Selch:

Col 2:14

ἔξαλείψας τὸ καθ' ἡμῶν χειρόγραφον τοῖς δόγμασιν ὃ ἦν ὑπεναντίον ἡμῖν, καὶ αὐτὸ ἤρκεν ἐκ τοῦ μέσου προσηλώσας αὐτὸ τῷ σταυρῷ.²¹

'¹⁴ having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And he has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.' NKJV

'blotting out the handwritten decree that stood against us and lifting it up from (our) midst by nailing it to the torture stake' [my translation]

¹¹ In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹² buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. ¹³ And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, ¹⁴ having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

The letter is clearly written to Gentile, God fearing followers of Yeshua. Paul is addressing various forces at work among them to rob them of their gains as they became more deeply involved with the God of the Hebrews. Based on v.4 it seems as if there were highly persuasive voices active in trying to deter them from the truth. According to v.8 the pressure seemed to be coming from the philosophers with their empty rhetoric based in various traditions, according to basic principles derived from those traditions. Many of the prevailing traditions of that era were strongly influenced by the Gnostics, whose hope for a better future – both temporal and eternal – was located in special, or secret knowledge.

²⁰ Col 2:16: *Let no one therefore judge you in eating, or in drinking, or with respect to a feast day or a new moon or a Sabbath day,*

²¹ Aland, B., Aland, K., Black, M., Martini, C. M., Metzger, B. M., & Wikgren, A. (1993, c1979). *The Greek New Testament* (4th ed.) (527). Federal Republic of Germany: United Bible Societies.

Paul explains to the Colossians how they had received a circumcision of the heart (Deut.10:16; 30:6) when they had turned to Messiah with repentant hearts through faith in God who had also raised Yeshua from the dead.

As Paul also pointed out to the Ephesians (2:12 ff.) *'...that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.'*, he tells the Colossians the same thing, *'(v.13)...being dead in your trespasses and **the uncircumcision** of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, he has forgiven you all trespasses,'*

What does it mean, 'they were dead in their trespasses'? As Gentiles they had no hope, because the (now active) Torah of Sinai had produced a document of guilt, which concerned all of humanity. Through their act of repentance, their guilt had been wiped by the death of Yeshua.

It is not the 10 Commandments, which have been annulled, but the decree of guilt.

The statement parallels the phrase in Ephesians, which refers to the enmity that existed between Jew and Gentiles. What Paul is seeking to impress on the Colossians in vv.20-23 is that there is nothing, by which they can make themselves acceptable to God.

Neither Jews nor Gentiles are saved by keeping rules of any kind. The Commandments are the moral Constitution of the Universe." (end quote)

Colossians 2 and Obedience:

Obedience is most important, but it is as a result of **repentance**, not a starting point. We need to ask ourselves the question: Have we turned from our pagan ways and sought to follow the path that Yeshua has pointed out to us? This is what it means to repent, to turn back to God.

If so, our obedience is then a consequence not a precursor.

Clearly, the problem in terms of obedience then becomes, obedient to what exactly and in what manner. Yes, loving obedience, but love needs to stand on solid foundations not on some vague notion that we all make up as we go along.

When we look at the Sabbath, we see the Christian world following Constantine's decree, not Yeshua's, Paul's or Moses.

There is plenty of evidence that the first followers of Yeshua worshiped Yahweh in the synagogues and then met afterwards in someone's home at the end of the Sabbath (i.e. on Saturday night).

Now we read in Col 2:16-17 that the 'a festival or a new moon or sabbaths' are a shadow, but the substance belongs to Messiah.

This 'shadows' reference was most likely a Platonic one (see Handbook to Exegesis of the New Testament By Stanley E. Porter p332 for a good reference) namely: *"The world of our experience, which we take to be real, is only a shadow world. The real world is the world of Ideas, which we reach, not by sense-knowledge, but by intuitive contemplation. "* ²²

²² <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12159a.htm>

This Platonic concept is that the sun passes through the 'true' world of 'reality' or 'substance' into the world we inhabit where we only really see shadows of truth/reality. In this analogy/Platonic mindset, the Messiah is in the 'real world' (heaven – the spiritual world) and is thus the 'substance'.

If Paul is using this Platonic mindset then everything we do here is a shadow then I would argue this is consistent with the understanding that the festivals etc., are not an endpoint in themselves as Messiah is, but this does not devalue them anymore than it devalues ALL our actions in this age.

The first followers of Yeshua were almost all Jews who would have naturally honoured the Sabbath on the last day of the week.

There is absolutely no evidence that the early disciples upheld the First Day over the Sabbath (Saturday) at a time when most followers of Jesus still worshipped in Synagogues.

There are only three references in all of the New Testament, which could relate to gatherings on the 'First Day'.

However, if these references are studied from Paul's Hebrew perspective, they are inadmissible as evidence that the Sabbath was abolished by Jesus & Paul.

These references are:

- 1) Acts 20:7 – since Paul was an observant Pharisee, celebrating Shabbat, followed by Havdalah²³ would have been quite normal, and even fortuitous because it allowed him to incorporate the resurrection events. As each Havdalah points to a new beginning with reference to salvation (Isa.12:1-3) it would have been a wonderful opportunity to speak about the Risen One. Jesus was the reason for this gathering at the start of the first day, NOT the abolition of the Shabbath.
- 2) 1 Cor.16:2 – a common practice by the Jewish people is to put money aside prior to the onset of Shabbath; and at the end of the day and once Havdalah is over, that money is then given to the poor or a worthy cause. A typical Jewish event and Paul as an observant Pharisee could not have done any different.
- 3) Rev.1:10 – '...the Lord's Day...' ἐν τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ '...in the day dedicated to kyrios...'. Now the term kyrios could certainly be read as master, as is common throughout the NT, but it could equally mean YHWH – in which case John is talking about the Sabbath. It seems much more likely that a day would (is) dedicated to the Yahweh, the Creator of the Universe that to His Messiah. If it was a new thing that was instituted upon the ascension of Yeshua, we would surely expect a lot more references to it and some clear guidelines for the institution of this new celebration and new 'Sabbath'.

Thus, it seems much more likely that the reference in Col 2:16, is in no way a suggestion to abolish the Sabbath. I believe the sabbaths referred to here are those that are part of the festivals of Israel, not the weekly Sabbath.

James Dunn points out (The Theology of Paul The Apostle p340) that the phrase "the works of the law" in Gal 2:16 was a term common to the Jews of his day, and referred to deeds done to maintain covenant righteousness (including separation from Gentiles), NOT the works of faith or 'responsive hearing'.

Thus "works of the law" is not the same thing as "good works" (or obedience to the 10 Words). In the same way, the one time that Paul uses this 'sabbaths, holy days and new moons' phrase, the context would appear to be very similar to that of Gal 2:16, that is, Paul is referring to Jewish traditions and is NOT referring to the weekly Sabbath at all²⁴.

²³ Havdalah is a Jewish religious ceremony that marks the symbolic end of Shabbat and holidays, and ushers in the new week. In Judaism, Shabbat ends—and the new week begins—at nightfall on Saturday.

²⁴ A reminder: I strongly recommend Frank Selch's booklet on the Sabbath

For a much more in-depth discussion of Colossians 2:16 and the issues surrounding it, please see my article 'Col 2:16 and the Sabbath' -

<http://circumcisedheart.info/Col%20%20and%20the%20Sabbath.pdf>

So in conclusion, there are some challenging passages that may appear to argue that the Torah has been abolished or annulled, but the overwhelming evidence speaks to the contrary (*see Appendix for some quotes from Prof. James Dunn which are supportive of this argument*).

What is also hopefully a little clearer now, is that the 'Oral Torah' was not really abolished by Yeshua either, but rather placed appropriately as of a secondary importance to the Written Torah for the Jews to whom he spoke.

As the Oral Torah was at least in large measure a reverent attempt to conform to the commandments of God in all matters, Yeshua himself displayed through his actions an acceptance of many of the doctrines of the Pharisees, but always from a circumcised heart perspective, not just from lip service to God. In fact, the writings of the Apostle Paul and full of 'Oral Torah' (also known today as 'hashkaffa' and Mussar), and illustrate that he had significant familiarity with these teachings that were not codified (written down in a systematic manner) until over a century after his death. For an introduction to this very illuminating and productive understanding I strongly recommend the articles at TorahOfMessiah.

A good article to start with is 'Oral Torah: Proof of its Legitimacy' - <http://torahofmessiah.org/oral-torah-proof-of-its-legitimacy/>

We Gentiles have been grafted into the cultivated olive tree. This means, amongst other things that the whole tree can produce better fruit, but being a graft it does not (we do not) become the 'root' or the same type/'species of tree'.

We are not, and do not become Jews²⁵ when we accept Yeshua as our Redeemer/Saviour.

Obedying Yeshua's Torah, which is the 10 Words properly understood (with a circumcised heart), while an act of true repentance; is also not necessary for salvation, but a result of salvation.

Just as our Messiah learned obedience, we too, once we receive his saving grace, are also called to learn obedience.

*He, in the days of his flesh, having offered up prayers and petitions with strong crying and tears to him who was able to save him from death, and having been heard for his godly fear, though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered. Having been made perfect, **he became to all of those who obey him the author of eternal salvation, named by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.*** (Heb 5:5-10)

The need and call to holiness and obedience should be most emphatically proclaimed. For an introduction to some of the practicalities of obedience, I recommend my article 'You Shall Be Holy' here <https://globaltruthinternational.com/2015/03/21/you-shall-be-holy-introduction/>

"And Yahweh your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live. And you shall again obey the voice of Yahweh and keep all his commandments that I command you today." (Deut 30:6,8)

²⁵ See my Restoration Fellowship talk 'On their Shoulders ...' available from www.restorationfellowship.info

“And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.” (Ezek 36:27)

We see that Yahweh always had a plan and a way. The Way (Psalm 119) was most emphatically demonstrated in Yeshua who lived, taught and brought the power of God into the world in a most powerful manner that demonstrated the Truth of Torah.

This Way was always evident, not only through the declarations of King David in Ps 119 but also in the words of the Prophet Micah:

“He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does Yahweh require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8)

Through the intelligent reception of the good news of the Coming Kingdom of God, both Jew and Gentile can be empowered to have their hearts circumcised by HaShem and be made capable and willing to love their Father God and walk in all his statutes!

We are called to be circumcised, but it is a circumcision of the heart! We are called to live as Yeshua lived, in right relationship with our God by having the ‘mind of Messiah’, by the indwelling spirit of Yeshua.

What about the faithful Jew?

Ezekiel prophesied 2 exiles of the Judeans, The Babylonian and a further exile which we now see as the exile of 70 and 135 AD. However, Ezekiel also prophesied a return from this 2nd exile as well. A return that has been marked by the events of 1948 and 1967 in particular.

Many Judeans (Jews) are now returning to the Land of Israel in unbelief; but they are then also being led back to their God and having their eyes and hearts opened to Him (I have written on this in some detail – please see my article ‘Israel’s Return in Belief or Unbelief’).

It appears that Yahweh has purposely keep the distinctions between Jew and Gentile believers alive so that His prophecies may be fulfilled. However, the ‘time of the Gentiles’ is either at end or coming to an end. Yahweh is turning His attention back to the ‘apple of His eye’ and awakening His rebellious and stiff-necked people so that they are turning back to Him.

Certainly we do not see a great number of them recognizing Yeshua as the Messiah, but then the ‘Christ’ being presented to him by the Christian world is a false Messiah, which they are quite justifiably rejecting. There is no doubt however that the day is fast approaching when they will say ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of Yahweh’.

Only at this time will the two ‘parallel train tracks’, the two ‘siblings’, Judaism and Christianity, at last converge and unite behind the Coming King!

The Way (Halacha – meaning a life lived in right relationship with God) is what all observant and faithful Jews endeavour to follow.

Consider just a few Hebrew Scriptures:

1 Kings 2:1-4 (NKJV)³ And keep the charge of the Lord your God: **to walk in His ways**, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn; ⁴ that the Lord may fulfill His word which He spoke concerning me, saying, ‘If your sons take heed to their way, to **walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul,**’ He said, ‘you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.’

Psalms 86:10-13 (NKJV) For You *are* great, and do wondrous things; You alone *are* God. ¹¹ Teach me **Your way**, O Lord; I will walk in **Your truth**; Unite my heart to fear Your name. ¹² I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart, And I will glorify Your name forevermore. ¹³ For great *is* Your mercy toward me, **And You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.**

Psalms 119: (NKJV) ¹¹ Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You! ³⁰ I have chosen the **way of truth**; Your judgments I have laid *before me*. ³¹ I cling to Your testimonies; O Lord, do not put me to shame! ³² I will run the course of Your commandments, For You shall enlarge my heart. ³³ Teach me, O Lord, **the way of Your statutes**, And I shall keep it *to the end*.
¹⁰⁵ **Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.**

Note the reference to the way of truth, to walking in right relationship with God and also notice that many of these scriptures speak of this relationship in terms of salvation.

Now, if we turn to the Messianic Writings, the NT, we similarly find references such as Luke 20:21 where we learn that Yeshua taught and lived the Way of Truth.

Luke 20:21 (NKJV) Then they asked Him, saying, "Teacher, we know that You say and teach rightly, and You do not show personal favouritism, but teach the **way of God in truth**:

When we seek to understand what Yeshua believed, we learn that the faith of Yeshua was the faith of Abraham, it was a heart-led desire to live only for Yahweh, to be obedient to Yahweh in all his ways. The Psalm of David, Ps 119 is a brilliant Psalm that so eloquently describes the faith that Yeshua had (see my article 'The Faith of Yeshua' for more on this).

The Faith of Yeshua:

Now consider that we too are called to have this same faith, we are called to have the faith of Yeshua:

Rev 14:12 (NKJV) ***Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.***

This faith then is the very same 'way of God in truth' that Yeshua (the Jew) lived and taught and that Abraham and David embraced. So now, when we turn to John's Gospel we read Yeshua saying: "The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, ²³ that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. **Whoever does not honor the Son** does not honor the Father who sent him. ²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever **hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life**. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life." John 5:22-24 (ESV)

Note Yeshua has been given the role of being the judge of who will enter the Coming Age, and note that the conditions for salvation. We cannot reject or fail to honour the Son and be saved.

We cannot refuse to do 'the will of the Father', that is what Yeshua's words and deeds were after-all; and we must believe in Yahweh.

Thus, it seems plausible that all obedient Jews who have not rejected the real Messiah are even today in the same place and under very similar conditions as they were in the days before Yeshua's birth.

It appears that Yeshua has paid for the remission of their sins so that they too are no longer under (the penalty) of Torah. Let us therefore leave the judgment of their hearts and their relationship with the Father to our Master and Lord, Yeshua.

Practicalities:

So what is the practical outcome of all this?

- We need to recognize that as Gentile believers we are not Jews and are not called to obey Jewish by-laws, etc, such as circumcision and certain food laws. We may choose to share in their special days because we gain much from this, but we are certainly not commanded to and should not judge others for doing so.
- We recognize that the Messiah, as the final and ultimate sacrifice has done away with the Levitical priesthood and all its attendant regulations.
- We recognize that the Ten Commandments are the Moral Code of the Universe and therefore we seek to obey all of them for our own benefit, as well as because our God and His Messiah placed such importance on them. We recognize that as we grow as 'born from above'²⁶ members of the household of God, we gain a maturity that means we embrace and appreciate the manner in which Yeshua intensified these Moral Codes.
- We acknowledge and embrace, along with Paul, the knowledge that we are 'no longer under (the penalty) of the Torah', giving joyful thanks and homage to our Messiah because he removed the penalty for our transgressions.
- We acknowledge our indebtedness to the cultivated olive tree into which we have been grafted, we acknowledge our debt to the 'set-apart' (holy) ones of God from Abraham and Moses through all the prophets and apostles down to today. As a consequence of our humble acknowledgement of our debt we seek always to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, to support in all ways possible the Jewish people and their rights to their national homeland.
- With these foundations we daily seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness; we seek in all ways available to us to bring restoration of all peoples to God including the restoration of Jew and Gentile before God²⁷. Thus, we declare the Messiah Yeshua and his message, the good news of the Kingdom.

Paul Herring
July 2009

Update: May 2016

"But he who looks into the perfect Torah of freedom, and continues, not being a hearer who forgets, but a doer of the work, this man will be blessed in what he does." James 1:25

²⁶ Gal 2:29 'born according to the Spirit'

²⁷ "The Ten Commandments: The Significance of God's Laws in Everyday Life" by Dr Laura Schlessinger and Rabbi Stewart Vogel Page xxiii: *"The Israelites were basically given an assignment. By their adherence to a unique way of life, with laws of holiness, justice, generosity, mercy, ethics and compassion, the whole world would come to know love and obey the One and Only God. The Jews were to be role models, and their behaviour in personal and public life, as commanded by God would draw others to follow: ultimately resulting in God's kingdom on earth. God loves all people. We are all made "in His image". The task of the Jews was not and is not to make Jews of all the world's people but to bring to everyone the knowledge of the presence of God and the basic values commanded by God as a blessing: "... and all the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you ..." (Gen 12:3)."* This is a book by an orthodox Jewish author and Rabbi. Isn't this task what we argue the 'Christian' is called to? Should this not give us pause for reflection? If a Jew is being truly obedient to this calling how does he/she differ from a faithful Christian? Isn't this exactly what Yeshua did? Note that many of our bibles use Gen 12:3 as a prophecy for the coming Messiah.

Appendix:

1: Some quotes from James Dunn on Torah

The Theology of Paul the Apostle by James D G Dunn

P131: Dunn indicates here that the church has misrepresented Judaism as legalistic in character.

P132: Dunn agrees that 'Torah' is a broader category than 'law' (*nomos*).

P135 "... Paul took it for granted that the law was given to be obeyed; submission to the law was what God expected (Rom 8:7)."

P136: "Not least of interest and importance here is the fact that **Paul evidently regarded the law as a standard of universal judgment**"

P139: "... and without knowledge of the later Romans text it must be judged doubtful whether any Galatian believer would have heard Gal 3:19 as a criticism of the law"

P145: In Romans too, therefore, **the first criticism of the law is not a criticism of the law as such**. It is a criticism of Paul's fellow Jews for assuming that their historic status of privilege under the law still held good, even after the coming of their Messiah."

P146: In speaking of Gal 4:24 and the two covenants, Dunn states: "These should not be understood as "old covenant" and "new covenant".

(in agreement with my take and explanation re this discussion of circumcision)

P149: Regarding 2 Cor 3, Dunn states:

"Not least of significance for us here is the fact that the word "law" (*nomos*) is never used. What Paul places on the passé side of the antithesis is *gramma* (2 Cor 3:6-7). The point is that *gramma* is not simply a synonym for *nomos*. It focuses rather on the law as written, visible to sight in the written letter. This obviously ties in to Israel's inability to understand Moses properly, that is, to grasp the limited and temporary scope of the epoch represented by Moses. And presumably it is this shortfall in understanding which gives the "letter" its killing character, in contrast to the writing of the Spirit in the human heart."

"Carnfield therefore has grounds for saying that **'there is here no suggestion that the law is done away'**. See further Hafemann, Paul 156-73 "the letter/Spirit contrast is between ***the Law itself without the Spirit*** as it was and is experienced by the majority of Israelites under the Sinai covenant, and ***the Law with the Spirit*** as it is now being experienced by those who are under the new covenant in Christ."

P160: "The law had a special relationship with Israel, particularly to protect and discipline Israel in the period from Moses to Christ. But that was a temporary role. **It should not be assumed, however, that this is the only function of the law and therefore that the coming of Christ means the abolition of the law.**"

P644 "For it is important to recall that the hope which Paul saw as thus fulfilled in the Spirit was **not hope for another law of a different Torah**. The fulfilment of that earlier hope had not been perceived as dispensing individuals or communities from keeping of the law. **On the contrary, the hope was for a means to a more effective keeping of the law**. Only a circumcision of the heart would enable an adequate keeping of the law (Deut 30:8-10). Contrary to popular opinion, the promise of a new covenant in Jeremiah is not of a new or different law. ... But nothing that Paul says indicates that for him Christ had brought emancipation from the law as God's rule of right and wrong, as God's guidelines for conduct. ... **For Paul, the objective of God's saving action in Christ was to make possible the keeping of the law!**"

2: The 10 Words and their significance in Daily Life²⁸ (a brief look at the first 4):

The 1st Word:

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me Ex 20: 2-3 (ESV)

This was a novel idea around 1300 BC – relationship not casual but covenantal. “I am the Lord **your** God” – a personal God, a God who is/wants a relationship with us, His creation. In our relationship with God the observation of a commandment brings us closer to God and every time we violate a commandment we become further estranged from God

The 2nd Word:

You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. Ex 20:4-6 (ESV)

in Judaism this is one of the three sins that one must be willing to die for rather than violate – murder and sexual prohibitions against incest and adultery are the other two. This may help explain how a Jew accepting Jesus (the Trinitarian version), is seen as now ‘dead’ to his family. Whenever anything besides God and acting out of godliness (kindness, charity, compassion, etc) becomes the actual endpoint of your attentions and activities, that is idolatry.

As the song goes “.. *don’t worry, be happy*” is idolatry.

Contrast with Ps 128:1-2: *Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways! 2 You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands; you shall be blessed (happy), and it shall be well with you.* and Ps 97:11 *Light is sown for the righteous, And gladness for the upright in heart.*

God is the ultimate source of meaning and therefore happiness – seek God and find happiness; seek the worship of idols and move away from God.

Any activity taken to extreme, in spite of obligations to family and society, is a behavior that serves the self and is a form of idolatry.

What is the consequence of idolatry:

The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the work of human hands. ¹⁶ They have mouths, but do not speak; they have eyes, but do not see; ¹⁷ they have ears, but do not hear, nor is there any breath in their mouths. ¹⁸ Those who make them become like them, so do all who trust in them! Psalms 135:15-18 (ESV)

That is, the more we lead idolatrous lives the more we become blind and deaf and dead to God!

The 3rd Word:

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain. Ex 20:7 (ESV)

²⁸ For a book length study see “The Ten Commandments: The Significance of God’s Laws in Everyday Life” by Dr Laura Schlessinger and Rabbi Stewart Vogel

The importance of a 'good name' or reputation is emphasised in the fact that this command is also repeated with regard to people in the 9th commandment – we are not to bear false witness against others.

God is about relationships – if you give a bad name to him you may diminish or demolish peoples belief respect and awe. A name defines something.

God's name in Ex 3:14-15 indicates his permanency, his reliability – the same yesterday, today and forever.

When we curse God, we are in a sense blaming Him for problems and not taking our responsibility to stand between the evil and innocent.

Since it is our duty to emulate God: "*Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy* (Lev 19:2); a clear way to sanctify God's name is to behave in holy ways. When we fail to do so we are profaning His name, especially if we are trying to declare our faith as believers and followers of Yeshua.

Similarly, trying to argue that God has condoned your sinful acts is a form of profaning his Name.

As we are tasked with the Great Commission we must take great care to act and speak worthy: *But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.*' Deut 18:20 (ESV)

God swears on his Name:

... establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." 12 And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: 13 I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. 14 When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, Gen 9:11-14 (ESV) and He said, "By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, 18 and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice." Gen 22:16-18 (ESV)

Also:

Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Cursed be the man who does not hear the words of this covenant 4 that I commanded your fathers when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, Listen to my voice, and do all that I command you. So shall you be my people, and I will be your God, 5 that I may confirm the oath that I swore to your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as at this day." Jer 11:3-5 (ESV)

God's name imparts a seriousness above and beyond anything else we might attempt to invoke.

Whoever blasphemes the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death. Lev 24:16 (ESV)

²⁸ *"Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter,*
²⁹ *but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"—*
30 for they had said, "He has an unclean spirit." Mark 3:28-30 (ESV)

Invoking God's Name while involved in evil (e.g. The Crusades) and making vows in God's Name which you don't intend to keep are examples of defying the Third Commandment.

The 3rd commandment speaks to the sacred nature of our relationship with God and our responsibilities to each other in His name.

The 4th Word:

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. Ex 20:8-11 (ESV)

A double portion of the manna was collected on the 6th day to last through the Sabbath. When this was tried on other days the manna rotted. God demonstrated in this miracle alone how important it was Him that His people observed a day of ceasing or abstaining from their normal labours of providing for themselves and their families.

The Sabbath day, a day spent with community and family in study, prayer, discussion, and peace, reminds is how we should regulate and perfect our spiritual, intellectual, physical, domestic and social behaviours.

Observing the Sabbath reminds and instructs us to sanctify our lives. The way God has sanctified the Sabbath day. This commandment does not limit our freedom, it gives us distinct guidance toward holiness and therefore meaningfulness for our lives.

The first day days God made good, the seventh He made holy.

We struggle to stop working for Shabbat but because it is commanded by God, their should be no guilt about having some downtime.

The Sabbath reminds us of our potential for doing good. We are the bridge between the worldly and the divine – between the rest of creation (on the first 5 days) and the sanctified 7th day.

The Sabbath is *spirit* in the form of *time*. (Herschel)

The appreciation of a non-productive day is predicated on a week of labour. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work Ex 20:9 (ESV)

During the week we emulate the creative side of God.. The Sabbath is then the culmination of a productive week on which the non-productivity can be appreciated only when preceded by creativity.

Community prayers and fellowship are an important part of the Sabbath.

The Sabbath was given to the Israelites as a reminder of God's freeing them from slavery – as a reminder then of both God and the sanctity of human freedom. It should serve the same purpose for Gentile followers of Yeshua who have also been freed from the slavery of sin.

On the Sabbath we search for the essence of God. Shabbat is the antidote to the tendency toward self-idolatry.

Every time we live a day dedicated to holiness we have the opportunity to bring some residual effect into our daily lives. The Sabbath is not about time off, it is about sacred time.