

## Ephesians 2:14-15

**Pastor:** Ephesians 2:14-15: The Law was abolished in the flesh of Christ.

**“For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into one* and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances*, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus establishing peace.*”**

**2:14-15** These are unquestionably some of the most difficult verses in the entire Bible for Messianic Believers to understand, especially as a surface reading in most English translations would seem to indicate that the Apostle Paul considered the Law of Moses to have been abolished.<sup>1</sup> It is commonly argued that it was the Torah which caused unnecessary separation between Israel and the nations, and thus with the sacrifice of the Messiah it has been rendered inoperative for the new entity known as the Church. Of course, difficulty does arise as the Messiah Himself said that He came to fulfill the Torah and not abolish it (Matthew 5:17-19), and so the able Messianic interpreter must carefully dissect not only the text, but also varied interpretations of Ephesians 2:14-15.

It must first be noted that those who deny genuine Pauline authorship of Ephesians often suggest that Ephesians 2:14-15 could have only had significant force in a post-70 C.E. context following Jerusalem’s destruction. The author does make an appeal to Believers being the Temple of God (Ephesians 2:21), with the Jerusalem Temple surely in view as a point of reference. But if the “dividing wall” being abolished has the Temple in view, what was most important for the First Century faith community was not recognizing some destruction of Jerusalem, but instead recognizing that what such a barrier represented had been removed by the sacrifice of Yeshua. This would then force them to inaugurate such a change within their midst: the First Century Messianic movement. This concurs not unlike with what the author of Hebrews envisioned in the change of priesthoods from that of Levi to Melchizedek, inaugurated via the sacrifice and exaltation of Yeshua, but would have been sealed with the impending destruction of the Temple in future view.

The point in Ephesians 2:14-15 that the work of Yeshua on behalf of humanity has initiated a significant change is clear; the question we have to consider is what this change specifically is. Perhaps this is why Ephesians 2:14 opens with the declaration “For He Himself is our peace,” stating the result before stating the cause. Many have thought that the before mentioned Isaiah 57:19 is in view, along with other various Tanach passages (i.e., Isaiah 9:6; 53:5; Micah 5:5; Haggai 2:9; Zechariah 9:10) as Yeshua the Messiah is the *sar-shalom* (שָׂרֵי-שָׁלוֹם) or Prince of Peace. Via His atoning work for the world, Yeshua has inaugurated an era where true peace (Heb. *shalom*, שָׁלוֹם; Grk. *eirēnē*, εἰρήνη) can be experienced among God’s people. This is a peace that includes “unimpaired relationships with others and fulfillment in one’s undertakings” (*TWOT*),<sup>2</sup> going well beyond simple absence of war and would include total harmony between God, humankind, and ultimately all of Creation.

It is interesting that theologians such as Andrew T. Lincoln consider the author to have an Old Testament prophetic scene in view, as he remarks “It is possible that for a Jew such a notion would recall the vision of eschatological peace which would prevail when the Gentiles joined Israel in worship in the temple in Zion, a vision found in Isa 2:2-4 and Micah 4:1-4.”<sup>3</sup> Such prophecies include the ever-important word, “For the law will go forth from Zion and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:3; cf. Micah 4:2),<sup>4</sup> and so Lincoln must quickly state “there is no conscious effort to invoke such prophecies here,”<sup>5</sup> as he and many others believe that the abolition of the Torah is the issue (which would hence negate these prophecies). But in all honesty, if the Messiah offers great peace via His sacrificial death—surely envisioned by expectations such as

<sup>1</sup> This entry has been adapted from the commentary *Ephesians for the Practical Messianic*.

<sup>2</sup> G. Lloyd Carr, “shālôm,” in *TWOT*, 1:931.

<sup>3</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 140.

<sup>4</sup> Consult the author’s exegetical paper on these passages, “The Torah Will Go Forth From Zion,” appearing in the *Messianic Torah Helper*.

<sup>5</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 140.

“Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they train for war” (Micah 4:3)—can these prophecies really be left out of the equation?

2:14 The time of peace that has begun via the work of Yeshua has come because He “has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility” (Ephesians 2:14, RSV). The “two” (NIV) He has made into one are obviously Paul’s own Jewish people and the nations, both of whom are offered redemption via His atonement for humanity at large. The peace that such an atonement brings to these two groups, sometimes very diverse groups, has been brought about by the breaking down of the dividing wall or *to mesotoichon* (τὸ μεσότοιχον). This dividing wall cannot be likened to just any wall, as it was one that specifically kept the Jewish people, divided from the nations at large.

Many Christian interpreters rightly associate this wall with the barrier that existed in the First Century Jerusalem Temple complex, dividing the inner court of the sanctuary from the Court of the Gentiles—but many others do not. And even if *to mesotoichon* is rightly identified as this barrier wall, the question of whether or not this was a Torah-inspired wall must be asked. Embracing a relatively negative view of the Torah, D.G. Reid asserts that *to mesotoichon* “was a Torah-inspired spatial representation of the distinction between Israel and the nations. Yahweh dwelt on Zion, with Israel encircling his dwelling and protected by walls from the nations.”<sup>6</sup> Yet, Reid offers no Tanach passages to substantiate this view, as though it was the Lord’s original intent from Mount Sinai for Israel to be so separated from the nations that they should actually erect barriers to keep others out, and hence unable to partake of His goodness and mercy.

When one views the Torah itself as a barrier wall that keeps people away from God, quickly the Torah’s standard of holiness and righteousness can be disregarded as though it has no more relevance for daily living. And, one should certainly be aware of the many problems caused by such a view. Old Testament theologian Walter C. Kaiser summarizes what has happened in recent days:

“The current evangelical generation has been raised almost devoid of any teaching on the place and use of the law in the life of the believer. This has resulted in a full (or perhaps semi-) antinomian approach to life. Is it any wonder that the unbelieving society around us is so lawless, if those who should have been salt and light to that same society were themselves not always sure what it was that they should be doing?”<sup>7</sup>

Reflecting his Messianic Jewish perspective on Ephesians 2:14, David H. Stern renders *to mesotoichon* with Yeshua having “broken down the *m’chitzah* which divided us” (CJB/CJSB). He compares the barrier wall to a *mechitzah* (מִחְצֵיטָה), a “division” (*Jastrow*)<sup>8</sup> which is most widely used today in the Orthodox Synagogue to divide men from women, and is present today at the Western Wall in Jerusalem. In a similar way, “the middle wall of partition” (KJV) had to have been something that kept people divided, and that skewed the original intentions of God calling out Israel as a special nation unto Him, with citizenship in Israel’s Commonwealth now fully accessible (Ephesians 2:12-13). By Yeshua’s sacrifice, those original intentions have now been brought back into the forefront of what the Father intends to do through the *ekklēsia*.

2:15a As we consider what Ephesians 2:15 means, we need to be very careful as Messianic Believers that we not harbor any negative feelings toward our Christian brethren. It is not insignificant to note that Christian interpreters *are divided* over what Yeshua’s work has specifically abolished or removed. Christopher J.H. Wright reminds us what the actual issue in view is: “to remove the barrier of enmity and alienation between Jew and Gentile, and by implication all forms of enmity and alienation...The cross is the place of reconciliation, to God and one another.”<sup>9</sup> The first third of Ephesians 2:15 states the work that Yeshua has accomplished via His sacrifice: “by abolishing in His flesh the enmity” (NASU). What He has abolished is *tēn echthran* (τὴν ἐχθρᾶν)

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<sup>6</sup> D.G. Reid, “Triumph,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 951.

<sup>7</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, “Response to Willem A. VanGemeren,” in Wayne G. Strickland, ed., *Five Views on Law and Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 75.

<sup>8</sup> Marcus Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature* (New York: Judaica Treasury, 2004), 760.

<sup>9</sup> Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 313.

or “the hostility” (NRSV). The verb *katargeō* (καταργέω) means “to make of none effect” (LS),<sup>10</sup> meaning that such a hostility has now been rendered inoperative.

**2:15b** The difficult section for Messianics to deal with obviously comes in the second third of Ephesians 2:15, where the cause of the hostility is stated. The NASU renders this as “the Law of commandments *contained* in ordinances,” which among mainline versions is probably the most literal that you will be able to find. Before we jump to the immediate conclusion that all Christian interpreters everywhere have viewed this as *all* of the Torah, there are in fact several distinct options put forward:

1. This “law” is the totality of the Torah of Moses.
2. This “law” composes the ceremonial commandments of the Torah, particularly in relation to the regulations of clean and unclean. Or, it composes the death penalty for high crimes in the Torah (cf. Colossians 2:14). This “law” does not compose the moral or ethical commandments of the Torah.
3. This “law” is a reference to what caused the dividing wall seen in the Jerusalem Temple (Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* 15.417; *Wars of the Jews* 5.194), derived from various inappropriate interpretations of Torah commandments. This would constitute “law,” but not law of Mosaic origin (cf. Mark 7:6-7).

While the first view is one which looks unfavorably upon the Torah, the second and third views tend to look favorably upon the Torah to an extent. The second view is generally adhered to among Christian Old Testament theologians, who still have a highly favorable view of the Torah’s moral and ethical commandments, and the Ten Commandments especially, which are to *always* be followed by God’s people in any generation. The third view concurs with the imagery of the Temple of God (Ephesians 2:21) that Paul considers the Body of Messiah to be, with the Jerusalem Temple as a point of comparison.

Peter T. O’Brien readily reminds the reader, “These words [in this verse]...are some of the most difficult to interpret in this tightly packed and theologically significant paragraph,”<sup>11</sup> requiring any person to read very carefully and not draw any hasty conclusions. One can see a variety of translations for Ephesians 2:15b, some of which reflect some interpretations as to what “law” Paul is making reference:

EPHESIANS 2:15B GREEK	EPHESIANS 2:15B VARIED ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS
<p>τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν</p> <p><b><i>ton nomon tōn entolōn en dogmasin</i></b></p>	<p>the law with its commandments and regulations (NIV)</p> <p>the law of commandments and regulations (WBC)<sup>12</sup></p> <p>the law of commandments expressed in ordinances (ESV)</p> <p>he annulled the law with its rules and regulations (REB)</p> <p>By his death he ended the whole system of Jewish law that excluded the Gentiles (NLT)</p>

<sup>10</sup> LS, 413.

<sup>11</sup> O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 196.

<sup>12</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 123.

Wood notes that *ton nomon tōn entolōn en dogmasin* (τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν) is literally “the law of commandments in decrees.”<sup>13</sup>

The singular *entolē* (ἐντολή) means “**a mandate or ordinance, command,**” and can be used “of commandments of OT law” (BDAG),<sup>14</sup> even though this is not a strict necessity. In a secular sense *entolē* was used “as the command of a king or official” or “as the instruction of a teacher” (TDNT).<sup>15</sup>

What *dogma* (δόγμα) pertains to is slightly more complex, as it can be both “**a formal statement concerning rules or regulations that are to be observed**” and “**something that is taught as an established tenet or statement of belief, doctrine, dogma**” (BDAG).<sup>16</sup> *Dogma* is not used at all in the Septuagint translation of the Pentateuchal books to describe any category of Torah commandments. It principally appears in the Book of Daniel to describe the decrees of the Babylonians and the Persians (Daniel 2:13; 3:10, 12; 4:6; 6:9ff, 13f, 16, 27; cf. Acts 17:7), as it can certainly be referring to “an imperial declaration” (BDAG).<sup>17</sup> Wayne E. Ward further indicates, in *Baker’s Dictionary of Theology*:

“[T]he word designates a tenet of doctrine authoritatively pronounced. In the LXX *dogma* appears in Esth. 3:9; Dan. 2:13 and 6:8 for a decree issued by the king. In Luke 2:1 it is the decree of Caesar Augustus, in Acts 16:4 the decrees laid down by the apostles, in Col. 2:14 and Eph. 2:15 the judgments of the law against sinners, which Jesus triumphed over in the cross.”<sup>18</sup>

In the Apocrypha an apostate Jew is said to leave all of *tōn patriōn dogmatōn* (τῶν πατριῶν δογμάτων) or “the ancestral traditions” (3 Maccabees 1:3), and a brother who is martyred testifies to have been raised on *dogmasin* or various “teachings” (4 Maccabees 10:2), neither of which has to be the Torah/Pentateuch proper. Given these examples, you should see some interpretational possibilities open to us as Messianic Believers, especially per Yeshua’s word that He came to *not* abolish the Law of Moses (Matthew 5:17-19; Luke 16:17).

Stern’s rendering in his Complete Jewish Bible as “the enmity occasioned by the *Torah*, with its commands set forth in the form of ordinances,” reflects his interpretation that the Torah can actually cause problems, when this is clearly not the testimony of the Psalmist who says, “Those who love Your law have great peace, and nothing causes them to stumble” (Psalm 119:165). Following the Torah as the Lord originally intended does not cause problems. Likewise, the Salkinson-Ginsburg rendering of *v’et-mitzvot ha’chukim b’Torah* (וְאֵת־מִצְוֹת־הַחֻקִּים בַּתּוֹרָה), “and commandments, statutes, in [the] Torah,” for the Greek *ton nomon tōn entolōn en dogmasin*, is also problematic.

A review of common interpretations of Ephesians 2:15b is in order:

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<sup>13</sup> A. Skevington Wood, “Ephesians,” in Frank E. Gaebelin, ed. et. al., *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 11:3-92., 11:40; cf. Witherington, *Philemon-Colossians-Ephesians*, 251.

<sup>14</sup> BDAG, 340.

<sup>15</sup> G. Schrenk, “to command, commission,” in TDNT, 235.

<sup>16</sup> BDAG, 254.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Wayne E. Ward, “dogma,” in Everett F. Harrison, ed., *Baker’s Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960), 171.

EPHESIANS 2:15b AND VIEWS OF THE TORAH OF MOSES	
POSITIVE TOWARD THE TORAH OF MOSES	NEGATIVE TOWARD THE TORAH OF MOSES
<p>the law with its detailed ordinances of ceremonies and regulations about the clean and the unclean had the effect of imposing a barrier and of causing enmity between Jews and Gentiles....The moral demands of the law and principles of the law were not lightened by Jesus, but made fuller and more far-reaching (Mt. v. 21-48).<sup>19</sup> Francis Foulkes</p>	<p>the Mosaic law and its scribal interpretation...prevented the Gentiles from having access to God because of Judaism's particularism....Jesus as Israel's Messiah abolishes the law by fulfilling it...<sup>20</sup> R.P. Martin</p>
<p>This traditional barrier was both religious and chronological...it consisted of the Jewish law, more particularly of those features of it which marked Jews off from Gentiles—circumcision and the food restrictions, for example.<sup>21</sup> F.F. Bruce</p>	<p>...the power of the Jewish law, with its divisive and hostility-producing <b>commandments and ordinances</b>, has been decisively broken...<sup>22</sup> Victor Paul Furnish</p>
	<p>...[this] would appear to include the totality of the law as construed as a moral burden...<sup>23</sup> A. Skevington Wood</p>
	<p>Some have thought it refers to the wall in the Jerusalem temple that separated the Court of the Gentiles from the Court of the Jews. But this view is invalid because Paul makes no reference to the temple in Jerusalem....the spiritual enmity between Jews and Gentiles, which separated them...Christ destroyed....Jews and Gentiles were enemies because the former sought to keep the Law...whereas Gentiles were unconcerned.<sup>25</sup> Harold W. Hoehner</p>

<sup>19</sup> Francis Foulkes, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians* (London: Tyndale Press, 1963), 82.

<sup>20</sup> Martin, in *NBCR*, 1111.

<sup>21</sup> Bruce, *Colossians-Philemon-Ephesians*, 296.

<sup>22</sup> Victor Paul Furnish, "The Letter of Paul to the Ephesians," in Charles M. Laymon, ed., *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971), pp 834-844., 839.

<sup>23</sup> Wood, in *EXP*, 11:40.

<sup>25</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, "Ephesians," in John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, eds., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), pp 613-645., pp 626-627.

<p>The 'barrier' or 'dividing wall' might allude to the wall that separated the court of the Gentiles from the inner courts of the temple, which were to be entered only by Jews. It prevented Gentiles from going further and warned them that they took their lives into their own hands if they did...Christ did not abolish the moral law by rendering it no longer relevant. If Paul were claiming that, he would be contradicting Christ's own teaching. But on the cross Christ did nullify the condemnation this law brings us under when we break it, by removing the penalty of our disobedience from us and bearing it himself. He nullified the ceremonial law, abolishing its regulations through fulfilling it in himself, thus making them an anachronism. Because he did so, these laws can no longer exercise their divisive powers.<sup>24</sup> Derek Tidball</p>	
<p>Since Mt 5:17 and Ro 3:31 teach that God's moral standard expressed in the OT law is not changed by the coming of Christ, what is abolished here is probably the effect of the specific "commandments and regulations" in separating Jews from Gentiles, whose nonobservance of the Jewish law renders them ritually unclean...<sup>26</sup> <i>NIV Study Bible</i></p>	<p>The divisiveness was produced by the law as such, by the very fact that Israel possessed the Torah, and so in order to remove the divisiveness Christ has to deal with its cause—the law itself...In his death Christ abolished the law...and terminated the old order dominated by that law, which had prevented the Gentiles from having access to salvation.<sup>27</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln</p>
	<p>Despite the attractiveness of the suggestion that this refers to the wall around the Court of Israel in the Jerusalem Temple...it should probably be rejected. Paul is not discussing a particular sign or wall, but that which separated Jew and Gentile, and that is surely the Mosaic Law...It was the Torah as a whole that separated Jews from Gentiles.<sup>28</sup> Ben Witherington III</p>

The number of negative views of the Torah compared to positive views should be rather disturbing. On the whole, at least within evangelical Christian theology today, one often finds Old Testament and New Testament theologian-specialists as being divided on Ephesians 2:15b and what is being represented. A significant number of New Testament theologian-specialists consider the Torah of Moses as a whole to now be abolished by the work of Yeshua. It is asserted that the Torah separated the Jewish people from the nations, and now with the arrival of the Messiah, that this barrier had to be removed. It is, in fact, actually claimed that the Torah stood in the way of the nations receiving God's salvation. Old Testament theologians in general, in

<sup>24</sup> Derek Tidball, *The Message of the Cross* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 228.

<sup>26</sup> *NIV Study Bible*, 1833.

<sup>27</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 142.

<sup>28</sup> Witherington, *Philemon-Colossians-Ephesians*, pp 259, 260.

contrast to this, tend to see Ephesians 2:15b as rendering inoperative the ceremonial commandments of the Torah, particularly those in relation to clean and unclean. They do not by any means see the Torah as a whole being abolished by Yeshua.

This latter interpretation—of Yeshua *only* abolishing the ceremonial law—has actually been a mainstay of Reformed theology for many centuries. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1643-1647), forming the basis of doctrine for a substantial number of Reformed churches, actually gives a great deal of high praise for the Torah:

God gave to Adam a law, as a covenant of works, by which He bound him and all his posterity to personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience; promised life upon the fulfilling, and threatened death upon the breach of it; and endued him with power and ability to keep it.

This law, after his fall, continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness; and, as such, was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai, in ten commandments, and written in two tables; the first four commandments containing our duty towards God; and the other six, our duty to man.

Besides this law, commonly called moral, God was pleased to give to the people of Israel, as a church under age, ceremonial laws, containing several typical ordinances; partly of worship, prefiguring Christ, His graces, actions, sufferings, and benefits; and partly of divers instructions of moral duties. All which ceremonial laws are now abrogated under the new testament.

To them also, as a body politic, He gave sundry judicial laws, which expired together with the state of that people, not obliging any other now, further than the general equity thereof may require.

The moral law doth for ever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof; and that, not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God, the Creator, who gave it. Neither doth Christ, in the Gospel, any way dissolve, but much strengthen this obligation (19:1-5).<sup>29</sup>

While first expounded upon in the Westminster Confession, the view of Ephesians 2:15b *only* abolishing the ceremonial laws of the Torah has been the historic view of a great deal of Protestantism at least up until the Nineteenth Century. Many of our Christian forbearers recognized Yeshua's clear word "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets" (Matthew 5:17) as surely meaning that God's Law in the Old Testament had *much* valid instruction for them to keep in order to live righteously. John Wesley considered the cause of enmity in Ephesians 2:14-15 to be "*the law of ceremonial commandments*,"<sup>30</sup> and not to be a wholesale annulment of the Pentateuch. This view of Ephesians 2:15b essentially considers things like circumcision or the kosher dietary laws to be those things that separated Israel from the nations, as opposed to its moral and ethical code.<sup>31</sup> Yet, with the rise of dispensationalism and higher criticism in the 1800s, many theologians began adopting the view that *none of the Torah*—including the Ten Commandments—was to be followed by God's people today (especially if the Torah came about not by Divine origins, but the editing together of the so-called JEDP sources subsequent to the Babylonian exile.)<sup>32</sup>

There are many interpreters who do continue to hold to the view that only "ceremonial law" was rendered inoperative via Yeshua's sacrifice. Kaiser is one who holds to this view, noting in his book *Toward Old Testament Ethics*, "Had the law in its entirety been intended in this 'abolishment,' Ephesians 6:2 would be somewhat of an embarrassment: 'Honor your father and mother.'"<sup>33</sup> It would be absolutely ridiculous for Paul to consider that the Torah as a whole has been abolished, especially if he later must appeal to its instruction in the same letter! Christian interpreters who have a high view of the Torah do rightly point out that Ephesians

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<sup>29</sup> [BibleWorks 7.0: Westminster Standards](#). MS Windows XP. Norfolk: BibleWorks, LLC, 2006. CD-ROM.

<sup>30</sup> John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, reprint (Peterborough, UK: Epworth Press, 2000), 709.

<sup>31</sup> The relevance of these instructions for Believers today is addressed in the author's book *Torah In the Balance, Volume II*.

<sup>32</sup> Consult the author's entries for the Pentateuchal books (Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, Deuteronomy) in *A Survey of the Tanach for the Practical Messianic*, for both a conservative and Messianic view of the JEDP documentary hypothesis.

Also consult the resources R.K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969) and Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), as well as Walter C. Kaiser, *The Old Testament Documents: Are They Reliable & Relevant?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001).

<sup>33</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, *Toward Old Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 310.

2:15 has to be balanced in view of Matthew 5:17 and Romans 3:31. They are also keen to point out that removing the Tanach or Old Testament from a modern Christian's regimen of discipleship has had disastrous moral consequences, being right to assert that things like the Ten Commandments were to keep Ancient Israel rightfully separated from the pagan nations around them.

While we as Messianics may not entirely agree with the classification of Torah *mitzvot* as "moral" or "ceremonial"—as the Torah's own division of the commandments appears to be more organic on the basis of one's status as male, female, a child, a priest, a farmer, a businessperson, married, unmarried, etc.<sup>34</sup>—**we can certainly take comfort in knowing that there are many Christians who appeal to the Torah's commandments regarding morality, who are absolutely appalled at the state of today's Church which has largely ignored them.** Kaiser responds to a fellow theologian who believes that all of the Law has been abolished, summarizing much of the dilemma:

"Ultimately, [this teacher] is bound only by what is clearly repeated in New Testament teaching. What advice will he give on marriage to close relatives (cf. Lev. 18), involvement with forms of witchcraft and various forms of the occult (cf. Lev. 19), the case for capital punishment (cf. Gen. 9), or the proscription against abortion (cf. Ex. 21)? Did Americans not learn in 1973 that a New Testament exclusivistic ethic landed us squarely in one of the largest legalized murdering ventures in recent times—now exceeding Hitler's six million Jews sent up a chimney by four times over with some twenty-four million babies going in a bucket? What will it take to wake us up to the narrowness of our views?"<sup>35</sup>

Evangelical Christians who desire to return to an ethical foundation in the Old Testament could very well make up the next wave of new Messianics in the near future, as they turn to the Tanach and are convicted by the Holy Spirit that *even more of it* is relevant instruction for Believers today. Let us as Messianic Believers pray to this end!

Even though I personally rejoice in the comments of Christians who see great relevance and importance in the moral commandments of God's Torah, we are justified to ask whether or not the so-called "ceremonial law" of the Torah is being referred to in Ephesians 2:15b. The wall or *to mesotoichon* in v. 14 regarded a separation between Israel and the nations that Yeshua's atoning work has now removed. Was this something that the Lord originally intended when Israel was founded as a nation? Does this stark separation or "wall" find justification in the Torah?

Many lay interpreters of Ephesians 2:14-15 easily overlook, or fail to fully consider, what "the wall" actually is. Paul's later analogy of the *ekklesia* composing "a holy temple in the Lord" (Ephesians 2:21) certainly has the Jerusalem Temple in view. And, there was a barricade that was present in the Jerusalem Temple which separated the Court of the Gentiles from the inner court, the latter only being accessible to Jews and proselytes. The First Century historian Josephus testified to this:

"Thus was the first enclosure. In the midst of which, and not far from it, was the second, to be gone up to by a few steps; this was encompassed by a stone wall for a partition, with an inscription, which forbade any foreigner to go in, under pain of death" (*Antiquities of the Jews* 15.417).<sup>36</sup>

"[T]here was a partition made of stone all round, whose height was three cubits: its construction was very elegant; upon it stood pillars at equal distances from one another, declaring the law of purity, some in Greek, and some in Roman letters, that 'no foreigner should go within that sanctuary'" (*Wars of the Jews* 5.194).<sup>37</sup>

Here, we see that this dividing wall which was erected between the Court of the Gentiles and the inner court included signs that any unauthorized person passing through would be executed, presumably on sight.

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<sup>34</sup> This is perhaps more in keeping with the different divisions of Law one sees in the Mishnah: agriculture, appointed times, women, order of damages, holy things, purities.

<sup>35</sup> Kaiser, "Response to Douglas Moo," in *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, 400.

<sup>36</sup> *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*, 425.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 706.

S. Westerholm explains, “at regular intervals were placed slabs with inscriptions in Greek and Latin forbidding Gentiles, on pain of death, to go further...It has often been suggested that Eph. 2:14 (the ‘dividing wall of hostility’) contains an allusion to this barrier” (*ISBE*).<sup>38</sup> This was a barrier that separated Jews from both non-Jews and women. Francis Foulkes attests, “Christ had now *broken down* the barrier between Jews and Gentiles, of which that dividing wall in the temple was a symbol.”<sup>39</sup>

Not all commentators are agreed that Paul has the dividing wall of the Jerusalem Temple in mind. Ben Witherington III remarks, “it is doubtful that Gentile Christians in Asia would have recognized such an allusion to the partition wall of the Jerusalem Temple since it is unlikely that more than one or two had ever been to the Temple.”<sup>40</sup> Whether or not all in Paul’s audience could specifically identify this is really not the point of Ephesians 2:15. We cannot underemphasize the fact that “Paul writes this letter from prison because he has been falsely charged with taking a non-Jew inside the temple in Jerusalem” (*IVPBBC*)<sup>41</sup> as seen from Acts 21:28: “This is the man who preaches to all men everywhere against our people and the Law and this place; and besides he has even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.” Paul was falsely accused of violating the *man-made law* that was responsible for erecting the dividing wall in the Jerusalem Temple, and hence a cause of great hostility between the Jewish people of his day and the nations. F.F. Bruce indicates,

“This was indeed a material barrier keeping Jews and Gentiles apart...Whatever the readers may or may not have recognized...it should be remembered that the temple barrier in Jerusalem played an important part in the chain of events which led to Paul’s [imprisonment]...That literal ‘middle wall of partition,’ the outward and visible sign of the ancient cleavage between Jew and Gentile, could have come very readily to mind in this situation.”<sup>42</sup>

If the dividing wall in the Jerusalem Temple is what Paul has in mind as being torn down in the Messiah, it certainly begs the question whether the erection of such a wall was God’s original intention. Some say that it was a natural application of the Torah, keeping Israel separated from the nations. Yet, does the erection of *to mesotoichon* in Ephesians 2:14-15 fit well with the missional imperatives seen in the Tanach? When the Lord called Israel as a nation of priests unto Him (Exodus 19:6)—intermediaries between Him and the world—would erecting barriers to keep outsiders *out* be a part of that call? It was, after all, to be Israel’s obedience to God’s Torah that would make them wise in the eyes of the other nations (Deuteronomy 4:6), and by seeing Israel blessed other nations would flock *to inquire about Him!*

At the dedication of the First Temple, the prayer of King Solomon is that the nations would hear of the fame of Israel’s God, and stream toward the Temple and come to know Him:

“Also concerning the foreigner who is not of Your people Israel, when he comes from a far country for Your name’s sake (for they will hear of Your great name and Your mighty hand, and of Your outstretched arm); when he comes and prays toward this house, hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to You, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know Your name, to fear You, as *do* Your people Israel, and that they may know that this house which I have built is called by Your name” (1 Kings 8:41-43).

The eschatological vision of the Temple is that all nations would stream toward it, joining themselves to the Lord and serving Him:

“Also the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to Him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants, every one who keeps from profaning the sabbath and holds fast My covenant; even those I will bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and

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<sup>38</sup> S. Westerholm, “Temple,” in *ISBE*, 4:772; cf. Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), pp 22-24.

<sup>39</sup> Foulkes, 82.

<sup>40</sup> Witherington, *Philemon-Colossians-Ephesians*, 260.

<sup>41</sup> Keener, *IVPBBC*, 544.

<sup>42</sup> Bruce, *Colossians-Philemon-Ephesians*, pp 297-298.

N.T. Wright further states, “The image of the dividing wall is, pretty certainly, taken from the Jerusalem temple, with its sign warning Gentiles to come no further” (*Justification: God’s Plan & Paul’s Vision* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009], 172).

their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; for My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples” (Isaiah 56:6-7).<sup>43</sup>

Did the Torah truly bring about a hostility between Paul’s Jewish people and the nations? Did the construction of the Temple purposefully create a division between Israel and the nations? You will note that there is **no Torah commandment** regarding the construction of a dividing wall in God’s sanctuary, nor would such an ideology be supported anywhere in the Tanach. The purpose of constructing the Temple was *l’ma’an yeid’un kol-amei ha’eretz et-shemkha l’yir’ah otkha* (לְמַעַן יִדְעוּן כָּל-עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ אֶת-שִׁמְךָ לְיִרְאָה אֹתְךָ), “Thus all the peoples of the earth will know Your name and revere You” (1 Kings 8:43, NJPS). The Temple was built to be a place for God’s glory to be manifest, and for the fame of the Creator to reach beyond the people of Israel! As Isaiah says, it was to be *beit-tefilah yiqarei l’kol-ha’amim* (בֵּית-הַתְּפִלָּה יִקְרָא לְכָל-הָעַמִּים), “[a] house of prayer called for all the peoples” (Isaiah 56:6, my translation).

In the opinions that are surveyed in the previous chart regarding Ephesians 2:15b, you certainly should have noticed that several commentators try to dismiss the idea that the barrier wall in the Jerusalem Temple is what is being referred to by Paul. This is likely due to the implications that if *to mesotoichon* is such a barrier wall, then Paul could likely not be considering the Torah, or at least the Torah as a whole, in view of being abolished. Instead, he could be considering the so-called ceremonial law, or perhaps even extra-Biblical injunctions that were responsible for erecting the barrier wall and thus unnecessarily and improperly keeping people out of the Temple (and by extension God’s presence).

More than a few commentators have proposed that the wall being referred to by Paul in v. 14 is not the barrier wall in the Jerusalem Temple,<sup>44</sup> but instead the wall that is referred to in works like the *Letter of Aristeas* from the Pseudepigrapha: “In his wisdom the legislator, in a comprehensive survey of each particular part, and being endowed by God for the knowledge of universal truths, surrounded us with unbroken palisades and iron walls to prevent our mixing with any of the other peoples in any matter” (139).<sup>45</sup> Here, the Torah is depicted as iron walls designed by God to keep Israel separate from the nations. Thus, many interpreters conclude that the dividing wall of Ephesians 2:14 is indeed the Law of Moses that kept Israel separated.

This interpretation of Ephesians 2:14-15 has a very obvious flaw, though. Is Paul using the wall being removed in Messiah in reference to any kind of citadel or fortress? No. Later in Ephesians 2:21 Paul likens Believers to be “a holy temple in union with the Lord” (CJB/CJSB). While the *Letter of Aristeas* may have had iron walls in view, with the Torah separating Israel from the nations, it does not concur with the subject matter of Ephesians 2:14-15, and toward the end of Ephesians ch. 2. the Jerusalem Temple is clearly in view. While some may consider it splitting hairs, the Temple did not have an iron wall as the *Letter of Aristeas* portrays, but rather a wall of brick which was probably some five feet thick.

It is not, of course, insignificant that the Lord Yeshua attaches eschatological rewards and penalties to those who teach in favor or teach against the Torah of Moses (Matthew 5:19). Ephesians 2:14-15 interpreted as somehow abolishing the Torah, when Yeshua Himself stated “Don’t assume that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets” (Matthew 5:17, HCSB), does not align with the words of our Savior. Paul himself places a clear priority on Yeshua’s words, writing Timothy, “If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited *and* understands nothing” (1 Timothy 6:3-4a). Paul says in Romans 3:31 to “uphold the law” (RSV/NIV). Yeshua is the One who is “our peace” (Ephesians 2:14), and the Torah clearly cannot be removed from the equation when peace is the subject, for *shalom rav l’ohavei Toratkha* (שְׁלוֹם רַב לְאוֹהְבֵי תוֹרַתְךָ), “peace [is] great to those loving your Torah” (Psalm 119:165, my translation).

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. Mark 11:17; Mathew 21:13; Luke 19:46.

<sup>44</sup> Martin, in *NBCR*, 1112; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 141; Pheme Perkins, “The Letter to the Ephesians,” in Leander E. Keck, ed., et. al., *New Interpreter’s Bible*, Vol. 11 (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 11:399.

<sup>45</sup> R.J.H. Shutt, “Letter of Aristeas,” trans., in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 22.

No Messianic Believer is trying to argue that every single commandment in the Torah of Moses can be kept today—not even the Orthodox Synagogue argues that. There have certainly been changes in technology and economy which have naturally rendered inoperative various commandments that can clearly be classified as case laws. Many Torah commandments can only be used as important teaching points for understanding God’s character and dealings in the Ancient Near East. Likewise, Yeshua’s sacrifice has initiated a change in priesthood from Levi to Melchizedek, and with that a *nomou metathesis* (νόμου μετάθεσις) or “transformation of Torah” (Hebrews 7:12, CJB/CJSB).<sup>46</sup> But in spite of salvation history having inaugurated some changes, Messianics firmly believe that the *ekklēsia* must return to a Biblical foundation in the Torah, where Believers are trained in its principles of righteousness and holy living. The widescale dismissal of the Torah seen in too much of today’s Church has been a cause of considerable antinomianism. Ignoring God’s revelation in the Old Testament has certainly **not** been a great asset for Christians today, and many are beginning to recognize this.

So if Yeshua the Messiah did not abolish the Torah of Moses, and Paul’s words must agree with His, what are we to do with Ephesians 2:15b? By the various intertextual allusions to the Tanach in his letter, it is clear that Paul already has a very high view of Israel’s Scriptures. Indeed, this is what he largely refers to when writing, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16).<sup>47</sup> Likewise, with the dividing wall or *to mesotoichon* in view from Ephesians 2:14, we can actually deduce much from what Paul means in referencing *ton nomon tōn entolōn en dogmasin* (τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν).

It absolutely must be taken into consideration that the Greek *nomos* (νόμος), while the common Septuagint translation for the Hebrew *torah* (hr’AT), is not always a reference to the Mosaic Torah or Pentateuch in the Apostolic Scriptures. Too much is often made by Messianics who simply say that a person can just cross out “law” in an English Bible and then replace it with “Torah,” as such a cosmetic change may actually cause *more* interpretational problems than solve them! Such would be true with Ephesians 2:15b and specifically what *nomos* is being referred to. An excellent case in point would be “the law of sin and death” in Romans 8:2,<sup>48</sup> as this may not be “the Torah of sin and death” but instead could be a spiritual principle governing human beings’ disobedience to God.

It is not insignificant that L.A. Jervis says, “The Greek word usually rendered ‘law’ by the translators of the NT is *nomos*. This word meant both ‘law’ and ‘custom’ and so could refer to the laws of a society and to that society’s customs and habits.”<sup>49</sup> In his translation of Plato’s *Gorgias*, James H. Nichols, Jr. indicates that “*Nomos*, translated ‘law’ or ‘convention,’ includes written law, unwritten law, custom, and prevalent opinion.”<sup>50</sup> While *nomos* can mean “law (often of the Jewish sacred tradition),” meaning the Torah of Moses, it can also mean “principle, rule” (*CGEDNT*),<sup>51</sup> which would make it not limited to the Torah/Pentateuch itself. It can indeed refer to the body of extra-Biblical Jewish religious law. Context always determines how *nomos* is to be properly applied. Considering this, it is not inappropriate at all to ask whether or not the *nomos* spoken of by Paul in Ephesians 2:15b is in fact the Torah of Moses, or something else. Most Christian interpreters do not want to consider the available definitions of *nomos*.

In the case of Ephesians 2:15b the kind of “law” being referred to will be governed by what we conclude composes the “ordinances” which compose it. The plural *dogmasin* (dative case, denoting indirect object) is generally rendered as “regulations” (NEB, NIV) or “ordinances” (RSV, NASU), and sometimes “decrees” (LITV).

<sup>46</sup> For a further discussion, consult the author’s article “Addressing the Frequently Avoided Issues Messianics Encounter in the Torah,” appearing in the *Messianic Torah Helper*.

<sup>47</sup> Kaiser concurs, “One of the strongest statements on the authority and use of the Old Testament Scriptures is found in 2 Timothy 3:15-16. Timothy had known these texts ‘from infancy,’ began Paul, so he was not pointing out anything new or original...This is the most definitive statement in the New Testament on how the Old Testament is to be used and what roles it must play in the life of believers. Only by following the words recorded in the older Testament could the man or woman of God be completely equipped for every good work (3:17)” (*The Promise-Plan of God*, pp 354-355).

<sup>48</sup> Grk. *tou nomou tēs hamartias kai tou thanatou* (τοῦ νόμου τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ τοῦ θανάτου).

<sup>49</sup> L.A. Jervis, “Law/Nomos in Greco-Roman World,” in Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter, eds., *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 632.

<sup>50</sup> Plato: *Gorgias*, trans., James H. Nichols, Jr. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University, 1998), 73, fn 69.

<sup>51</sup> *CGEDNT*, 121.

The singular *dogma* in a secular context can mean “*that which seems to one, an opinion, dogma*” or “*a public decree, ordinance*” (LS).<sup>52</sup> Vine remarks that *dogma* “primarily denoted ‘an opinion or judgment’ (from *dokeō* [δοκέω], ‘to be of opinion’), hence, an ‘opinion expressed with authority, a doctrine, ordinance, decree,’”<sup>53</sup> which in Acts 16:4 is used to designate the most positive decisions of the Jerusalem Council. But as previously mentioned, *dogma* is not found in the Septuagint translation of the Pentateuchal books—and thus is not used to represent *any kind* of Biblical commandments. For the purposes of understanding Ephesians 2:15b, notable usages of *dogma* appear in the LXX throughout the Book of Daniel to represent the decrees of Babylon and Persia. In Daniel 3:12, for example, we see,

“There are *certain* Jews whom thou has appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Sedrach, Misach, and Abdenago, who have not obeyed thy decree [*dogma*], O king: they serve not thy gods, and worship not the golden image which thou hast set up” (LXE).

For not obeying the decree to worship the Babylonian gods, these three Jews were thrown into the fiery furnace (Daniel 3:19-30). In a similar way, for not obeying the *dogma* to stay behind the dividing wall in the Jerusalem Temple, non-Jews in the First Century risked death.

The only other time *dogma* is used in the Pauline corpus appears in Colossians 2:14, where Paul writes concerning to *kath’ hēmōn cheirographon tois dogmasin* (τὸ καθ’ ἡμῶν χειρόγραφον τοῖς δόγμασιν), “the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us” (NASU). Lincoln’s view is that this “is the only other instance of the use of the term δόγματα [*dogmata*] in the Pauline corpus. There it refers not so much to the Torah as to ascetic regulations.”<sup>54</sup> In actuality, though, the “certificate of debt” in Colossians 2:14 is not the ascetic regulations of the false teachers, nor the Torah’s code of holiness, but rather the capital penalties of the Torah. What was clearly nailed to the cross of Yeshua was not the Torah that He came to uphold, but rather the decrees in the Torah’s penal code demanding the death of those who violated it. This is a penalty that has been remitted via the sacrifice of Yeshua on our behalf! *Dogma* being a term often associated with the death of a violator certainly finds support in the Septuagint uses where the Jews who did not obey the Babylonian or Persian decrees would surely be executed.

Bruce is about as close to positive about the Torah as New Testament commentators often get. His view is, “It is not the law as a revelation of the character and will of God that has been done away with in Christ...But the law as a written code, threatening death instead of imparting life, is done away with in Christ...And when the law in that sense is done away with, the barrier between Jews and Gentiles is removed; Jewish particularism and Gentile exclusion are things of the past.”<sup>55</sup> His thoughts are well taken, **because the issue in view is the exclusion of the nations**; the issue is not “the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good” (Romans 7:12).

I would propose that a more correct translation of Ephesians 2:15b, *ton nomon tōn entolōn en dogmasin* (τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν), especially per the context of the *dogmas* of the dividing wall, would be: **“the religious Law of commandments in dogmas”** (PME). *Nomos* is rendered as “law,” but clarified with an italic “*religious*,” as it would be more akin to man-made religious law than Biblical law, definitions afforded by the classical meaning of *nomos*<sup>56</sup> and varied usage throughout the Pauline Epistles where it does not need to

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<sup>52</sup> LS, 207.

<sup>53</sup> W.E. Vine, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1968), 153.

<sup>54</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 142.

<sup>55</sup> Bruce, *Colossians-Philemon-Ephesians*, pp 298-299.

<sup>56</sup> Worthwhile to consider here is “*nomos*,” in Jacob Neusner and William Scott Green, eds., *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 457, which indicates,

“Although *nomos* overlaps *torah* and the English word ‘law’ in meaning, it also has other connotations. An important additional concept was the idea of ‘custom’ in a particular sense: the Greeks often considered their customs to be ‘natural law.’ Thus, obedience to the law meant more than honoring certain written regulations; it included an entire way of life. In Jewish writings in Greek, the term ‘the law’ (*to nomos*) came to mean ‘Jewish religion.’”

mean the Mosaic Torah.<sup>57</sup> This law would be more akin to what is described in the opening words of Mishnah tractate *Pirkei Avot*: “make a fence around the Torah”<sup>58</sup> (m.*Avot* 1:1).<sup>59</sup>

“The *religious* Law of commandments in dogmas” of Ephesians 2:15b, is the cause of the enmity between Jew and non-Jew witnessed in Paul’s day. It is not the cause of enmity or hostility because God’s Torah demands that His people be holy unto Him and separated from paganism, valuing human life and following a righteous code of conduct. This *man-made* law set forth in religious decrees causes enmity because it deliberately skews the work of God as originally laid forth in the Torah mandate for Israel to be a blessing to all! In the First Century, it would primarily include things like proselytic circumcision (cf. Ephesians 2:11), something not required by the Torah as an entryway into God’s people, yet often set ahead of belief in God and certainly required by the establishment of the time. Paul spoke against non-Jewish Believers going through such a ritual circumcision, because it would devalue one’s own native culture and the unique things that it could bring to the Kingdom of God (Galatians 3:28).<sup>60</sup>

There are, in fact, several kinds of Rabbinical injunctions making up Jewish religious law that would have placed a kind of dividing wall between the Jewish people and the nations, which would have undoubtedly caused problems for the mission upon which Paul had embarked among the nations. Examples of this are replete in the Gospels, where Yeshua directly confronted many of the *halachic* practices in His day, that directly interfered with the work of His Father. While Yeshua instructed His Disciples to follow the lead of the Pharisees (Matthew 23:1-2), there were clearly matters where they were hypocritical and were not to be followed (Matthew 23:3). In Yeshua’s Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chs. 5-7), our Lord uses the statement “You have heard that it was said” (Matthew 5:27, 38, 43), and proceeds not to deny the continuance of the Mosaic Torah, but correct (gross) misunderstandings of it.<sup>61</sup> One of the most significant areas where Yeshua’s teaching directly confronted the understanding of His day appears in Matthew 5:43-44:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR [Leviticus 19:18] and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”

It is absolutely imperative to keep in mind that nowhere in the Tanach can any reference be found to “hate your enemy.” Kaiser asserts, “For some years now, I have offered my students a monetary prize if anyone can find the second part of that quote anywhere in the Old Testament. So far no one has claimed the prize.”<sup>62</sup> Stern also remarks on Matthew 5:43, “nowhere does the *Tanakh* teach that you should **hate your enemy**.”<sup>63</sup> Those in the Qumran community, however, specifically commanded love only for the members of one’s covenant community and that hatred could be shown for the outsider:

“He is to teach them both to love all the Children of Light—each commensurate with his rightful place in the council of God—and to hate all the Children of Darkness, each commensurate with his guilt and the vengeance due him from God” (1QS 1.9-11).<sup>64</sup>

<sup>57</sup> One of the issues surrounding 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 is that nowhere in the Pentateuch do we see regulations prohibiting women speaking up in an assembly. There is no vocabulary present in these verses allowing for the Oral Torah to be something referred to, even though this is what the Talmud says: “**the sages said: A woman should not read the Torah because of the dignity of the congregation**” (b.*Megilah* 23a; *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary. MS Windows XP*, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005. CD-ROM). Given the reference to simply “the Law” being spoken of in general has led various conservative interpreters to wonder if 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 is actually an interpolation to Paul’s letter of a later copyist.

Cf. Gordon D. Fee, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), pp 699-708; “1 Corinthians 14:34-35: Did Paul Forbid Women to Speak in Church?”, in Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul’s Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), pp 217-267.

<sup>58</sup> Heb. *ha'r'beih v'asu seyag l'Torah* (הַרְבֵּה וְעָשׂוּ סֵיג לַתּוֹרָה).

<sup>59</sup> Leonard Kravitz and Kerry M. Olitzky, eds. and trans., *Pirke Avot: A Modern Commentary on Jewish Ethics* (New York: UAHC Press, 1993), 1.

<sup>60</sup> Consult the Excursus “Should Non-Jewish Messianic Believers ‘Convert’ to (Messianic) Judaism?” in the author’s commentary *Galatians for the Practical Messianic*, second edition.

<sup>61</sup> Kaiser explains, “Jesus was correcting the *oral* traditions that had accumulated around the law (‘You have heard it said’). He did not say, as all too many presume, something like ‘It is written, but I now correct that by saying...’” (*The Promise-Plan of God*, 313).

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 30.

<sup>64</sup> Wise, Abegg, and Cook, 127.

The kind of dogma which would demand that one hate others outside of the accepted community of Israel was one which undeniably had to be abolished via the work of Yeshua, as our Lord emphasized love for all people as the first of the commandments (Matthew 22:36-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-28; cf. Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18). While it can be demonstrated that both Yeshua and Paul (cf. Acts 25:8) kept many of the extra-Biblical traditions of their day—they certainly clashed in the area of equality for all. (In fact, such equality put the gospel at odds with the Greco-Roman establishment every bit as much as with the Jewish establishment!) Hating other human beings, even sinners outside of the Jewish community, would have come into direct conflict with the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). Any kind of extra-Biblical decree, that would give justification for hating other people, was to be jettisoned via the teachings and sacrificial work of Yeshua.

Some in the independent Messianic movement would make out “the *religious* Law of commandments in dogmas” (PME) to simply be a Mishnah and Talmud that they should never have to consult on any topic, but neither had been formally codified in the First Century, and at most such works have a consultative authority for Messianic Believers that is secondary to the Scriptures.<sup>65</sup> Given the analogy of this *nomos* to be “the dividing wall” (v. 14), it would be those Rabbinical and extra-Biblical injunctions whereby unnecessary barriers would be placed between the Jewish community and the evangelistic mission which would deter the work of God in the Earth. If we understand the fact that the Temple was to be a testimony to the God of Israel among the nations (1 Kings 8:41-43)—and indeed a house of prayer for all nations (Isaiah 56:6-7)—then the placement of a physical barrier prohibiting the nations from entering into the inner sanctuary was obviously something that He had *never intended!* Such a barrier, at least in the hearts and minds of the First Century Jewish Believers, **had to have been removed by the work of Yeshua within them.** Tim Hegg’s thoughts are well taken:

“[W]e may conclude that Yeshua abolished those Rabbinic laws which, when practiced, set aside the Law of God by separating Jew and Gentile which God intended to make one in Mashiach. This was the ‘dividing wall, the (Rabbinic) law contained in the ordinances (of the oral Torah)’. Those parts of the oral Torah which affirm the written Torah or are in harmony with it remain viable for the Messianic believer as the traditions of the fathers.”<sup>66</sup>

Daniel C. Juster, in his book *Jewish Roots*, surprisingly, draws a similar conclusion:

“The commands and ordinances are not necessarily intrinsically Torah, but the oral extensions of these laws made Gentiles unclean and contact with Gentiles something to avoid. As well, it would abolish commands precluding a Jew worshipping in the most intimate way with a Gentile since the Gentile, in Yeshua, is no longer an idolatrous sinner.”<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Consult the author’s exegetical paper on Matthew 23:2-3, “Who Sits in the Seat of Moses?” appearing in the *Messianic Torah Helper*.

<sup>66</sup> Tim Hegg. (1996). *The “Dividing Wall” in Ephesians 2:14. Torah Resource*. Retrieved 05 August, 2008, from <<http://torahresource.com>>.

<sup>67</sup> Daniel C. Juster, *Jewish Roots* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 1995), 113.