

-3-

ANSWERING: THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW

Pastor: First, the Law was given to point out our sins. “Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions...” (Galatians 3:19). It is the standard that is used to show how sinful we are.

Many people think that the Law was given so that by keeping it we will become righteous. This is a wrong understanding of the Law. The Law is our referee to show us how many times that we step out of bounds. It shows how utterly filthy and wicked our sin is (Romans 7:13). In God’s eyes, even our righteousness is called filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6).

Second, it points to the Savior: “Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24). The Law not only points out the problem, but also the solution. It is our tutor (teacher) to lead us to Christ that we might be **justified by faith, not by keeping the Law**. Jesus paid for all of the sins of the world (1 John 2:2; 1 Peter 2:24), the very sins that the Law pointed out. The only way to receive forgiveness from sins is by receiving Jesus Christ into our lives because there is salvation in no one else (Acts 4:12).

“First, the Law was given to point out our sins. ‘Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions...’ (Galatians 3:19).”

The pastor is correct in asserting that a main reason why the Torah or the Law was given, would be so that there was a clear set of standards by which to define human sin. This is something emphasized by the Apostle John when he communicates, “Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4), which the CJB/CJSB notably renders with, “Everyone who keeps sinning is violating *Torah*—indeed, sin is violation of *Torah*.” G.W. Bromiley correctly asserts how “The law is obviously not sinful. It is, in fact, the very reverse. It is a revelation of the holy and righteous will of God” (*ISBE*).¹ The very reason why God’s people are to strive to obey the Torah’s instruction is so that they will not be caught disobeying Him, much less *willfully* disobeying Him.

Regarding *anomia* (ἀνομία) or “lawlessness,” *Vine* says, “This definition of sin sets forth its essential character as the rejection of the law, or will, of God and the substitution of the will of self.”² A total rejection of the validity, relevance, value, and Divine origins of the Torah may be regarded as being a rejection of the will of God. In extreme cases, this leads to destructive and damaging activities/transgressions, yet more likely to manifest are just confusion and spiritual disorientation. When the Lord claims that He is One “Declaring the end from the beginning” (Isaiah 46:10), how is a man or woman of faith to truly understand His plan for the

¹ G.W. Bromiley, “Sin,” in Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 4:522-523.

² W.E. Vine, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1968), 357.

ages if what is recorded for us in Moses' Teaching and the Tanach Scriptures is largely disregarded—or in some cases not even studied and considered as a matter of Biblical history?

The First Commandment tells us, "You shall have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3; cf. Deuteronomy 6:14). To reject the Torah or the Law of Moses as important instruction for God's people could be viewed as people making themselves out to be God, as individuals find themselves making up all the rules for life as they go along, rather than being committed to following the rules that God Himself has established for us. We should all agree that making ourselves out to be God **is not a position that we should ever be putting ourselves in**, as human beings with a fallen sin nature will eventually, *literally make the world run amok*. I cannot help but be reminded of some rather fearful words from my great-grandfather, Bishop Marvin A. Franklin (1894-1972), who on 30 May, 1948 preached in a radio sermon,

"Man, to reach the noblest proportions, must know a Supreme Being to love, to worship and to serve. This gives him a sense of moral responsibility and places him under inescapable moral controls. God is his highest authority and gives him a compelling reason to keep under the base demands of his flesh, to think God's thoughts after him, to respect human beings as such, wherever he finds them, and to learn to live peaceably and constructively with all men."³

His concern, as well as that of many others in 1948, was that no one learned the terrible lessons of World War II. He continues, exclaiming how "We have laid hold upon the secrets of God and have found such power that the world can be blasted into bits. I exhort you to hear the awful truth that unless God controls the findings of science, we are near the end of our civilization."⁴ The threat of a God-less world using the atomic bomb to annihilate itself was a very real fear to him, and many other clergy in the 1940s-1960s—which means that seven to eight decades later a God-less world *with many more means* to obliterate people is an even more, for lack of a better description, **lawless place**.

David declares in Psalm 32:1-2, "How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit!", with the Hebrew *pesha* (פֶּשַׁע) rendered with the Greek *anomia* in the Septuagint.⁵ Similarly, the promise of the New Covenant involves the Lord's decree, "AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS⁶ I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE" (Hebrews 10:17; cf. Jeremiah 31:34). Our Heavenly Father **has always been in the business of wanting to forgive those who turn to Him**, as Supreme Creator, from the negative grasp of lawlessness on their lives!

While general disobedience to the commandments of God's Torah, most especially its ethical and moral demands imprinted upon the human conscience via the Divine image (Genesis 1:27; Romans 2:14-15) and a lack of love for others (1 John 3:10-23; 4:7-12; et. al.), are largely intended by the term lawlessness or *anomia*, there is another perspective of 1 John 3:4 that needs to be seriously considered. Indicating how the antimessiah/antichrist is labeled in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 as "the man of lawlessness," *ho anthrōpos tēs anomias* (ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας), I. Howard Marshall offers an important view from his Epistles of John commentary that should not be excluded:

"[T]he word [*anomia*] was associated with the final outbreak of evil against Christ...and it signifies rebellion against the will of God. To commit sin is thus to place oneself on the side of the devil and the antichrist and to stand in opposition to Christ. If this view is correct...the stress falls more on the idea of opposition to God which is inherent in disregarding his law."⁷

No sincere, born again Christian who is a moral person—but who may have an incomplete and under-developed view of God's commandments—is an ally of the antimessiah/antichrist! These people are most

³ Marvin A. Franklin, *The Christ Who Makes Men Whole*, transcript (Atlanta: Joint Radio Committee of the Methodist Church, 1948), 10.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp 10-11.

The complete text of this sermon has been reproduced on the Messianic Apologetics website.

⁵ "Happy are those whose lawless behavior was forgiven" (NETS).

⁶ Grk. *tōn anomion autōn* (τῶν ἀνομιῶν αὐτῶν).

⁷ I. Howard Marshall, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), pp 176-177.

eager to repent of errors, when their shortcomings are carefully pointed out to them by Messianic Believers, who care for them and are true living testimonies of the great love of Yeshua, demonstrated forth in faithful obedience. The problem, however, is that there are many Bible teachers and theologians who do not frequently take the Scriptural warnings of lawlessness—especially the Messiah’s own end-time prediction, “Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold” (Matthew 24:12)—as seriously as they should.

Many Christian theologians are of the impression, based on Galatians 3:19 which the pastor references, that the Torah was added later as the sin of humanity significantly got worse. Galatians 3:19 says, after all:

“Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made.”

Many conclude that Paul only saw the Torah as a parenthesis between Moses and the coming of Yeshua, and now with Yeshua it is no longer necessary to follow. It is commonly concluded that the presence of the Torah in human history, or even in Ancient Israel’s culture, was only to be temporary until the arrival of the Messiah, the Promised One who would bruise the serpent (Genesis 3:15). However, this is an incorrect understanding, because *torah* (תּוֹרָה), meaning the Instruction of God, existed in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were commanded by the Lord not to eat the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. For them, this was *torah* (Genesis 2:16-17).

Adam and Eve did not follow this simple instruction given to them by God. They disobeyed and as a consequence of their sin, humanity was ejected from the Garden of Eden and from communion with Him, suffering death. We must now have a Redeemer so that we can return to full communion and have reconciliation with God.

Galatians 3:19a, “Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions...,” is often interpreted as meaning that the formal giving of the Torah to Ancient Israel at Mount Sinai was not something intended in any way to be permanent. This is a rather strong claim, given the extremely severe warnings the Israelites were given if they approached the mountain (Exodus 20:18-19ff). This line of reasoning argues that the main intention of the Torah was to define sin, *only to* be able to stir up an even greater ability for people to sin (cf. Romans 5:20), obviously demonstrate the inherent need people have for a Savior, but once the Savior arrived the Law would then be thrown aside. In the view of G. Walter Hansen (among the *many* possible quotes that could be provided), “The Mosaic law came into effect at a certain point in history and was in effect only until the promised *Seed*, Christ, appeared...[T]he law was in effect for a relatively short period of time limited in both directions by the words *added* and *until*.”⁸

This perspective, while commonly found among those who either read or preach from Galatians today (dispensationalists especially), would be at odds with the Messiah’s own perspective on the Torah found in Matthew 5:19. Furthermore, such a view of Galatians 3:19 can be viewed as being rather isolated, as the Apostle Paul himself is clear to attest immediately afterward in Galatians 3:21a, “Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be!” Paul’s primary purpose is to demonstrate to his audience, “For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law” (Galatians 3:21b). Torah-keeping of any kind, be it by rote human observance of commandments and/or a sectarian interpretation and application of commandments, will not bring one into a right relationship with God.

In Galatians 3:19a Paul says that the Torah was “added.” *What was the Torah added to?* The first definition of the Greek verb *prostithēmi* (προστίθημι) provided by *BDAG* is, “**to add to someth. that is already present or exists, add, put to.**”⁹ What this can certainly imply is that the Torah was not added to the plan of the Abrahamic promise (cf. Galatians 3:17-18), but that when the Torah “was added” what was actually put forward was a set of *further instruction* joined to an already existent ethical and moral code, present before the formal codification of the commandments given to the Ancient Israelites at Mount Sinai.

⁸ G. Walter Hansen, *IVP New Testament Commentary Series: Galatians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994), pp 101-102.

⁹ *BDAG*, 885.

Torah (תּוֹרָה) as God’s Instruction certainly pre-dated Mount Sinai in some degree, because Noah was able to determine the difference between clean and unclean animals (Genesis 7:2),¹⁰ Noah knew how to sacrifice animals (Genesis 8:20), and Abraham “obeyed My voice, and observed My safeguards, My commandments, My decrees, and My Torahs” (Genesis 26:5, ATS). Abraham knew how to conduct himself and obeyed God’s commandments, as they existed at the time. According to Sirach 44:19-20a in the Apocrypha, a sentiment which would have been present in the Second Temple Judaism of Yeshua and the Apostles, “Abraham was the great father of a multitude of nations, and no one has been found like him in glory; he kept the law of the Most High, and was taken into covenant with him.”¹¹

While there is no shortage of those who would say that the Torah was a temporary addition to God’s plan to later be jettisoned with the arrival of the Messiah, we need not overlook the specific reason of *why* the Torah was added: “It was added because of transgressions” (Galatians 3:19). **Human sin needed to be properly defined, regulated, and handled, with clear terms in place regarding atonement and forgiveness.** One of the things that can easily elude English readers is how the clause *tōn parabaseōn charin prosetethē* (τῶν παραβάσεων χάριν προσετέθη), literally ordered “of transgressions because added,” is to be viewed. The genitive case (indicating possession) preposition *charin* (χάριν),¹² is also the accusative case (indicating direct object) noun form of *charis* (χάρις), a Greek word which in most Bibles is rendered as “grace.” What this means, more than anything else, is that even though Galatians 3:19a is most often viewed from the perspective that the Torah being “added” was a largely negative and unhappy thing, it is something actually quite positive and beneficial. James D.G. Dunn concurs,

“In the case of [Galatians] 3.19a the issue centres on the meaning of *χάριν*. Here we need to recall that the word is the accusative form of *χάρις*, ‘grace, favour’, and that its usual meaning as attested elsewhere is in usage of the time is ‘for the sake of, on behalf of, on account of’. This suggests a much more immediately gracious objective for the law...”¹³

Dunn’s own conclusion, from his Galatians commentary, is how “the law was provided as an interim measure precisely to deal with the problem of transgression, until it could be dealt with definitively and finally in the cross of Christ.”¹⁴ None of us should disagree with how even with the Torah formally given to Moses at Mount Sinai, and as great as it is (i.e., Psalm 119:97), that the Torah was and is completely powerless to offer final redemption (cf. Hebrews 9:9; 10:1). In revealing human transgressions, though, the giving of the Torah still serves a positive function—pointing to the ultimate goal of the Messiah who offered Himself as a final sacrifice (Romans 10:4, Grk.). Still, Galatians 3:19a says that the Torah was “added.” If we conclude that figures such as Noah or Abraham followed *torah* to some degree, what would have been specifically added in the Sinai revelation to Moses?

When the Torah or Law was formally given to Ancient Israel, there were various instructions brought in or incorporated that had obviously not been previously revealed by God. In this case, Galatians 3:19a attests to the fact that there were things added and joined in and specifically given—**because** of the transgressions or sins that needed a Divine response. This is why the CJB/CJSB renders Galatians 3:19a with, “So then, why the legal part of the *Torah*?” What commandments or instructions do we specifically witness in the Torah that regulate how Ancient Israel was to deal with sin?

Is it reasonable to conclude that prior to God, with various angels present (cf. Acts 7:53; Hebrews 2:2), formally giving the Torah to Moses—that the bulk of this instruction was added, or joined into, an already existent code that righteous figures like Noah or Abraham had followed and/or passed down orally? The main part of *torah* that clearly concerns transgressions or sins is easily seen in how the Levitical priesthood, its animal sacrifices, and the Tabernacle would be responsible for offering a degree of atonement for the sin of

¹⁰ Consult the author’s exegetical paper on Genesis 9:3-7, “Why Meat?”, appearing in the *Messianic Kosher Helper*.

¹¹ Other references from Jewish literature in the broad Second Temple period include: *Jubilees* 23:10; 24:11; CD 3.2-3; m.*Kiddushin* 4:14.

¹² “prep. with gen. generally occurring after a noun or pronoun *for the sake of, because of, by reason of*” (CGEDNT, 197).

¹³ James D.G. Dunn, “Was Paul against the Law?”, in *The New Perspective on Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), pp 269-270.

¹⁴ James D.G. Dunn, *Black’s New Testament Commentary: The Epistle to the Galatians* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 190.

the people. Galatians 3:19a does not speak of the Torah in its entirety being added, but the major component of it specifically “added” to deal with the sin problem. This is something that by necessity needed to be provided to an already understood moral and ethical code. And, animal sacrifices could only *temporarily* cover sin until the coming of Messiah Yeshua, the Seed, and His being offered up as the final sacrifice for humanity’s sin. Dunn’s further observations on Galatians 3:19a are well taken:

“[T]he purpose of the law as it was generally recognized within the (OT) scriptures and the Judaism of Paul’s time...[was] as a means of dealing with transgressions. In other words, what was probably in mind here was the whole sacrificial cult at whose centre was the provision of means for covering sin and removing guilt, means of atonement.”¹⁵

The idea that “It was added...” (Galatians 3:19) does not pertain to all of the Torah’s instructions, especially things like the principles seen in the Ten Commandments, being provisional until the arrival of Yeshua, is not only found among modern scholars like Dunn. Even from my own denominational upbringing, John Wesley would observe on Galatians 3:19,

“The moral law was added to the promise to discover and restrain transgressions, to convince men of their guilt, and need of the promise, and give some check to sin. And this law passeth not away; but the ceremonial law was only introduced till Christ, the seed to or through whom the promise was made, should come.”¹⁶

An Eighteenth Century figure like Wesley, probably following in the wake of various Calvinistic interpreters several centuries before him, would not at all argue that the bulk of the Torah’s commandments were abolished just because the Messiah had arrived. While working from the artificial divisions of the “ceremonial law” and “moral law,” the so-called “ceremonial law” would nonetheless largely include the institutions of the Levitical priesthood and animal sacrifices, which could not offer a permanent solution to the human sin problem. The “moral law,” a considerable majority of the Torah’s commandments, would remain valid instruction for Christians to follow.

It is unfortunate that some Bible readers want to base their argument that God’s Torah was something only temporary, solely on Galatians 3:19—which upon close review seems to speak instead of the Levitical priesthood and animal sacrifices being added—and then they throw away the moral, ethical, theological, and perhaps even the spiritual value of the Torah. Some I have personally encountered like to infer that if there were no Law and no commandments, then there would not be any sin. We are made to assume that if Adam and Eve were not instructed by God to not eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, that humanity would not have fallen from grace. *We sit on the other side of the Fall*, however, and this kind of speculation is idle and will not do us any good. We must deal with the fact that human beings have a sin nature and are naturally inclined not to obey God or His Law. Being condemned to eternal punishment, we need a Divine Redeemer **and we need to repent from any lawless attitudes or behaviors we may harbor in our hearts and minds**. Only He can enact a total cleansing!

“It is the standard that is used to show how sinful we are.”

We have already examined the significance of 1 John 3:4, which candidly states **“sin is lawlessness.”** Within God’s Torah is found His definitive standard regarding what He considers acceptable and unacceptable

¹⁵ Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul*, 270.

Dunn is notably one of only a few modern interpreters that one would find who would suggest such a perspective of Galatians 3:19. Tim Hegg, *A Study of Galatians* (Tacoma, WA: TorahResource, 2002), 121 summarizes the typical situation one is more likely to find:

“Already prejudiced against the Torah, the typical Christian exegesis misses the fact that a great deal of the Torah centers upon the Tabernacle/Temple, priesthood, and sacrifices. How were the covenant members to deal with the inevitable presence of sin in their personal and corporate lives? The Torah gives the answer: by repentance and acceptance of God’s gracious gift of forgiveness through the payment of a just penalty exemplified in the sacrifice. It was the Torah that revealed in clear detail the method which God had provided for transgression, and it was this method—the sacrificial system and priesthood that pointed to Messiah, the ultimate sacrifice and means of eternal forgiveness.”

¹⁶ John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, reprint (Peterborough, UK: Epworth Press, 2000), 689.

behavior. The Apostle Paul speaks of the person who recognizes “that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin” (Romans 7:14, RSV), the person who recognizes the Divine nature and qualities of God’s commandments, but who still struggles with obedience.¹⁷ The Torah absolutely reflects the character of our Creator, and when we read it we are most frequently shown how far we fall short of His high standard. It reveals for us the sin nature we inherited from Adam (Romans 5:12), and the reality that we not only need to be delivered from disobedience **but saved from sins.**

It is, however, quite important that people receive a proper amount of training in the Scriptures—especially those of the Tanach or Old Testament—from a young age if at all possible (2 Timothy 3:14-15; cf. Galatians 3:24). This can adequately prepare someone for that critical moment in life where one instinctly knows that he or she must turn to Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ), in confession and repentance of all wrongdoing, for complete reconciliation with the Father. How frequently is this seen in today’s Christian Church? (Or for that same matter, much of the Messianic movement?)

“Many people think the Law was given so that by keeping it we will become righteous.”

The idea that observing the Torah will merit righteousness for people is based on Deuteronomy 6:25, where the Ancient Israelites declare, “It will be righteousness for us if we are careful to observe all this commandment before the LORD our God, just as He commanded us.” The Hebrew word for righteousness in the Tanach is *tzedaqah* (צְדָקָה).¹⁸ HALOT offers a variety of definitions for it, including: “loyalty to the community, in conduct, **honesty**,” “**justice**, of the human judge and of the king; it includes the elimination of anything breaking the peace and the preservation of good order;” “**justness** of the divine judge,” “justness, meaning **community loyalty**,” “**justness, justice**, meaning God’s loyalty to the community,” “**entitlement, just cause...deeds of justice**, deeds of loyalty to the community, or covenant.”¹⁹ *Tzedaqah* is derived from the word *tzedeq* (צֶדֶק), which “refers to an ethical, moral standard and of course in the OT that standard is the nature and will of God” (TWOT).²⁰

The underlying terms for righteousness and justification in the Bible (the Hebrew root *tzqd*, צֶדֶק and Greek root *dik-*, δικ-) have a wider array of application than do their equivalent English terms today. To be “righteous/justified” can relate to one’s identity as God’s people, or being made a part of God’s people, as much as it can mean being forgiven of sin, or demonstrating proper and virtuous behavior.²¹

The *Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament* states for Deuteronomy 6:25, “our righteousness will consist in the observance of the law; we shall be regarded and treated by God as righteous, if we are diligent in the observance of the law.”²² If righteousness or *tzedaqah* is to be taken from the perspective of a right and cleared standing before God, then this surely presents one obvious problem: **Where in the history of the Bible have God’s people ever perfectly obeyed Him?** Where has the keeping of the commandments resulted in His people being considered righteous, blameless, perfect, and without any error before Him? If we were all righteous because we followed the Torah, then we would really not need a Savior for eternal redemption (Galatians 3:21b).

¹⁷ Note that there is a diverse array of opinion as to whether or not Paul is speaking of himself autobiographically in Romans 7:14, or is speaking of a hypothetical, imaginary “I” sinner (derived from the ancient rhetorical practice of *prosopopeia*). While many interpreters hold to Paul speaking autobiographically, many others do not. Yet, while many Romans commentators today recognize the strong possibility that the “I” in Romans 7 is not Paul speaking about himself, there are many different conclusions drawn as to what is being specifically communicated if this is not autobiographical material.

For a summary of this, consult J.M. Everts, “Conversion and Call of Paul,” in Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, eds., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 158.

¹⁸ Its main Greek equivalent in the Septuagint and Apostolic Scriptures is *dikaionē* (δικαιοσύνη).

¹⁹ HALOT, 2:1006.

²⁰ Harold G. Stigers, “צֶדֶק,” in TWOT, 2:752.

²¹ Cf. Philip F. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul’s Letter* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2003), pp 163-168.

²² E-Sword 8.0.8: Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament. MS Windows 9x. Franklin, TN: Equipping Ministries Foundation, 2008.

The perspective that Torah-keeping will bring salvation seems to be represented in the NJPS translation of Deuteronomy 6:25: “It will be therefore to our merit before the LORD our God to observe faithfully this whole Instruction.” In his commentary on Deuteronomy, Jewish scholar Jeffrey H. Tigay argues for this verse, “That is, ‘it will be to our credit,’ implying that one accumulates credit for meritorious good deeds.”²³ As his corroborating evidence, he references statements witnessed in both the Tosefta and the Mishnah, some early Rabbinic literature from the Second Century C.E. *t.Peah* 1:2 says, “Doing good...creates a principal [for the world-to-come] and bears interest...[in this world],”²⁴ followed by *m.Peah* 1:1, which more fully attests:

“These are the things the benefit of which a person enjoys in this world, while the principal remains for him in the world to come: [deeds in] honor of father and mother, [performance of] righteous deeds, and [acts which] bring peace between a man and his fellow. But the study of Torah is as important as all of them together.”²⁵

None of us can argue against that honoring one’s parents, accomplishing holy deeds reflective of God’s own righteousness, and trying to facilitate peace among one’s neighbors are things that we should all be doing. The question is whether the performance of these various works can result in human beings having a right standing before God. Yeshua said quite directly, “For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses *that* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20). The scribes and Pharisees often had such high and elite standards of what was considered “righteousness,” that the Lord says common human righteousness must exceed *their standards* in order to enter into the Kingdom. For us today, this would mean that without Yeshua, we basically need to keep all of the extra-Biblical laws of Orthodox Judaism perfectly to be saved. But this is impossible in our human condition. We might be able to learn from Rabbinic commentary in order to be more effective in holy conduct, but our sinful inclinations will often get the better of us no matter how hard we really try.

Various Christian Old Testament theologians, who generally have a rather positive outlook on the Law of Moses, tend to propose another perspective on Deuteronomy 6:25. Rather than arguing that Torah-keeping will merit people righteousness before God, Christopher J.H. Wright instead indicates how this verse “is virtually the OT ‘gospel’ in a nutshell. The crucial point here, however, is that this definitive statement of Israel’s salvation history is given as the answer to a fundamental question about *the law*...The basis of the law lies in the history of redemption (vv. 21-23); the reason for keeping the law is to enjoy the blessings of redemption (v. 24); the fruit of obeying the law is the righteousness that is the goal of redemption (v. 25).”²⁶ Wright is entirely correct in emphasizing the positive, educational nature of the Torah, particularly in terms of how successive generations of the Ancient Israelites would learn of God’s deliverance by the Exodus. Deuteronomy 6:21 instructs, “then you shall say to your son, ‘We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and the LORD brought us from Egypt with a mighty hand.’” A proper response to God’s intervening and saving action should be obedience to Him. The history of Ancient Israel, especially in texts like 1&2 Kings, sadly reveals that this was frequently not the case. Furthermore, the history of humanity in general is one of disobedience and rebellion toward the Creator (i.e., Romans 1).

The question of whether or not Deuteronomy 6:25 lays forth the hypothesis that if the Ancient Israelites were able to keep the Torah, they would be “righteous” or “justified,” is a legitimate one, because of how the verse is constructed. What is communicated is *u’tzedaqah ti’heyeh-lanu ki-nishmor l’asot et-kol-ha’mitzvah ha’zot* (וַיִּצְדָּקָה תִּהְיֶה־לָּנוּ כִּי־נִשְׁמָר לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־כָּל־הַמִּצְוֹת הַזֹּאת), “And it shall be counted as our righteousness, when we take care to fulfill all this commandment...” (Keter Crown Bible). The result of whatever *tzedaqah* is to be considered here, however worthwhile it may be, originates from the action of people. However, one can certainly debate whether such *tzedaqah*/righteousness/justification is an individual vindication of sin before Him, or a corporate demonstration of being reckoned among of His own.

²³ Jeffrey H. Tigay, *JPS Torah Commentary: Deuteronomy* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 83.

²⁴ Roger Brooks, trans., “Peah,” in Jacob Neusner, ed., *The Tosefta: Translated from the Hebrew With a New Introduction*, 2 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 1:47.

²⁵ Roger Brooks, trans., “Peah,” in Neusner, *Mishnah*, 15.

²⁶ Christopher Wright, *New International Biblical Commentary: Deuteronomy* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 104.

Can any kind of righteousness/justification result from human obedience to God's commandments? Deuteronomy 6:25 seems to present the possibility that at least an excellent obedience of God's commandments could somehow result in *tzedaqah* status. Once again, though, we are most soberly reminded of how fallen human nature is often prone **to do exactly the opposite** of what God expects. The Psalmist affirms, "They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one" (Psalm 14:3; cf. 53:3b). Paul reaffirms, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE" (Romans 3:10). The kind of obedience, that would merit *tzedaqah* status, is frequently unattainable for human beings with a fallen sin nature.

As high and as holy as God's Torah is, and as much as His people should seek obedience to it and compliance with it, so much of the consternation we experience in life is over what happens in our relationship with Him *when we are caught breaking the Law*. Even in a Messianic community that emphasizes God's grace and mercy as super-abounding to be there to cover some of the most problematic of sins (cf. Romans 5:20), so much of our time is spent worrying over matters like having to fill up our gas tanks on *Shabbat* when we forget to do so, or even going to the drug store to buy aspirin or antacid. Sins where we can all clearly be found in the wrong are in violating those commandments and principles where harm to a neighbor's person or his/her character will be found, where we are guilty of elevating our own self-worth and we cheapen the value of other people in our own estimation—perhaps even thinking that God approves of our attitudes.

Only Yeshua the Messiah, who expressly stated He came to "fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)—which was definitely manifested in His fulfilling the Torah (Matthew 5:17)—**perfectly kept Moses' Teaching**. He was the One sacrificed for the transgressions of all people. Our common inability to keep the thrust of Deuteronomy 6:25 **is what should precisely drive us to Him as our Divine Savior**. People have all failed to obey the Torah and its commandments. *We have all fallen short of God's standard*. With all thankfulness and gratitude, though, the sacrifice of Yeshua has been provided so we do not have to have the condemnation of the Law come crashing down upon us! We can each be redeemed from the Torah's penalties via the power of the gospel, and then be supernaturally empowered by the Holy Spirit within us to let the Lord write His commandments on our hearts just as He has promised (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27).

What this means is that the *real righteousness* Messiah followers must be reaching out for is none other than that which is granted to them from Yeshua's very work on their behalf at Golgotha (Calvary). As a direct result of being saved by God's grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9), the Apostle Paul says "For we are His workmanship, created in Messiah Yeshua for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). Yeshua Himself bids His disciples, "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). Good works of obedience to the Torah are to surely come as a result of the redemption we experience by faith, and demonstrate that we are truly God's own (James 2:17-18, 22). But, such good works will be *natural evidence* of the Holy Spirit inside of redeemed people, will be tempered by His grace, and will not be rigidly forced.²⁷

"This is a wrong understanding of the Law. The Law is our referee to show us how many times that we step out of bounds. It shows us how utterly filthy and wicked our sin is (Romans 7:13)."

The pastor is correct in stating that the Torah cannot ultimately be a person's key to righteousness, because no human being can ever perfectly observe God's Instruction. On the contrary, what most people tend to experience when they strive to follow the commandments are various degrees of guilt—because sooner or later they are going to break the Law, even by errors of omission.

While we can all access the experiences of prayer before our Heavenly Father, and Bible study, to turn to in order to know Him—there is definitely such a thing about knowing Him by the actions we perform in obedience. Obeying God does often present difficulties for people. In Romans 7:13, referenced by the pastor, Paul speaks of the person who says, "Therefore did that which is good become *a cause of death* for me? May it

²⁷ For a further discussion, consult the FAQ, "Deuteronomy 6:25."

never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, so that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful.”

In the preceding verse it is said “the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good” (Romans 7:12), a testimony to the Torah’s Divine origins and most worthwhile intent. It is later stated, “For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin” (Romans 7:14). Nowhere in these remarks is it ever said that the Torah or Law of Moses is “bad” or “evil,” or somehow not spiritual and not of God—much less something to be thrown away and ignored. However, the person in Romans 7 does say that because of his disobedience, he is “unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin” (NIV). *He surely needs deliverance from this predicament.*

Precisely because of the dilemma of sin in people, the Torah most frequently serves the purpose in revealing the sin in someone’s life, which may result in one sinning *even more* in defiance of God. The observations of the sinner, about what the Torah has done to him, are quite poignant:

“What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COVET’ [Exodus 20:17; Deuteronomy 5:21]. But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin *is* dead” (Romans 7:7-8).

It is interesting that in Romans 7:7-8ff, the sin of covetousness is the one referenced as resulting in this person’s spiritual downfall. The Orthodox Jewish *ArtScroll Chumash* commentary offers the unique observation, “one who covets...demonstrates a lack of faith in God. It is surely the proper province of the Torah to command that one develop...absolute faith.”²⁸ It also notes that “this last commandment” of the Ten Commandments “is one that only a Divine Lawgiver could have decreed. A mortal ruler can legislate against such acts as murder and theft, but only God can demand that people sanctify their thoughts and attitudes to the point where they purge themselves of such natural tendencies as jealousy and covetousness.”²⁹ Mentioning the Tenth Commandment (Exodus 20:17; Deuteronomy 5:21) is important, because overcoming the urge to covet is surely one of the reasons why we all need the Lord, and why we all require His salvation!³⁰

When sin or violation of God’s commandments gets the better of someone, the result will be death: “I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died; and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me” (Romans 7:9-11). Just like when Adam and Eve were ejected from the Garden of Eden after eating the forbidden fruit, so do sinners exist in a condition of exile from their Creator. The Torah does not cause people to be separated from God; disobedience to the Torah that remains unforgiven and unresolved causes people to be separated from God. In such a schema, the Torah is the means by which sinners *know they are sinners*, and they can turn to the Lord for help. For when the sinner finally finds and experiences redemption, he or she can then confidently say, “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Messiah Yeshua” (Romans 8:1)!

Throughout his epistles, the Apostle Paul emphasizes the need for born again Believers to be most fair-minded in approaching the Torah. He is quite clear that any observance of commandments or human works or various works based on interpretations of commandments, will not result in salvation and a right standing before the Lord. The emphasis of the Pauline Epistles is often that the need for salvation is shown through the Torah, per the example of the person described in Romans 7, and that freedom from its condemnation and penalties are available to those who desire it (Romans 7:2b, 4). (In our analysis of Chapter 6, given the fact that most of the verses we will address are from Paul’s letters, we will demonstrate how he was not at all anti-Law.)

²⁸ Scherman, *Chumash*, 413.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Note that if Paul is not speaking about himself in Romans 7, and instead a hypothetical “I” sinner, that this is supportable by the fact that the main sin which finally condemned Paul as guilty before God was trying to eliminate the early Messianic Believers via murder (Acts 9:4; Galatians 1:13; 1 Corinthians 15:9), whereas covetousness as a rather general sin is mentioned here.

The challenge is that in much of modern Christianity, it is thought that since people are going to instinctively disobey the Law anyway, and that Jesus provides final atonement, it might not be that useful to really expel the effort to try to keep anything beyond the commands to love God and neighbor, and basic things like prohibitions against murder or stealing or adultery.

Simply because people are likely to falter from time to time, is it really God's will for His people today that they should be largely ignorant of His commandments, widely ignoring them and not really trying to keep them? What does this say about growing and maturing in one's walk of faith and knowledge of the Lord? Are we not to be striving toward excellence? Are we not to understand what our Creator has to tell us about proper business practices, or *specific* sexual conduct between a husband and wife?

If obeying God's commandments and demonstrating proper works are excluded from the equation of what it means to be a "good Christian" today, it is no surprise why many really do struggle with James' observation about Abraham: "faith was working with his works" (James 2:22) or "faith was active along with his works" (RSV).³¹ This details the operation that faith and works are to demonstrate together. The example that we see in Romans 7 is to be a rather common phenomenon witnessed when sinners come to faith, and are released from the Torah's penalties once they find salvation. It is most expected of redeemed and forgiven persons to walk in and obey God's Instruction, as they are filled with His Spirit (Romans 7:6b; 8:4), *not cast it off*.

"In God's eyes, even our righteousness is called filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6)."

No one can disagree with the pastor when he claims that human righteousness in and of itself *without the presence of a holy God* may be compared to "filthy rags." The Prophet Isaiah most unfortunately observed in his generation, "For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; and all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away" (Isaiah 64:6). The "polluted garment" (RSV) or "filthy rag" (NJPS) being spoken of here is a *beged idah* (בגד עדים), and can specifically relate to either the garments of a leper (Leviticus 13:44-46; Haggai 2:13-14), and/or the menstruation garments of a woman. In today's vernacular, it might very well be that our instinctive human "righteousness" is likened unto used tampons, dirty diapers, or some other biohazardous material. Without the Lord's presence in our lives, *our own righteousness is pretty revolting* or just flat "crappy."

No matter how hard an individual may try in his or her strength to keep God's commandments, a person will inevitably break something, knowingly or unknowingly—even if he or she is a Believer. **We all commit unintentional sin.** Because of this reality, redeemed Believers are to be in constant remembrance that Yeshua came and paid the penalty for the sins specified in the Torah that were demanding of capital punishment in our stead (Colossians 2:14). He absorbed the penalty that was destined for us **upon Himself**. While redeemed Believers have all cried out in repentance to the Lord confessing sins that they deserve punishment for, knowing that we are likely to at least commit errors of unwillful omission should cause us **to never take our salvation for granted**. Our mortal limitations *should always drive us back to Yeshua (Jesus)!*

Once we have partaken of the salvation experience, we are to never make it a habit to disobey God's commandments. Yeshua admonished the woman who was about to be stoned, "Go your way, and from now on do not sin again" (John 8:11, NRSV). He admonished the woman to no longer disobey the Torah. However, among too many of today's Christians, how many new Believers are trained in the basic essentials of what God's commandments are? How many have a shoddy foundation in the teachings of Christ, precisely because what He instructs is widely rooted in and built upon Moses' Teaching?

Once we are forgiven of our sins, are we then to go out and violate God's very commandments that condemned us as sinners? Is it really true that the standard of God which condemned us does not matter for those forgiven? Should the criminal who has been caught guilty of a crime, yet who is shown mercy and leniency from a judge, make it his habit to break the law again?

³¹ Grk. *hē pistis sunērgei tois ergois autou* (ἡ πίστις συνήργει τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτοῦ).

As born again Believers, because the Holy Spirit has indwelt us, we can be Spirit-led in keeping God's commandments that are intended to keep us within appropriate, permissible limits. Obeying the Torah is not a burden, but rather as we are continually conformed to the image of the Messiah (Romans 8:29), we are to follow His example of obedience to the Law. Remember that Yeshua the Messiah said, "My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:30). The *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period* indicates that the phraseology "yoke" is "a metaphor for submission to God's sovereignty through obedience to, and study of the Torah...The yoke imagery recurs in Matthew 11:28-30, where Jesus speaks as the voice of wisdom...Comparison...does not indicate that Jesus' invitation implies a contrast between his commands and the Torah construed as a burden."³² Indeed, when Yeshua is talking about His "yoke," He is talking about how He lived forth the Torah in His ministry, and how His disciples are to follow His example, teaching its importance to others (Matthew 28:19-21).

We are called to grow and mature in our walk of faith, and obedience to God's Torah comes as we move forward in our relationship with Him, studying the Scriptures and committing ourselves to greater compliance with the Word. We are all called to "abide in Him." Yeshua Himself says, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you" (John 15:7). Far from obedience to God becoming something stale and stagnant, abiding in Yeshua is to enable those who are born again to truly understand God's great love for us (John 15:9-10).

"Second, it points to the Savior. 'Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith' (Galatians 3:24). The Law not only points out the problem, but also the solution. It is our tutor (teacher) to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith, not by keeping the Law."

The pastor references Galatians 3:24, where the Apostle Paul tells us "Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us* to Messiah, so that we may be justified by faith."³³ The Law of Moses is to truly reveal our need for a Savior and full redemption, because of the precise reason that it not only contains predictions of His arrival onto the stage of history (John 1:45; 5:46), but most especially because our human inability to keep the Torah is to innately take us to the Messiah! Without Yeshua in our lives, all the Torah can really be is a strict "schoolmaster" (KJV) or "disciplinarian" (NRSV).³⁴ Realizing that we cannot live our lives always being guilty and feeling condemned by the Torah's penalties, people are to turn to the good news of the Messiah who came and died for them, being forgiven and redeemed by trust in Him.

Nowhere have balanced Messianic Believers such as myself **ever said or implied that observing commandments will bring salvation**. Our works or human actions cannot save us. The Apostle Paul makes it clear in Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." Yet, simply because salvation cannot be attained by obedience to God's commandments, it does not mean that they are to be ignored and disregarded. On the contrary, the Torah defines how His people are to be holy and set-apart unto Him. The problem of antinomianism, a total disregard of God's Law, as E.F. Harrison points out, is that "What results is more interest in freedom to live as one chooses than to cultivate a holy life...[I]t remains a snare to believers who are content to come to terms with sin in their own lives and remain unwilling to seek a way of deliverance" (*ISBE*).³⁵

One of the main reasons why people such as myself are convinced of the importance of the Messianic movement—aside from seeing Jewish people brought to faith in Yeshua, and evangelical Christians exposed to their Hebraic and Jewish Roots—is precisely because of its grand potential to recapture a fully Biblical understanding of holiness. This includes not only expressing faith in the completed work of Yeshua the

³² "yoke," in Jacob Neusner and William Scott Green, eds., *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 684.

³³ Note how many Bible versions, unlike the NASU used here, render the clause *eis Christon* (εἰς Χριστόν) as either "until Christ came" (RSV, ESV) or "until Christ" (HCSB). This is examined in the more detailed remarks on Galatians 3:24 in Chapter 6.

³⁴ Grk. *paidagōgos* (παιδαγωγός).

³⁵ E.F. Harrison, "Holiness," in *ISBE*, 2:728.

Messiah (Jesus Christ) in atonement for sins, but also in living forth the expected obedience to God's commandments found in His Torah.

“Jesus paid for all the sins of the world (1 John 2:2; 1 Peter 2:24), the very sins that the Law pointed out. The only way to receive forgiveness from sins is by receiving Jesus Christ into our lives because there is salvation in no one else (Acts 4:12).”

No one who claims faith in the Messiah, and who has truly partaken of the transforming power of the good news, can at all deny that what the pastor says here is true! As his referenced verses attest, Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) has come and has freed all redeemed persons from the power of sin and lawlessness, which would have resulted in eternal damnation:

- “[A]nd He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of the whole world*” (1 John 2:2).
- “[A]nd He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed” (1 Peter 2:24; cf. Isaiah 53:5).

If we have received Yeshua into our lives, then we should each have the confidence that we have been released from the fear of eternal separation from the Lord in the Lake of Fire. Because we have experienced such a degree of release from the power of sin, we surely **do not** have the liberty to disobey the very Law of God, which originally condemned us as sinners. On the contrary, Messiah followers are to expel the considerable effort, empowered *and* molded by the Holy Spirit, to obey the Lord and follow Him all the more!

The problem with many people today in contemporary Christianity, because too many do not often have a strong foundation in the Torah of Moses, is that not enough really understand why the Messiah had to come and die for them. The Messiah had to come to redeem all people from the penalty pronounced upon sinners in the Torah, because Paul astutely says Galatians 3:13, “Messiah redeemed us from the curse of the Law.” This is compounded by the misunderstanding among many in modern Christianity *who may actually teach*—but most falsely—that Yeshua came to abolish the Law of Moses or the Torah in order to be the Messiah. They do not realize that this is historical Judaism’s primary reason for rejecting Jesus as the Messiah.³⁶

Freedom in the Holy Scriptures is not at all being granted the ability for people to do whatever they want to do, which can be the false assumption that some have. The freedom to do whatever you want is licentiousness, which Jude, the brother of Yeshua, staunchly warns about: “For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Yeshua the Messiah” (Jude 4). Freedom for those who live in Messiah is having the assurance that you will not be subject to the penalties or condemnation of sin **because you have redemption in Him**, and you are living the life of service that God expects! The Psalmist actually does decree, “So I will keep Your law continually, forever and ever. And I will walk at liberty [in freedom, NIV],³⁷ for I seek Your precepts” (Psalm 119:44-45).

Do you honestly think that God took the Ancient Israelites out of their slavery in Egypt, demonstrated His might and power to them, and delivered them through the Red Sea—only to then put them in *slavish bondage* to the Law at Mount Sinai? The giving of the Torah was to make Israel a holy and blessed people. The Torah was given to Ancient Israel to make them a free and liberated people, so they could be a light of change in the world (Deuteronomy 4:5-8). Keeping the Torah, especially through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, brings liberation to one’s life and walk of faith, *not bondage*. Following the pattern of Israel in the Exodus, once we are each redeemed of our sins by the blood of the Lamb, we are to be brought to God’s mountain, instructed by His commandments, and then empowered for His mission in the world.³⁸

³⁶ For an analysis of this and related issues, consult the author’s article “Answering the ‘Frequently Avoided Questions’ About the Messiahship of Yeshua” (appearing in *Confronting Critical Issues*).

³⁷ Heb. *b’rechavah* (בְּרֵחָבָה).

³⁸ Consult the author’s article “The Message of Exodus,” appearing in the *Messianic Spring Holiday Helper*.

The pastor is right to emphasize the great words of the Apostle Peter in Acts 4:12: “there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.” The only name, *shem* (שֵׁם) or *onoma* (ὄνομα)—that being the authority or repute³⁹ by which salvation can be attained—is Yeshua the Messiah (*Yeshua HaMashiach*, יֵשׁוּעַ הַמָּשִׁיחַ) or Jesus Christ (*Iēsous Christos*, Ἰησοῦς Χριστός).⁴⁰ **This has never been in dispute.** But what is in dispute, which is what we are precisely examining in *The New Testament Validates Torah*, is how we are to emulate our Messiah and the example that He gave us during His ministry and in His teachings. How are we to properly realize that He is our Lord and Savior, but that He is *also* our Rabbi? This will be a cause of much discussion and debate in the coming years and decades as the Messianic movement grows, and the Holy Spirit quickens and convicts more and more Believers about the validity and relevance of the Torah for holy living in Him. Hopefully, a publication such as this will be a reasonable voice to such a debate, and keep it focused on the relevant issues and Bible verses in a constructive manner.

³⁹ Cf. Walter C. Kaiser, “שֵׁם,” in *TWOT*, 2:934-935; H. Bietenhard, “ὄνομα,” in *TDNT*, pp 694-700.

⁴⁰ The claim that is sometimes made in the Messianic community, that the name Jesus is pagan and derived from the name Zeus, is without linguistic support. *Iēsous* (Ἰησοῦς) and *Zeus* (Ζεὺς) have two totally different Greek spellings and different pronunciations. Likewise, if the Greek name *Iēsous* were of pagan origin, and not a Jewish transliteration of the Hebrew name *Yeshua* (יֵשׁוּעַ) to be employed among Greek speakers, then it would not have been used for the title of the Book of Joshua (appearing as ἸΗΣΟΥΣ) in the Septuagint.

For more information and detail, consult the author’s article “Sacred Name Concerns” (appearing in *Introduction to Things Messianic*).