

Law of Moses, Binding on Christians

Do you believe that the Torah or Law of Moses is binding on Christians?

Any Messianic ministry is likely to have a more positive view of the Torah or Law of Moses, than is commonly witnessed in today's contemporary Christianity. Like much of the Messianic community, Outreach Israel and Messianic Apologetics fully believe that Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) did not come to abolish the Torah, and that He directed His followers to treat it as valid instruction (Matthew 5:17-19).¹ While one will encounter language within various parts of the Messianic movement of Believers being "bound to keep Torah," we find this to often be laced with a tenor of legalism—as though the Messiah has *ordered* His followers to keep some kind of dictates.

We do not prefer to say that the Torah is "binding" on any Believers—non-Jewish *or* even Jewish—for the simple fact that our Messiah says, "My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:30, NASU). Obeying the Father's Instruction is to bring freedom and liberation to one's life, as one can experience His blessings, and stay away from harmful influences. The Torah is not to be kept rigidly as some form of rules and regulations, designed to bring God's people into bondage.

Within evangelical Christianity, there is the notion that in order to live a proper life in accordance with the Bible, faithful Believers need to do what Jesus did. This is perhaps best represented today with the popular slogan: "What Would Jesus Do?" ***We could not agree more.*** But, if we are to follow the example of our Messiah, *we should live as He did.* Today's Church has lost much of its moral and ethical direction because of downplaying the role of the Torah or Law of Moses, at least in one's Bible reading and understanding of the Scriptural message. Today's emerging Messianic movement has a great job to do, in redirecting the attention of concerned Believers back to the faith of Yeshua and His Apostles, in a way that brings greater richness, spirituality, and holiness in appreciation toward God's commandments.

Yeshua lived as a Jewish Rabbi in First Century Israel, and obeyed the Torah. While this surely includes much of the moral and ethical instruction of the Law, that godly Christians throughout the centuries have always followed and appreciated—Yeshua also followed things that much of Christianity has deemed "unnecessary" for the post-resurrection era. These include things such as the seventh-day Sabbath, the appointed times of Leviticus 23, and the kosher dietary laws—which Messianics do not believe have been "done away." We affirm that by remembering these things in one's daily walk, that Messiah followers can better appreciate the Father's redemptive plan for the ages, and have a greater degree of holiness present in their lives (i.e., 1 Peter 1:16; Leviticus 11:44ff).

If you were to pinpoint a Messianic ministry like Outreach Israel and Messianic Apologetics and say, "Do you believe that the Law of Moses is applicable today?", we would say **yes**. But asking if the Law is "binding upon Christians," may imply that obeying our Heavenly Father is a "burden," and is intended to be legalistic bondage and a life of little joy. *This is not what the Lord wants.* Obedience to God must come from the heart, and our motivation must come forth via the work of the Holy Spirit inside of us, rather than a work of the flesh or some kind of Law-keeping for salvation. The Holy Spirit, poured out upon every human being who has sought the Creator God via His Son (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17), is to supernaturally compel the redeemed to walk in obedience to His Instruction (Romans 8:4).

¹ Consult the author's exegesis paper on Matthew 5:17-19, "Has the Law Been Fulfilled?", appearing in *The New Testament Validates Torah*.

Obedience to God's Torah should never come because one is trying to earn his or her salvation out of works (Ephesians 2:8-9), but rather be manifested by saved people as they walk in good works (Ephesians 2:10). We should all want to live as our Messiah Yeshua lived, demonstrating obedience as a result of an inward transformation that has taken place. Do note that the greatest commands in the Torah are to love God and love others (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18; cf. Matthew 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8.), and the essence of the New Covenant includes not only a permanent forgiveness available for the redeemed *but also* the supernatural transcription of the Law onto the hearts and minds of God's people (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27; cf. Hebrews 8:8-12; 10:16-17).²

² Be aware that there are various Messianic Jewish groups, who while being quite favorable to all Believers keeping the Torah, will use language along the lines of "We have freedom in Messiah to keep the Law..." This is most likely based on a misreading of the errant Corinthian slogan of "Everything is permissible for me" (1 Corinthians 6:12, NIV), which Paul refuted in his letter. A more worthwhile approach would be for such ministries to instead emphasize sanctification manifested in good works.