

FAQs related to  
**Addressing the Frequently Avoided Issues  
Messianics Encounter in the Torah**

**What do you think the biggest challenges are regarding today's  
Messianic Believers and the Torah?**

There are a number of well-known, ongoing challenges present in the broad Messianic movement regarding the Torah, such as the debate regarding non-Jewish Believers keeping the Torah, as well as issues regarding the integration of Jewish tradition and Rabbinic materials into *halachah*. Yet, there are some other issues—which might be a bit more important—which scarcely receive any of our collective attention. These include:

1. **The specific degree of changes which have been inaugurated by the sacrifice of Yeshua the Messiah for human sin, in the post-resurrection era:** What was nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14)? What does it mean that a “change of law” (Hebrews 7:12) has taken place? How does a responsible Bible reader balance post-resurrection era changes directly caused by the Messiah’s work, with the Messiah’s own insistence that the Torah is not to be abolished (Matthew 5:17-19)?
2. **Properly considering the Ancient Near Eastern background of the Pentateuch:** While the Torah is to be regarded as valid instruction that informs the lifestyle and character of God’s people, it cannot be ignored that it was originally given to the Ancient Israelites. There are aspects of the Torah which were given to those who operated within a different level of technology and economy than those of today. How do we respect the original intention of many time-sensitive Torah instructions, and derive principles from them for modern-day living?

Concurrent with some of this is the frightening spectre that as we steadily approach the return of the Messiah—not only will there be an increasing need for God’s faithful to be following His Instruction (Revelation 12:17; 14:12)—but there will need to be an increasing knowledge on the part of His people to be aware of the coming apostasy (2 Thessalonians 2:3). While there are aspects of this apostasy which will surely involve a steady erosion of Biblical ethics and morality, and people disregarding foundational instructions like the Ten Commandments—how much of this apostasy will be spearheaded by more and more people treating the Holy Scriptures as myths and fairy tales? How much of the coming apostasy will be related to reliability and historicity issues pertaining to the Biblical record,

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and will even be coupled with scientific criticisms against the Bible? These are issues, which while certainly dominating much of today's evangelical Christian apologetics, are things which too many of today's Messianic Believers avoid.

### How am I to appropriately understand the division of the Torah's commandments?

Yeshua the Messiah did teach us that there were "weightier provisions of the law," such as "justice and mercy and faithfulness" (Matthew 23:23). He affirms that the greatest of the Torah's commandments are the admonitions to love the Lord God and to love one's neighbor (Matthew 22:36-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-28; cf. Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18). It is a fact that there is a prioritization among the Torah's commandments between those that carry more weight and those that may be considered "least" (Matthew 5:19), especially as there are differing penalties for the violation of various regulations. The teaching of our Messiah does indicate that the Torah's commandments are divided in some way. Determining what this way is, however, has been a matter of theological discussion and debate for millennia.

Greg L. Bahnsen makes the important remark, "Christians throughout the history of the church who have advocated the authority of the Old Testament law in Christian moral instruction, such as the Reformers or Puritans, have not. . . done so because they make Moses the locus of their authority! Rather and more realistically, they have done so only because their true Lord and Authority, Jesus Christ, directs them to honor and obey the moral commandments of Moses."<sup>1</sup> In Reformed Christian theology (and to a lesser extent historic Wesleyan theology) the commandments of the Torah have been classified under the broad categories of: moral, civil, and ceremonial. It is believed that with the coming of Yeshua and His sacrifice, the civil and ceremonial laws of Ancient Israel have been abolished, but never the Torah's commandments regulating ethics and morality which are to remain true for all people of all times. Reformed expositors interpret passages such as Ephesians 2:14-15 and Colossians 2:14 as relating to the annulment of not the Torah as a whole, but rather the ceremonial and civil law.

In the Twenty-First Century when the evangelical Church has largely cast aside any of the Torah as relevant instruction for Believers today, we as Messianics should rejoice with our Christian brethren who have always held the Torah's ethical commands as *always* having relevance! We have more in

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<sup>1</sup> Greg L. Bahnsen, "Response to Douglas Moo," in Wayne G. Strickland, ed., *Five Views on Law and Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 391.