



OUTREACH ISRAEL NEWS

monthly newsletter of Outreach Israel Ministries
and MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS



AUGUST 2024

THE STATUS OF TORAH

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STATEMENT OF BELIEF

*Outreach Israel Ministries
and Messianic Apologetics*

There is One Almighty Creator God of the Universe, who has revealed Himself to us in the manifestations of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) came in fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies of the Scriptures and is fully God. It is mandatory for us to believe in a Divine Redeemer to be saved. Salvation is a free gift of God to all who receive Messiah Yeshua into their lives and confess of their sins. Those who reject Messiah will be consigned to eternal punishment.

The Holy Scriptures, Genesis-Revelation, are the inspired, infallible Word of God as revealed in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts

All Believers in Israel's Messiah are to be regarded as a part of the Commonwealth of Israel. Jewish and non-Jewish Believers are to respect one another in mutual love as brothers and sisters, and are to work together for the salvation of the Jewish people and return of Israel's Messiah.

The Torah (Genesis-Deuteronomy) is the foundation of all Scripture, was followed by our Messiah Yeshua, and is to still be studied and heeded by Believers today.

Yeshua the Messiah is coming to gather the Believers after the Tribulation period.

OIM is an *agapē* ministry, freely and benevolently giving the vast majority of its teachings and resources, without charge, to those who desire to be spiritually nourished.

For a fuller Statement of Faith, consult the OIM website

Outreach Israel News is the monthly newsletter of Outreach Israel Ministries, a non-profit organization with an emphasis on reaching, teaching, and encouraging the Messianic community. Subscription to **Outreach Israel News** is without cost and supported only by donation.

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OLM UPDATE

August 2024

J.K. McKee

Since its initial paperback release in 2012, it is safe to say that *The New Testament Validates Torah* has widely become the flagship book of Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics. While there have been new resources released for the broad Messianic movement since that time, most notably the 2014 Tree of Life Version Bible (TLV) and the 2016 *Complete Jewish Study Bible*¹—there is still nothing in 2024 which reaches the scope of *The New Testament Validates Torah*, in terms of defending Messianic essentials involving the post-resurrection era validity and relevance of Moses' Teaching. But what does one encounter, today in the mid-2020s, looking out at the broad Messianic sphere of influence?

Many people across the spectrum, including Messianic Jews, Messianic non-Jews, evangelical Protestants, and those who might identify with some form of Hebrew Roots—have read *The New Testament Validates Torah*, and have been positively impacted by it in some way. Certainly, as I have interacted with those who have read this book and provided me feedback—both positive and negative—many have been challenged, in particular as they know that they need to probably begin having a more Torah- or Law-positive orientation toward the Apostolic Scriptures (NT). Many know that they definitely need to reevaluate some traditional Christian approaches to the matter of the Law, and adjust their thinking.

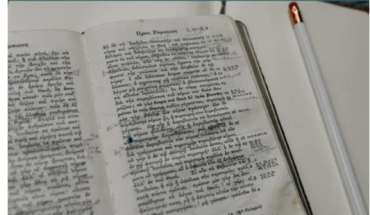
Many who have read *The New Testament Validates Torah* will testify how this was one of their first major books, which got them started in their Messianic experience. A number of those who read this publication, will often then purchase a number of our other teaching workbooks and commentaries. While many of us can agree on the ongoing validity and relevance of Moses' Teaching, we can be seen to implement its instruction in very differing ways. It can be easily observed, for ex-

THE STATUS OF TORAH

The New Testament Validates Torah

Does the New Testament Really Do Away With the Law?

J.K. McKee



¹ Barry Rubin, gen. ed., *The Complete Jewish Study Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2016).

ample, how believing in the ongoing validity of the Law of Moses for God’s people is one thing—certainly in terms of one’s ethics and morality—but it can be something else to actually implement this in terms of personal/familial discipline and congregational life. There are those who will be seen to agree with our ministry that God’s Torah remains valid and worthwhile instruction for the Messiah’s followers—but rather than be seen to demonstrate a traditional style of Torah application consistent with contemporary Messianic Judaism and/or the Conservative to Reform Synagogue, as our family and ministry do, they might instead demonstrate more of a preference toward an a-traditional style of Torah observance.

So what are some of the things which have we witnessed throughout the 2010s, and now into the 2020s, regarding the status of Torah? This is actually something which has both external and internal factors to be evaluated. There have been a number of somewhat significant materials, which I have acquired “organically”—with little effort made or with minimal prompting from others—which have affected much of the status of Torah we are now witnessing in the mid-2020s. In all likelihood, you have been affected either directly or indirectly, knowingly or unknowingly, from some of these matters.

As the 2010s came to a close, many across the evangelical world were understandably shocked and horrified, when Andy Stanley emphasized how Christians needed to see that they de-hitch themselves from the instruction of the Old Testament (2018).² Being the son of the late Charles Stanley, a stalwart evangelical conservative from the late Twentieth Century, Andy Stanley’s ministry has been seen to embrace more and more progressive and LGBTQ+ affirming perspectives. And, many have rightly attributed his theological devolution to his broad dismissal of the Tanach Scriptures as having any real moral or ethical relevance for Christian Believers. While Stanley’s apostate orientation is widely known, he is hardly alone, as a prime example of what happens when a theological foundation beginning with the Torah of God is removed.

Thankfully, among various evangelical Old Testament scholars, there have been various studies released, which to various degrees have stressed the high value of the Law of Moses for followers of Jesus.³ One of the most important studies has doubtlessly been *Bearing God’s Name: Why Sinai Still Matters* by Carmen Joy Imes (2019). While none of these Christian examinations would go as far as today’s Messianic movement, in stressing how the New Covenant does not abrogate instructions such as the seventh-day Sabbath/*Shabbat*, appointed times or *moedim*, or the kosher dietary laws—these examinations are keen to recognize how much of the contemporary Church is ethically and morally suffering, because of disregarding the ethical principles of the Law of Moses. And indeed, a number of resources

² This perspective is broadly encountered in Andy Stanley, *Irresistible: Reclaiming the New that Jesus Unleashed for the World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018).

³ Among the resources I have acquired, notably include:

Roy E. Gane, *Old Testament Law for Christians: Original Context and Enduring Application* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017); Daniel I. Block, *Covenant: The Framework of God’s Plan of Redemption* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021); Richard E. Averbeck, *The Old Testament Law for the Life of the Church: Reading the Torah in the Light of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2022).

have been lauded and positively employed by those who have a pro-Torah perspective. Yet, even with a number of evangelical theologians wanting to stress continuity between the Old and New Testaments—with the former having more relevance than not for Believers—the overall momentum witnessed, even in academics, is epitomized in the title *The Old Testament is Dying* (2017).⁴

When I was attending Asbury Theological Seminary for my M.A. in Biblical Studies (2005-2009), the main trend which was changing Pauline Studies was the effect of the **New Perspective of Paul** (NPP)—in particular from proposals made by scholars such as James D.G. Dunn and N.T. Wright. Some of their perspectives have been considered in this resource, in the chapters “What Are ‘Works of the Law?’” and “The Faithfulness of Yeshua the Messiah,” as well as my commentaries on Galatians and Romans. The NPP has widely been responsible for interjecting the thought that what can be perceived as Pauline attacks on the Law, were actually criticisms against First Century Jewish particularism (i.e. Romans 2:17-29), with Jewish possession of the Torah and identity hardly sufficient to be considered “righteous” or in proper covenant status with the God of Israel. In the 2020s, as Pauline studies have developed,⁵ there continue to be those who adhere to various aspects of the NPP, although modified criticisms of the NPP have also been seen.⁶

The 2010s, and now mid-2020s, has seen the rise of a further, major school of Pauline interpretation: **Paul Within Judaism**.⁷ While still developing, it does rightly try to understand the ministry and mission of the Apostle Paul within the world of Second Temple Judaism. It widely approaches Paul as being “the Apostle to the Gentiles,” in that Paul’s seeming criticism of the Mosaic Torah was to discourage non-Jewish Messiah followers from living as ethnic Jews, but instead as redeemed persons from the nations of Planet Earth at large. Paul’s letters were largely not written to mixed communities of both Jewish and non-Jewish Believers, but instead mainly non-Jewish persons. Paul emphasized the universal morality of the Torah’s principles, but discouraged non-Jewish Messiah followers to take on various apparent “sign commandments” of Jewish identity (i.e., Sabbath, festivals, diet, circumcision). Paul’s letters were not for Jews and Gentiles, but Gentiles. Suffice it to say, some are not too comfortable with this kind of compartmentalization of the Pauline Epistles. Messianic Jewish supporters, of a bilateral ecclesiology, have been seen to

⁴ Brent A. Strawn, *The Old Testament Is Dying: A Diagnosis and Recommended Treatment* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017).

⁵ One useful review may be accessible in Michael F. Bird, ed., *Four Views on the Apostle Paul* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012).

⁶ Garwood P. Anderson, *Paul’s New Perspective: Charting a Soteriological Journey* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016).

⁷ Among the resources I have acquired, notably include:

Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm, eds., *Paul Within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015); Paula Fredriksen, *Paul the Pagans’ Apostle* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2017); *When Christians Were Jews: The First Generation* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2018); Matthew Thiessen, *A Jewish Paul: The Messiah’s Herald to the Gentiles* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2023).

be widely welcoming of Paul Within Judaism approaches.⁸ But as noted, Paul Within Judaism is a still developing school of theology.

The Explosion of Things Messianic—or Not?

Within our family's early days of getting started in the Messianic movement, and certainly with the launch of Outreach Israel Ministries in 2002—we believed that we were going to see an evitable explosion of evangelical Believers embrace their faith heritage in the Scriptures of Israel.⁹ My stepfather, Mark Huey, was especially among those who believed that many Christian Believers would eagerly embrace wanting to have a faith experience, closer to that of the First Century holy ones or saints. And indeed, around the turn of the Millennium or so, there were many non-Jewish Believers superintended by the Lord into the Messianic movement. These were people who were genuinely convicted by the Lord, as part of their furtherance into the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27; cf. Hebrews 8:7-13; 10:14-18), that things like the seventh-day Sabbath/*Shabbat*, appointed times or *moedim*, a kosher style of diet, regular study of the weekly Torah portion, and participation/membership in a Messianic congregation or synagogue, were important things to consider. Many of these people still continue to be a part of the Messianic movement, and are co-laboring with Jewish Believers in the salvation of Israel.

There was indeed an explosion of many non-Jewish people taking hold of many things of Torah, throughout the 2000s-2010s. But rather than with this being a tempered work of the Holy Spirit—focused around love for God and neighbor as most important¹⁰—things were actually far more complicated and messy. At the lighter end of the spectrum were those who embraced various outward practices of Torah, and while officially recognizing that salvation did not come from human works (Ephesians 2:8-9), were in practice quite legalistic, inflexible, and judgmental of others. Torah observance became an end to itself, and among various groups and cliques, it was clear enough that too many had a relationship with the Law, but not so much with the Lawgiver.

Far more problematic were those who, when taking a hold of things of Torah, became highly condemning of the legitimate contributions of evangelical Protestantism to the faith—and perhaps also the Jewish Synagogue as well. While wanting to reevaluate the legitimacy of various traditions such as Sunday Church, Christmas and December 25, and Easter—returning to more Biblical practices such as *Shabbat* and the *moedim* (especially Passover)—many conducted their own unbalanced witchhunts for anything which they (subjectively) considered to be “pagan.”

⁸ This is widely witnessed in Ryan C. Lambert, *The Weird Apostle* (Roswell, GA: Ryan Lambert Forum, 2024).

⁹ If necessary, do consult “My Family’s Messianic Experience: 1995-2022” (appearing in *Introduction to Things Messianic*), covering a wide selection of our encounters and interactions.

¹⁰ Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18; cf. Mark 12:31; Matthew 19:19; 22:39; Luke 10:27; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8.

If there was any kind of association or parallel which could be possibly made or detected, between traditional Christian theology and ancient (often Greco-Roman) paganism, it was to be immediately rejected.¹¹ Many, in embracing things of Torah, were then seen to reject doctrines such as the revealed tri-unity of God and Divinity of Yeshua,¹² and an intermediate afterlife in Heaven or Hell prior to the resurrection.¹³ A few even embraced polygamy, a man having multiple wives, as being a legitimate practice for men.¹⁴ Very quickly, difficult texts of the Apostolic Writings—such as Hebrews, Galatians, Romans, 1 Corinthians, and others¹⁵—became spurious and illegitimate, to then be followed by the Gospels. A number of people were not seen to totally throw out the New Testament, but the Greek Apostolic Scriptures were certainly seen to be inferior and less authoritative than the Hebrew Tanach.¹⁶ A number of people who embraced outward things of Torah, though, have quite sadly fallen prey to the arguments of the Jewish anti-missionary movement, and have denied Yeshua as Messiah.

It is a sad fact that as we get closer and closer to the Messiah's return, that there will be apostasy from faith in Him, on many different levels (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:3). **Those, who have followed the ministry of Outreach Israel and Messianic Apologetics, know that we have had our hands full, for many years, in trying to best address many of the criticisms which have been out there against the integrity of the Apostolic Writings.** Because of technology being what it is now, ideas which are targeted against the veracity of the New Testament or the Messiahship of Yeshua, can now reach into any Messianic congregation or synagogue—no matter how much the local leadership may try to proactively keep ideas from being circulated or discussed.

The various resources I have passively acquired, over the past ten to twelve years, are reflective of those who are reasonable in terms of addressing some kind of a Torah perspective,¹⁷ to those which are seen to promote various forms of legalism and/or levels of negative disdain for much of Christianity,¹⁸ to those which are actually seen to, at least indirectly, support non-Jewish Believers denying Yeshua

¹¹ Possible parallels and connections between stories and accounts in the Hebrew Tanach, and Ancient Near Eastern paganism, however, were almost never conducted by such persons.

For a review, consult the author's article "Encountering Mythology: A Case Study From the Flood Narratives" (appearing in *Confronting Critical Issues*).

¹² This has been thoroughly addressed in the author's books *Salvation on the Line, Volumes I & II: The Nature of Yeshua and His Divinity*.

¹³ This has been reviewed in the author's book *Messianics and the Afterlife*.

¹⁴ This has been addressed in the author's article "Is Polygamy for Today? The Case Against Polygamy?" (appearing in *Men and Women in the Body of Messiah: Answering Crucial Questions*).

¹⁵ This has been especially witnessed in the horrendous book by Douglas J. Del Tondo, *Jesus' Words Only—Or Was Paul the Apostle Jesus Condemns in Rev. 2:2* (West Conshohocken, PA: InfinityPublishing.com, 2005).

¹⁶ If necessary, review the author's article "The Hebrew New Testament Misunderstanding" (appearing in *Confronting Critical Issues*).

¹⁷ Daniel Gruber, *Torah and the New Covenant: An Introduction* (Hanover, NH: Elijah Publishing, 2014); Earl A. Clampett, *Homecoming: How the Mystery of the New Covenant Brings Both Jew and Gentile Back to Abba Father* (San Diego: Simple Truth Ministries, 2022).

as Messiah.¹⁹ While it is palpably true that non-Jewish people embracing outward things of Torah is a theological and spiritual reality to be contended with—it is also true that this is going to be responsible for more and more complex challenges as the future unfolds.

One Law/One Torah Versus Bilateral Ecclesiology

It would be very hard, especially if someone was a non-Jewish Believer involved within the Messianic sphere of influence, to not in some way be affected by the controversies and rivalries present between One Law/One Torah theology and Messianic Jewish bilateral ecclesiology. While there are many Messianic people, Jewish and non-Jewish, who do not like much of the tension and division which have been manifested from both sectors, theology since the Protestant Reformation has been frequently created in an environment of conflict. Over the past decade or so, whether it be One Law/One Torah or bilateral ecclesiology, both have contributed to polarizing a great deal of the theological maturation, or lack thereof, of a great deal of persons within the broad Messianic community.

One Law/One Torah theology widely arose after the turn of the Millennium, as a spin-off from Messianic Judaism, attempting to sort through the issue of why so many non-Jewish Believers were being drawn by the Lord into the Messianic movement. Its emphasis was that such non-Jewish Believers were to be regarded as the *gerim* or sojourners who entered into Ancient Israel—outsiders who were to be welcomed into the community (cf. Leviticus 19:34). A major credo of One Law/One Torah theology would come from a passage such as “The same law shall apply to the native as to the stranger who sojourns among you” (Exodus 12:49, NASU). But, a major criticism, of One Law/One Torah theology, is how various usages of “one law” or “one statute” appearing in the Pentateuch (i.e., Exodus 12:48-49; Leviticus 24:22; Numbers 9:14; 15:15-16, 29-30) did not concern universal Torah adherence, but instead some kind of specific instruction—as in the case of Exodus 12:48-49, circumcision of native and sojourner in order to eat of the Passover lamb/sacrifice.

For certain, universal Torah education, within the community of Ancient Israel, was required (Deuteronomy 31:12). But a major criticism, of One Law/One Torah theology, has been how it has emphasized that there were *almost no differences of any kind* between native Israelite and welcome sojourner. This is an untenable position, given the obvious fact that only native Israelites could expect tribal inher-

¹⁸ Among the resources I have acquired, notably include:

Daniel Lang, *Reviving the Reformation: A Jewish Believer Peers Backward to Move Biblical Truth Forward* (Maitland, FL: Northloop Books, 2016); Richard Hadad, *Apologia for the Law and the Sabbath* (Voor Dire Publishing, 2019); Jeffrey W. Dandoy, *Our Bible Too: A New Soteriology of Messianic Judaism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2021).

¹⁹ This notably includes many of the sentiments present in Rivkah Lambert Adler, ed., *Ten From the Nations: Torah Awakening Among Non-Jews* (Jerusalem: Geula Watch Press, 2017); ed. *Lighting Up the Nations: Jewish Responsibility Toward the Nations Today and in the Messianic Era* (Maale Hever, Israel: Root Source Press, 2021).

itance in the Holy Land. Likewise, a number of other differences were present (i.e., Deuteronomy 14:21), a reflection on the common condition of sojourners being among a poor and vulnerable class (cf. Leviticus 19:10; 23:22; Deuteronomy 24:14). It would be correct, however, to assert that within Ancient Israel, both natives and sojourners had far more in common than not. While One Law/One Torah theology has not been keen on noting a few of the notable differences between natives and sojourners in Ancient Israel, many more controversies have taken place due to much of the Torah legalism, inflexibility, and fundamentalism seen throughout its ranks.²⁰ The matters it has raised, however, involve the necessary impetus *that today's Messianic community focus on common values of faith in the Lord first, and various differences second*—in order to dispel any suspicion, rivalry, or feelings of inferiority.

Quite at the opposite end of the spectrum, has been Messianic Jewish bilateral ecclesiology, something which has been often traced to the 2005 release of *Post-Missionary Messianic Judaism* by Mark S. Kinzer.²¹ Bilateral ecclesiology does advocate that all of God's people compose the Ephesians 2:11-13 Commonwealth of Israel, but that such a Commonwealth of Israel is composed of two distinct branches: the ethnic Jewish people and/or Messianic Jewish community *and* the Christian Church. Non-Jewish Believers may be regarded as part of the latter. Bilateral ecclesiology has been welcomed in various academic and scholastic circles, particularly in response to growing tides of supersessionism or replacement theology.²²

Various Messianic Jewish proponents of bilateral ecclesiology are seen to be negatively inclined to non-Jewish Believers taking on or participating in various outward elements of Torah (i.e., Sabbath, festivals, kosher),²³ and such have indeed been responsible, in various ways, to seeing various non-Jewish Believers—at least indirectly—pressured to leave Messianic Jewish congregations. Yet, Messianic Judaism is hardly universal in terms of bilateral ecclesiology, with various leaders rising up stressing “one new man” (Ephesians 2:15) unity, with many being quite supportive of non-Jewish Believers being involved with things of Torah²⁴—provided they are genuinely called by the Lord into the Messianic movement, also

²⁰ For a further review, consult the author's article “Approaching One Law Controversies: Sorting Through the Legalism” (appearing in the *Messianic Torah Helper*), and the Messianic Apologetics FAQ, “One Law/One Torah, Status of Movement.”

²¹ Mark S. Kinzer, *Post-Missionary Messianic Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005).

²² For a further review, consult the author's publication *Are Non-Jewish Believers Really a Part of Israel?*

²³ Consult the perspectives broadly offered in David Rudolph. (2021). *One New Man, Hebrew Roots, Replacement Theology*. Available online via <<http://tku.edu>>; Dan Juster. (2021). *Messianic Jewish Movement Compared to Gentile Jewish Roots One Law Movement. Restoration from Zion*. Available online via <<http://restorationfromzion.com>>; David Rudolph, Russell Resnik, and Daniel C. Juster. (2023). *Gentile Believers and the Torah: Proposed UMJC Executive Committee Guidance Paper*. Retrieved 24 November, 2023, from <<http://messianicstudies.com>>.

²⁴ This has been most recently seen in David Tokajer, *One New Man Revival: True Unity in the Body of Messiah* (Daphne, AL: Author, 2023). Also useful to review is Suzanne Linett, *Unity of the Faith: Finding Harmony Between Jewish and Gentile Believers by Examining Eight Key Topics* (Nashville: Sela Press Publishing, 2021).

involving participation in the Messianic mission of Jewish outreach, evangelism, and Israel solidarity.

Sadly, many who are favorable toward non-Jewish Believers participating in things such as *Shabbat* or the *moedim*, are now likely to be branded as being “One Law”—even if they are seen to have had many points of disagreement with those who formally identify with One Law/One Torah theology.

It cannot go unmentioned how Messianic Judaism itself is not uniform regarding the role of the Torah or Law of Moses for Jewish Believers themselves. There are those within the Messianic Jewish community, who adhere to various dispensational presuppositions, widely considering the Torah to be abolished for the post-resurrection era, but with various aspects of the Torah possibly being important for matters of Jewish culture and heritage.²⁵ Among those who are more-or-less positive toward Torah keeping, for Messianic Jews, have been studies conducted evaluating the place, or lack thereof, of the Oral Torah,²⁶ as well as the place of the Holy Spirit.²⁷ External analysis by Law-positive evangelical Old Testament theologians, regarding Messianic Jews and the Torah, has also been conducted.²⁸

Pronomian Christianity

Originally in the late 1990s to mid 2000s, when one employed the term “Hebrew Roots,” it was to emphasize matters such as study of the Hebrew Tanach, Hebrew language, and even various bodies of Second Temple Jewish literature. Sometimes it was used as a complement to “Jewish Roots,” but sometimes it was used to differentiate one from Judaism and Jewish tradition. By the early 2010s, though, the terms “Hebrew Roots” or “Hebraic Roots” quickly became the catch-all term for a wide scope of different non-Jewish Torah movements. While those who perhaps emphasized “Hebrew Roots,” did so with matters of Tanach study, Hebrew language study, and even ancient Jewish literature in mind—by the end of the 2010s, “Hebrew Roots” was widely associated with *anything but this*. Today in the mid-2020s, when one commonly thinks of the Hebrew Roots movement, non-Jewish people doing outward things of Torah can be quickly conflated with matters such as denial of the Divinity of Yeshua, denial of much of the Apostolic Scriptures as inspired, acceptance of Flat Earth, and even forms of anti-Zionism and Holocaust denial—and a host of other conspiracies and abominable issues. Messianic Judaism has been understandably concerned about what the Hebrew Roots movement has devolved into.²⁹

²⁵ These perspectives are witnessed in Seth D. Postell, Eitan Bar, Erez Soref, Michelle Shelfer, *Reading Moses, Seeing Jesus: How the Torah Fulfills Its Purpose in Yeshua* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017); John B. Metzger, *The Law, Then and Now: What About Grace?* (Larkspur, CO: Grace Acres Press, 2019).

²⁶ Consult the report, International Alliance of Messianic Congregations and Synagogues (IAMCS), *The Non-Torah: Exposing the Mythology of Divine Oral Torah* (2019).

²⁷ Consult Joshua M. Lessard and Jennifer M. Rosner, *At the Foot of the Mountain: Two Views on Torah and the Spirit* (Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2021).

²⁸ “Jewish Messianic Believers and the Torah,” in Averbek, pp 334-349.

²⁹ Review some of the main concerns presented by IAMCS Steering Committee. (2014). *One Law, Two Sticks: A Critical Look at the Hebrew Roots Movement, A position paper of the International Alliance of Messianic Congregations and Synagogues (IAMCS)*. Available online via <<http://iamcs.org>>.

A wide number of those, who were involved in the Hebrew Roots movement, have recognized that much of what had taken place via the label of “Hebraic” — was anything but good. This mainly involved how a wide majority of those identifying as “Hebrew Roots,” often unfairly deride and chastise any of the good contributions of evangelical Protestantism as being illegitimate and “pagan.” The early 2020s witnessed a new offshoot emerge, identifying as Pronomian Christianity. It mainly involved those formerly involved in Hebrew Roots, who had grown tired of a great deal of its anti-Christian rhetoric, and rightly sought change. It also involved, though, a number of those holding to a One Law/One Torah theology, some of whom had grown disenfranchised with the label “Messianic” and various Jewish traditions and customs. A new label, **pronomian**, was chosen, something which simply means **pro-law**—and certainly something which could sit in contrast to being **anti-law** or **antinomian**.

While many people across the Messianic community can legitimately identify as small “p” pronomian—what capital “P” Pronomian Christianity is going to become, remains to be seen in the mid-2020s. Those who identify as capital “P” Pronomian are to be commended, for not wanting to cast aside the legitimate contributions of Law-positive Christian traditions, and a great deal of good and wholesome Protestant theology. But there are likely to be ongoing questions surrounding Pronomian Christianity, regarding the place of Judaism, Jewish tradition, Zionism and the State of Israel, and standing against anti-Semitism. Will Pronomian Christianity be favorable or negative to the Messianic Jewish movement and its mission? Already when looking at some of the theology of those formally identifying as Pronomian, one does see strong leanings toward Reformed Calvinism, its predestinarian soteriology, and forms of cessationism. At present, it is useful to not make any detailed evaluations of Pronomian Christianity, as it probably needs to be given some more time (2024) to develop and figure out what it actually stands for.³⁰

Torahism

It was probably inevitable, given the huge explosion of the Hebrew Roots movement across social media, that at the end of the 2010s someone in the Christian world was going to take notice, and begin refuting much of the false doctrine, shoddy scholarship, and extremism encountered. In 2019, I was sent a complimentary copy of the book *Torahism: Are Christians Required to Keep the Law of Moses?* by R.L. Solberg.³¹ Solberg has been responsible for coining the term “Torahism,” which is best defined as some kind of a theology which focuses on a Torah foundation and outward Torah matters. It is easily deduced from his writings and many Inter-

³⁰ For some further discussions, consult the author’s YouTube videos from 15 December 2021, “What is Pronomianism Going to Be? Will it be Messianic?”, and 05 November 2022 “Pronomian: A Short Observation - Today’s McKee Moment,” both accessible via <[youtube.com/MessianicApologetics](https://www.youtube.com/MessianicApologetics)>.

³¹ R.L. Solberg, *Torahism: Are Christians Required to Keep the Law of Moses?* (Franklin, TN: Williamson College Press, 2019).

A somewhat related resource is Rubén Gómez, *The Hebrew Roots Movement: A Critical Analysis of Its Origins, Teachings & Biblical Interpretations* (Kent, UK: King’s Divinity Press, 2023).

net broadcasts, how he sees more contrasts, rather than continuity, between the practices of the Tanach (OT) and Apostolic Writings (NT).

What is labeled as “Torahism” could apply, on some level, to non-Jewish Believers, who in some way have been prompted to consider matters such as the seventh-day Sabbath/*Shabbat*, the appointed times/*moedim*, or a kosher style of diet—as well as to Jewish Believers maintaining a level of fidelity to the covenants made with their ancestors.³² Solberg does fairly recognize how those practicing what he labels as “Torahism,” can vary, as not all are extreme legalists trying to earn their salvation by human works. As he states in his 2022 update of *Are Christians Required to Keep the Law of Moses?*,

“When Torahism focuses on how our faith should be lived out, rather than how we are justified or saved, it is a matter between brothers and sisters in the faith. It’s a family disagreement on par with disputes about infant baptism versus believers’ baptism, or dispensationalism versus covenant theology. These are not unimportant issues. But they are secondary in the sense that there is room for disagreement among believers.”³³

Solberg would seemingly classify a ministry like Outreach Israel and Messianic Apologetics along these same lines, given our strong track record of speaking against legalism, inflexibility, works righteousness, and even Torah-olatry—and instead stressing it as part of a Believer’s sanctification and growth in holiness. While we would have strong theological differences and disagreements on the post-resurrection era validity of the Torah, and perhaps what the New Covenant involves (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27; Hebrews 8:7-13; 10:14-18), I doubt he would consider us as promoting things at the level of “heresy.”³⁴ However, to focus the considerable bulk of one’s ministry attention, as Solberg has, on people disregarding the post-resurrection era validity or relevance of God’s Torah, is likely to beg considerable, ongoing questions for the future and prophesied spread of lawlessness (Matthew 24:12). Many of the significant ethical and moral controversies, faced by evangelicalism, directly originate in disregarding the significance of the Torah or Law of Moses. Those who actively encourage people to dismiss the principles of the Torah and Tanach, are not in as strong a position as they think they are, to see Messiah followers incorporate the values and ethics of Yeshua of Nazareth.³⁵

³² R.L. Solberg, *Torahism: Are Christians Required to Keep the Law of Moses? Revised & Expanded* (Franklin, TN: Williamson College Press, 2022), 121 does recognize the value of various outward matters of Torah, as some part of Jewish cultural tradition and ethnic identity.

³³ *Ibid.*, 272.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

If necessary, consult the author’s Messianic Apologetics episode from 17 November 2021, “What is Heresy? What is Not Heresy?” accessible via <[youtube.com/MessianicApologetics](https://www.youtube.com/MessianicApologetics)>.

³⁵ For a useful review, consult Walter C. Kaiser, *Recovering the Unity of the Bible: One Continuous Story, Plan, and Purpose* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009).

The Torah of Messiah

Anyone who has entered into a quest of becoming “Torah observant” to some degree, is likely to have gone through a season of making some mistakes, and possibly even being a little legalistic and judgmental of others. We are each human, after all. I myself, as a part of my ongoing apologetics ministry, will frequently have to walk people through some of the mistakes and errors which I have made. This not only includes various personal matters of *halachah* or Torah application, but also how our ministry has had to make a few theological course corrections along the way.³⁶ In today’s Messianic sphere of influence, each of us has to navigate through many currents and eddies—ranging from Torah as a matter of (hyper-) Jewish identity, to Torah observance meriting a person eternal salvation, to those who look at the Pentateuch as something of Ancient Israel’s past and not “the Church’s” present or intended future.

Some of the most significant statements regarding the Torah for Messiah followers, are the following words issued by the Apostle Paul:

“Bear one another’s burdens, and in this way you fulfill the *Torah* of Messiah” (Galatians 6:2, TLV).

“...not being without law to God, but within law to Christ [Grk. *en nomos Christou*; or, within the Torah to Messiah]...” (1 Corinthians 9:21, YLT).

Here, the stress of Paul is seen, in how his orientation toward the Torah, or Law of Moses, was focused on “the *Torah’s* true meaning, which the Messiah upholds” (Galatians 6:2, CJSB). For many Biblical examiners, this points them to interacting with the challenging words of the Messiah in His Sermon on the Mount of Matthew chs. 5-7: **our Lord’s definitive interpretation and application of Moses’ Teaching**. While today’s Messianic community will interpret His fulfillment words of Matthew 5:17-19 as being supportive of the post-resurrection era continuance of practices such as the seventh-day Sabbath/*Shabbat*, appointed times or *moedim*, and kosher dietary laws—the considerable bulk of Matthew chs. 5-7, and the Messiah’s Torah teachings in general, related to the high ethical and moral matters of Moses’ Teaching.

While in the past, many Christian theologians advocated a wide distinction between an independent “Law of Christ”—in contrast to a previous Law of Moses—some trends indicate that this has begun to shift somewhat.³⁷ For today’s Messianic people, we ourselves need to see much of our examination of the Torah, and further Biblical teachings on its instructions and commandments, shift more toward what the Lord specified as “the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness” (Matthew 23:23, NASU). *Everyone in today’s Messianic com-*

³⁶ Consult the March 2023 issue of Outreach Israel News, “A Spiritual and Theological Refitting.”

³⁷ Consult the discussion offered by T. Wilson, “Law of Christ,” in Scot McKnight, Lynn H. Cohick, and Nijay K. Gupta, eds., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters, Second Edition* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2023), pp 622-625.

munity should agree how the Torah's weightier matters are to be followed. Unfortunately, due to many of the controversies I have been involved with since the 2000s, when we actually do start engaging with such weightier matters—I am desperately afraid that we may find that the spirituality of many Messianic people, and even various leaders, is quite shallow.³⁸

Are You Truly Called?

From the very start of Outreach Israel Ministries, our family has stressed that today's Messianic people—and especially those from evangelical Protestant backgrounds—have to make sure that their doing outward things of Torah is a genuine work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. *Is the power of the New Covenant supernaturally prompting someone to consider a Torah lifestyle, and sincerely writing God's Instruction onto a redeemed heart and mind?* Far too frequently, across the spectrum of non-Jewish people considering things like *Shabbat*, the appointed times, or a kosher style of diet—**this has not been witnessed**. The self-labeled “Torah movement,” in fact, has been responsible for a huge rise in legalism, judgmentalism, self-righteousness, and even a few later denying faith in Yeshua and converting/transitioning to some form of Messiah-less Judaism or Yahwism.

One of the frequent claims I have heard for many years, regarding some high necessity of non-Jewish Torah observance, is based on Romans 11:11: “I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their false step salvation has come to the Gentiles, to provoke Israel to jealousy” (TLV). Non-Jewish Believers in Israel's Messiah, apparently need to do outward things of Torah, in order to provoke Jewish people to Messiah faith. While non-Jewish Believers remembering things like *Shabbat* or various Biblical holidays can surely be worthwhile endeavors—and indeed can be the starting point of many legitimate conversations with Jewish people—doing outward matters of Torah alone is *hardly enough* to provoke Jewish people to Messiah faith! As further detailed by the Apostle Paul, the mercy shown to non-Jewish Believers must be reciprocated to Jewish people, who need to tangibly witness the transforming power, blessings, and peace of the good news:

“For just as you once were disobedient to God but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, in like manner these also have now been disobedient with the result that, because of the mercy shown to you, they also may receive mercy” (Romans 11:30-31, TLV).

Unfortunately, there have been many non-Jewish people—thinking that their “Torah observance” alone was going to provoke Jewish people to Messiah faith—who have later actually ended up leaving the Messiah. This was hardly the fault of God's Torah or its practices; **it was the fault of forgetting what the Messianic**

³⁸ I have had an open file for a *Sermon on the Mount for the Practical Messianic* commentary since 2018. It continues to get delayed on being written, perhaps indeed because there are future, unforeseen matters it will need to address.

mission was all about!³⁹

Today in much of the Messianic Jewish movement, there is a debate raging about whether it is God's ideal for all of God's people to be involved in outward things of Torah, beyond basic ethical or moral principles. Many have answered a direct "No" to this. Yet, what none of us deny, is that it is God's ideal for Jewish and non-Jewish Believers to be working together in the redemption of Israel and salvation of the Jewish people—especially in a time when anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism are on the extreme rise!⁴⁰ When non-Jewish Believers are active participants and members in Messianic congregations and synagogues, they are in a far better place to provoke Jews to jealousy to Messiah faith—tangibly demonstrating acts of kindness and mercy via the fulfillment of the Messianic mission, and the reconciliation present of being "one new man/humanity" (Ephesians 2:15)—than they would be supporting Israel from arms' length, from some various church setting.⁴¹

While there are debates in contemporary Messianic Judaism regarding the place of non-Jewish Believers and outward matters of Torah—which might cause some to think that Messianic Judaism as a whole tries to turn people away—Messianic Judaism experienced on the ground in much of North America, is actually majority non-Jewish. Many Messianic Jewish leaders and rabbis do correctly recognize the valued place of non-Jewish Believers in Messianic congregations and synagogues, even including them at all levels of local leadership as elders, deacons, and Messianic pastors. The main question which is asked is: **Are you called?** *especially at this phase of development.* Is a non-Jewish Believer going to be like the figure of Ruth (cf. Ruth 1:16-17), to the point of dying with one's Messianic Jewish brothers and sisters if necessary?

While many non-Jewish Believers have been positively exposed to their faith heritage in the Scriptures of Israel, and have partaken of the various blessings of outward matters of Torah—it is not enough to solely be seen fulfilling the prophecies of the nations streaming to Zion in the end-times to be taught from Moses' Teaching (Micah 4:1-3; Isaiah 2:2-4). Eventually, participating in a lifestyle of Torah and acclimating to the Messianic movement, **is to involve actively fulfilling the Messianic mission of Jewish outreach, evangelism, Israel solidarity, and standing against anti-Semitism.** *This is where many non-Jewish people involved in the Messianic movement, have actually been seen to move on to other places.* For my family, even given various challenges and current limitations of the Messianic Jewish movement—we have continued...

What good does it do anyone to reconnect with some kind of a theological foundation in the Torah and Tanach (OT)—to then not carry it through? All of us

³⁹ For a further review, consult the author's Messianic Apologetics episode from 11 February 2022, "Is Non-Jewish Torah Observance Really Provoking Jews to Jealousy?" accessible via <youtube.com/MessianicApologetics>.

⁴⁰ Consult the March 2024 issue of Outreach Israel News, "Why Are People Giving Up on Israel?"

⁴¹ If necessary, consult the author's analysis provided in "The Calling of Ruth and Non-Jewish Believers in Today's Messianic Movement" (appearing in *The Messianic Walk*).

need to have a burden for the lost souls of the Jewish people, just as the Apostle Paul had (cf. Romans 9:1-3). While I firmly believe in the post-resurrection era validity and continuance of Moses' Teaching, not enough who have stressed Torah validity, have then taken it to the next step of emphasizing active participation in the Messianic mission. Yet, I am seeing more and more non-Jewish Believers, whom the Lord once genuinely convicted about the need to plug into the Torah and Tanach—being stirred regarding the lack of evangelism and gospel proclamation in the varied non-Jewish Torah movements. Many are beginning to see their participation in things of Torah, now needing to mature into being decisively called into the Messianic mission! And while we do not need to be presumptuous, time is short! *Let's get on to the work of the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel (cf. Acts 1:6)!*

The New Testament Validates Torah is a study all Messianic people need, especially in terms of the future growth and expansion in which our faith community finds itself. On the whole, today's Messianic movement holds that the Torah or the Law of Moses remains valid instruction for God's people, and that Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) did not come to abolish or do away with it (Matthew 5:17-19). Yet throughout much of Christian history, many theologians have argued that the Law has been rendered inoperative, and/or that it was only to be followed by those in the pre-resurrection era. Many Messianics are incapable of responding to the common arguments delivered by their Christian family members, friends, acquaintances, or even various pastors and teachers they know—who quote verses to them from the Apostolic Scriptures (New Testament) which supposedly prove that the Law has been "done away."

Has Moses' Teaching been abolished? This publication is a lengthy study which analyzes and critically examines, in detail, a wide number of New Testament passages commonly offered as proof texts to claim that the Torah is not to be followed by those in the post-resurrection era. Statements such as not being "under the Law" (Romans 6:14-15), "Christ is the end of the Law" (Romans 10:4), "All things are lawful" (1 Corinthians 6:12), "abolishing...the Law of commandments contained in ordinances" (Ephesians 2:15), "having nailed it to the cross" (Colossians 2:14), and many more, are considered. Considerable attention is given to the Greek source text of the Apostolic Scriptures, and where translation errors into English appear to have been made by various modern versions. Cross-examination and discussion with various scholars have also been offered, as well as an exploration of important subjects present within today's Biblical Studies.

The New Testament Validates Torah is an important apologetic study which will benefit Messianics and evangelical Protestants alike. There is literally nothing in today's Messianic movement which has compiled as much information on Torah relevance for God's people into a single book. Also, unlike some other publications issued on the message of Torah relevance, *The New Testament Validates Torah* is highly respectful to Christian voices over the centuries who have valued what they have considered to be the "moral law" of the Old Testament, and seeks to honor those who have preceded us in the faith.

