

The End of the Law for Rabbi Lichtenstein: An Early Messianic Jewish Interpretation of Romans 10:4

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What Paul meant by the word ‘*telos*’ (τέλος) in Romans 10:4 has long been debated. “Messiah is the *telos* of the law for righteousness for all who believe.” Does it imply ‘end’ in the sense of termination? Does it mark the law as ‘finished’? Or, does it mean ‘goal’ or ‘aim,’ indicating that the Torah points to the King Messiah?¹ In spite of the Church’s long history assuming the former, there is a well founded and growing consensus that it means the latter. The reading “For the Messiah is the *goal* of the Torah for righteousness for all who believe” is accepted by many fine scholars to be the correct interpretation, one that fits best with Paul’s line of thought both in his letter to the Romans and other writings.² I agree with this translation because it makes the most sense to me.

But why does this matter? What are the implications involved when choosing between ‘end’ and ‘goal’? First, if we adopt “Messiah is the *end* of the Torah” as our reading, it can slip very quickly into the assumption that the law had in some way been abolished so that God could bring righteousness through a different means. It would be to say that God gave Israel an opportunity to become righteous through the Torah, but since they failed, He had to come up with another way. But in order to implement this second plan, He somehow had to do away with the first. This reading posits that before the Messiah came one could indeed earn righteousness through observance of the Torah. Second, it suggests anyone still observing the commandments given in Plan A has not only failed to understand the truth of the Gospel but is helplessly stuck trying to merit a right standing before God through their own works. Sadly, such a reading has found a comfortable home among Christian theologians for centuries.

On the other hand, if we choose “The Messiah is the *goal* of the Torah” as our reading, many passages of Scripture begin to sparkle like the stars in heaven. “*Thus it is written, that the*

1 See BDAG, p. 998-999 for the semantic range of *telos*.

2 Though their various conclusions differ, see for example: Tobin, Thomas H. “Romans 10:4: Christ the Goal of the Law” in David T. Runia, ed., *The Studia Philonica Annual: Studies in Hellenistic Judaism*, Vol. III (Scholars Press: Atlanta, GA: 1991) 272-280; Hegg, Tim, *Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, Vol II (Tacoma, WA: TorahResource, 2005) 316-319; Piper, John, *The Future of Justification* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007) pp.191-195; Wright, N.T. *Justification* (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009) 240-248.

Messiah should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:46-47); “*If you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me*” (John 5:46); “*Behold, in the volume of the book it is written of Me*” (Hebrews 10:7). The very next verses of Romans 10 are quotes from the Law and Prophets that testify of Yeshua! He is the goal, and through Him alone is righteousness for all who believe. With this interpretation of Romans 10:4 we sharpen our discernment of a unified story, centered upon the promised life, suffering, death, and resurrection of Yeshua the Messiah son of David, son of Abraham; the Great Story authored before time began by none other than the holy and blessed Creator of Worlds.

The popular Christian view that supports the ‘end’ or ‘abolition’ rendering of *telos* in our passage is dismantled by N. T. Wright³ in his 2009 book, *Justification*. Wright emphasizes that fact that God’s law is given in a context of grace.

...Paul’s entire understanding of the Mosaic law is that it never was intended as a ladder of good works up which one might climb to earn the status of “righteousness.” It was given, yes, as the way of life (Romans 7:10), but it was the way of life *for a people already redeemed*... God did not say to Israel in Egypt, “Here is my Torah; if you keep it perfectly for a year or two, then I will liberate you from your slavery,” but “I am liberating you now because I promised Abraham I would do so; when, and only when, I have done so, I will give you the way of life that you will need for when you come into your promised land.” ...the Torah, the Mosaic law, was never given or intended as a means whereby either an individual or the nation as a whole might, through obedience, earn liberation from slavery, redemption, rescue, salvation, “righteousness” or whatever else. The gift always preceded the obligation. This is how Israel’s covenant theology worked.⁴

3 Though I lean heavily on some of Wright’s scholarship, I do not agree with all his conclusions. Wright believes the dietary laws, circumcision, and Sabbath were abolished by Messiah. However, Wright’s solid grasp on the proper definition of “righteousness” is extremely helpful for my purposes in this paper specifically and understanding of Scripture generally (see note 7 below).

4 Wright, *Justification*, pp. 231-232. Cf. Exodus 6:1-8. However, an early rabbinic midrash in the Mekhilta (Bo, Chapter 5) views the redemption as reward rather than gift or fulfillment of promise, and states that God gave two commandments prior to liberation – circumcision and the blood of the paschal lamb – so that Israel might merit the deliverance from Egypt. The midrash argues, “One does not receive a reward except by deeds” (שאיין מעשה גוטלין שבר אלא על ידי מעשה). Of course, the Apostle Paul would agree (cf. Romans 4:4 and 11:6), but most likely

If we are willing to follow Wright's thoughts carefully, it becomes unimaginable that Paul would suggest that Messiah has changed the way one becomes righteous. Tradition has expected us to hear him say, "It used to be that we had to earn it on our own, but now Messiah has come and we are righteous by faith. God said we don't have to earn it anymore. We are free!"

Put in these somewhat exaggerated terms, it becomes clearer that the older reading of Romans 10:4 cannot be correct. Nonetheless, this is precisely how one of the 19th century Messianic Jewish commentators read the text. Along with Franz Delitzsch, the Lutheran scholar twenty years his senior, Rabbi J. Z. Lichtenstein⁵ translated the Greek word *telos* with the Hebrew 'sof' (סוף). Drawing from his commentaries on Romans, 1 Timothy, and Acts, I will demonstrate in this paper that R' Lichtenstein (herein R'L) understood *sof* to mean 'end' in the Christian sense of 'termination' and 'abolition.' But this misunderstanding is not in and of itself surprising.⁶ What makes this particularly interesting for the history of interpretation of Romans 10:4 is this Messianic Jewish scholar held the commandments of the Torah to be eternally binding upon the people of Israel. The juxtaposition of these two assumptions – one, that Messiah is the end of the Torah, and two, that the Torah has not been abolished for Israel – creates a tension that is difficult to navigate hermeneutically. At the end of the paper, I will share my thoughts on the challenge this interpretive tradition holds for Messianic scholarship today, particularly for those who share Lichtenstein's conviction that Torah is for Jews alone.

With the stage set, we can now proceed to the texts themselves. What better place to start than with R'L's commentary on Romans 10:4. (Original Hebrew texts can be found in the Appendix.)

"For the Messiah is the end of the Torah for righteousness for all who believe in Him."

He means by this that which he said in the previous verse *"For they did not submit to the righteousness of God"* and they desired only works, for the Messiah is the end of the

viewed the Exodus as unmerited (1 Corinthians 10; Acts 13:17-18).

- 5 See the helpful article by Jorge Quiñónez, "An Introductory Bio-Bibliography to Jechiel Zebi Herschensohn-Lichtenstein (1831-1912)," *Kesher* 15 (2002), p. 78-89. Quiñónez writes, "It is hoped that this brief overview will stimulate further discussion and interest in translating some of his writings from Hebrew into English; a thorough and critical analysis of his life and work is certainly required" (p. 88). I am thankful for Quiñónez's efforts on this front, and hope that this article is received as a small contribution toward the type of critical analysis he envisioned.
- 6 On the adoption of faulty Christian dogma by 19th century Messianic Jews, see my paper "19th Century Messianic 'Sages' in Context," available online at http://www.torahresource.com/EnglishArticles/sages_in_context_final.pdf

Torah for righteousness as is clear in 3:19-22, “*For the righteousness of God without the Torah has been revealed, etc...*” And even though the Messiah did not abolish the Torah and said that all the days of heaven and earth not one stroke of a *yod* will be abolished from the Torah until they are all fulfilled (Matthew 5), yet as touching righteousness by which a man will be justified He is the end of the Torah. And this is why he said, “*for righteousness for all who believe in Him.*”⁷

This reads a bit clumsily, as the Hebrew is not easily rendered into smooth English.

Nevertheless, the ideas he presents are not easily reconcilable. In his commentary on the very next verse, R’L puts it slightly differently: “For in truth the Torah will never be abolished for the people of Israel. However, in the matter of justification the Messiah is the end of the Torah...” In very close proximity, he has these two times juxtaposed the notion of ‘abolish’ (Hebrew *bittul* ביטול) with that of ‘end’ (*sof*). His belief in the continuing validity of the Torah is in both instances qualified with a reference to 10:4.

Lichtenstein’s comments on 1 Timothy 1:8 provide us another opportunity to clarify what exactly he means by “end of the Torah,” for he uses the phrase here as well.

“*For the Torah is good if man uses it according to Torah...*” That is, that he should not transgress it and he should fulfill all its commandments, but since it is weak because of the flesh and man has no power to fulfill all its commandments (Romans 8), therefore the Messiah came in order to be the end of the Torah for the righteousness of the believers (Romans 10:4). And through Him they will be saved with eternal salvation.”

“Messiah came in order to be the end of the Torah...” (להיות סוף התורה) The comments here sound similar to the exaggerated Plan A/Plan B scenario described above: Man *should* keep the

7 Of key concern here, yet beyond the scope of this paper, is the definition of “righteousness” (*dikaiousune* in Greek or *tzedekah* in Hebrew). I follow N.T. Wright’s Hebrew Law Court definition here, distinguishing between the “righteousness of God,” which consists of His covenant faithful (Rom. 1:1-5, 15:8), non-person respecting (Rom. 2:11), un-bribeable (Rom. 2:23) attributes as Judge on the one hand with the “righteousness” of the believer – that is, God’s verdict of “not guilty” which He has declared over those who confess Messiah Yeshua as their Master and Savior on the other. It seems to me that R’L has only a vague definition of the word, though he does equate it in some manner with life in the world to come. For a good overview of the law court understanding of “righteousness,” see Wright, *What St. Paul Really Said* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1997).

commandments for righteousness, but since he is a sinner and cannot do so, Messiah came to be the end of the Torah for righteousness. Now, instead of the commandments man only needs faith. And though Lichtenstein believes this to be true, he is always quick to insist that Jews are still obligated to keep the Torah.

The next three passages taken from Lichtenstein's commentary to Acts 15 are a bit more extensive. As with the comments we have already seen, they will show not only how important he considered Romans 10:4 to be in discussions about Torah and faith, but how solid he was in defining *telos* to mean 'termination' and 'end.'

In as much as the Torah's power is weakened through the flesh (Romans 8:3), and there is no man who does not sin and fulfills the Torah perfectly, and therefore we are not able to obtain eternal life through the Torah on our part (not on the part of the Torah, heaven forbid), it is for this that faith in the Messiah is profitable. And thus Paul said to the Romans (3:31) "*And now are we abolishing the Torah through faith? Heaven forbid! Rather, we are establishing the Torah,*" and that faith came because from the works of the Torah no flesh will be justified before Him, for all of them are sinners and are justified freely by the grace of the Messiah (20-24). This was the foundation of the believers and apostles. And as he said to the Romans in 10:4, "*the Messiah is the end of the Torah,*" he explained there "*for righteousness for all who believe in Him*" that only in the matter of justification is the Messiah the end of the Torah...

According to R'L's view, God's purpose for giving the Torah was for man to obtain eternal life (להשיג חיי עולם). But because of man's sinfulness, he was unable to earn it. For this very reason God ended the Torah – but only with respect to meriting the world to come. Therefore, not all the Torah is eternal. Another excerpt from this same section of commentary elaborates.

...in the Torah, Moses gives (Deuteronomy 6:20-25) the reason for the commandments: "*When your son will ask you, saying, 'What are the testimonies and the statutes, etc...?' Then you will say to your son, 'We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and (Hashem) delivered us, etc... and commanded us to do, etc... and it will be our righteousness before Hashem our God, etc...'*" (The Scripture also says "*And this will be righteousness for you before Hashem your God*" (Deut. 24:14), and this means "in the world to come," as

Rabbeinu Bachya rightly interpreted.⁸) If then there are two reasons for the commandments, the second reason - which is for righteousness - He abolished after the death of the Messiah. However, the first reason He did not abolish, and this is only for the people of Israel, who were in Egypt and to whom were given the commandments of the nation. But as for the Gentiles who were not in Egypt and desire to be a nation for themselves – a nation of Greeks, a nation of Romans, a nation of Germans, etc... – and since it is no longer necessary to join to the nation of Israel for justification, as it appears to me, why would they want to take the Torah upon themselves for nothing?

To make better sense of Lichtenstein's view that the commandments have "two meanings," we need to first understand his brief reference to a medieval Spanish kabbalist's Torah commentary. Rabbeinu Bachya taught that the commandments had both temporal (this worldly) and eternal (next worldly) rewards. The words "good" (טוב) and "righteousness" (צדקה) in Deuteronomy 6:24-25 were interpreted as rewards in the world to come.⁹ R' Lichtenstein follows R' Bachya's teaching here, only to add that Messiah's death marked the end (*sof*) of the second type of reward for the commandments: that for eternal life. By sending Messiah, God switched the basis for reward in the world to come: what was originally based upon Torah observance was now based entirely upon faith. Gentiles, as Gentiles, can have a share in heaven – and it has nothing to do with Torah!

Perhaps now it is easier to understand why R'L would be perplexed by a Gentile who is drawn to observe the commandments. As he writes, "...since it is no longer necessary to join to the nation of Israel for justification... why would they want to take the Torah upon themselves for nothing?" There is no merit! Why would a Gentile, who can simply believe in the Messiah to have a portion in the world to come, want to observe Torah? To him this just did not make any sense. In his mind, such observance could only stem from a misunderstanding of the work of Messiah. This same line of reasoning continues with his comments on Acts 15:18:

8 Rabbeinu Bachya (mid 12th – mid 13th centuries) was a Spanish Kabbalist whose teacher was a disciple of Ramban (Nachmanides).

9 R' Bachya is not alone in this interpretation, for the older Targum Jonathan translates Deuteronomy 6:25 "...and righteousness will be kept for us in the world to come, if we keep all these commandments to do them before Adonai our God just as He commanded us."

“...therefore why would we place a yoke¹⁰ upon the disciples from the Gentiles which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear,” for we stumbled in sins, and there is no man that does not sin (1 Kings 8:46), and only by the grace of the Messiah we are saved. However, it is forbidden for us to remove this yoke from our necks because (Hashem) placed the Torah upon us. But as for the disciples from the Gentiles upon which He did not place the Torah – for according to the Messiah they are our complete brothers – why would they receive upon themselves a yoke like this, which is no longer necessary?

Certainly, Lichtenstein is correct to point out that the Torah reveals sinfulness and that we are saved only by the grace of Messiah. But why then would he go on to suggest that the solution to the sin problem is to exclude Gentiles from the Torah? And with the last phrase, “a yoke... which is no longer necessary” (Heb. שאינו נצרך עוד), a phrase he also used in our previous excerpt, R’L again underscores his conviction that with Messiah’s death God “changed the rules” by which one becomes righteous. Before Messiah, a Gentile had to take on this yoke to be saved; after, he need only believe.

I now introduce a final excerpt from the work of R’ Lichtenstein. This is taken from his comments on Acts 21:24, another context in which he felt a reference to Romans 10:4 was necessary. Here, he criticizes Christian scholars (חכמי הנוצרים) for their tradition that the law was completely abolished for Israel.

And every misery came to the Christian scholars, for according to (their) inaccurate view of the letters of Paul to the Gentiles, it appears that the Torah was abolished even for the Children of Israel... [Rather,] all the words of Paul in his letters regarding the abolition of the Torah are only in the matter of justification,¹¹ as he says in Romans 10:4 “*For the*

10 In line with popular Christian tradition, R’L equates the “yoke” mentioned here by Shimon Kefa with the commandments. For a clearly reasoned rejection of this position, see Tim Hegg’s article, “Acts 15 and the Jerusalem Council,” (TorahResource, 2008) pp. 2-6; available online at <http://www.torahresource.com/EnglishArticles/Acts%2015.pdf>. Hegg writes, “Rather, the yoke they are unwilling to place upon the backs of the Gentile believers is the yoke of man-made rules and laws. Indeed, the layer upon layer of rabbinic additions to the Torah has made the whole matter a burden, and even at times clouded the very purpose of the Torah” (p. 6). I prefer we use “pharisaic additions” rather than “rabbinic” in the specific case of Acts 15 to guard against anachronism and limit ourselves as much as possible to the lexicon used by Luke and the other Apostles. Certainly, “rabbinic” is both helpful and appropriate when discussing these same trajectories as they span into the mishnaic and talmudic periods.

11 Concerning Lichtenstein’s tendency to think of Messiah as the end of “Torah-for-righteousness,” see N.T. Wright’s commentary on our verse in, *The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary: Vol. X, Romans* (Nashville,

Messiah is the end of the Torah for righteousness for all who believe in Him,” and he means by this that the Gentiles, to whom the Torah was not given (for throughout the Torah it says, “*Speak to the Children of Israel...*”), but were given the commandments of the Children of Noah,¹² they desired to fulfill the Torah only for justification. Paul cries out about this, that the righteousness of the Messiah alone is sufficient. But the Children of Israel, to whom the Torah was given for an everlasting statute, are obligated to fulfill it, even when it is not for the sake of justification...”

Time and again when R’L mentions Gentiles observing Torah, he assumes they are doing so in order to merit righteousness. Knowing in his heart that such efforts to merit eternal life are wrong, and that salvation is rather a free gift of God, based upon Yeshua’s redemptive work on our behalf, he concludes that Gentiles have no portion in the Torah, save for the so-called “Seven Commandments” given to Noah. It is apparent that Lichtenstein simply could not conceive of Gentile Torah observance motivated by anything other than the desire to be justified before God. The Torah is for Israel, but righteousness is for all who believe, regardless of what nation they are from.

Rabbi Lichtenstein’s interpretive legacy lives on. There are those who still affirm that the Torah is for Jews alone. Gentiles need only have faith in Messiah and keep the Noachide Laws. I would suggest that the posture of such a reading today relies too heavily on a non-biblical, cultural bias inherited from European Jewish tradition and not enough on sound scholarship and solid grounding in the sources themselves. Though the study of the precious works of Jewish scholars of our faith are profitable, any move to uphold Rabbi Lichtenstein as a “Messianic Sage” for today should be tempered with honest criticism rather than dreamy romanticism. I hope to have shown that the foundations of Lichtenstein’s views concerning Torah and righteousness are shaky in at least one very significant place. It will not stand under the scrutiny of scholarship. His attempt to reconcile a 19th century reading of Paul with a 19th century

TN: Abingdon Press, 2002). Discussing the grammatical construction of the Greek phrase, Wright explains, “Nor can “unto righteousness” modify “law,” making the meaning that “Christ is the end of the ‘law-unto-righteousness”” (p. 656).

12 For a description of the problems involved with projecting the rabbinic legal category “Children of Noah” (*bnei noah*) onto earlier texts, and of the distortions and misunderstandings that follow such anachronism, see Tim Hegg’s 2006 paper, “Do the Seven, Go to Heaven: A Investigation into the History of the Noachide Laws.” Hegg argues that the ruling in Acts 15 served to separate Gentiles from idolatry. The article is available online at <http://www.torahresource.com/EnglishArticles/NoachideETS2.pdf>

perception of rabbinic tradition, though laudable, does not provide 21st century Messianics anything sturdy to build on when it comes to understanding faith and Torah.

Given his reliance on Romans 10:4, Lichtenstein evidently considered it a key passage. Unfortunately, he mistook what Paul meant by it. This misunderstanding can and must be corrected. It must be reworked and tested rather than denied and ignored. The challenge for Messianic Judaism today is to take this lesson to heart, to let patience have her perfect work when seeking to understand and apply the Scriptures, and to chart a course forward with new and inspiring articulations of a faith that boldly affirms the Torah of the Messiah for the body of Messiah.

Appendix

Excerpts from Lichtenstein's Commentaries

Romans 10:4

כי משיח סוף התורה לצדקה לכל המאמין בו, מפרש בזה מה שאמר בפסוק הקידם לצדקת אלהים לא נכנעו והם רוצים רק במעשים, כי המשיח הוא סוף התורה לצדקה וכמבואר למעלה ג' 19-22 כי צדקת אלהים בלי תורה לאור יצאה וגו'. ואף כי המשיח לא ביטל התורה ואמר כל ימי שמים וארץ לא יבטל אף קיצו של יוד מן התורה עד אשר יעשו כלם (מתי ה' 16 ע"ש) ואולם בנוגע לצדקה שיצדק האדם על ידו הוא סוף התורה וזה שאמר לצדקה לכל המאמין בו והבן, ועמ"ש במעשי השליחים ט"ו בזה.

Romans 10:5 (excerpt)

כי באמת התורה לא תבטל לעולם לעם ישראל, ואך לענין הצדקה המשיח סוף התורה...

1 Timothy 1:8

אבל כי התורה טובה אם ישתמש בה האדם כתורה היינו שלא יעבר עליה ויקיים כל מצותיה, אך בעבור כי נחלשה על ידי הבשר ואין בכח האדם לקיים כל מצותיה (רומיים ח) ולכן המשיח בא להיות סוף התורה לצדקת המאמינים (שם י' 4) ועל ידו יושעו תשועת עולמים.

Acts 15 (excerpt #1)

אל במה שהתורה נחלש כחה בידי הבשר (רומיים ח' 3) ואין אדם אשר לא יחטא ולא יקיים התורה בשלימות וע"כ לא נוכל להשיג חיי עולם ע"י התורה מצדנו (ולא מצד התורה ח"ו) לזה תועיל אמונת המשיח. וכן אמר פולוס לרומיים (ג' 31) ועתה המבטלים אנחנו את התורה ע"י האמונה חלילה אך מקימים אנחנו את התורה, והאמונה באה יען אשר ממעשי התורה לא יצדק לפניו כל בשר כי כולם חוטאים ויצדקו חנם בחסדו ע"י במשיח (שם 20-24). זה היה יסוד של המאמינים והשליחים. (ומ"ש לרומיים י' 4 המשיח סוף התורה פירש שם לצדקה לכל המאמין בו כי רק בענין הצדקה המשיח סוף התורה...

Acts 15 (excerpt #2)

...כי משה אמר בתורה (דברים ו' כ' – כ"ה) בטעם המצות: כי ישאלך בנך מחר לאמר מה העדות והחקים וגו' ואמרת לבנך עבדים היינו לפרעה במצרים ויוציאנו וגו' ויצונו לעשות וגו', וצדקה תהיה לנו וגו' לפני ה' אלהינו (ע"ד הכתוב ולך תהיה צדקה לפני ה' אלהיך שם כ"ד י"ד והכונה בעולם הבא כמו שפירש רבינו בחיי על נכון). אם כן נתן שני טעמים אל המצות והטעם השני בעבור הצדקה בעל אחר מות המשיח, ואולם הטעם הראשון לא בטל וזה רק לעם ישראל שהיו במצרים והוא להם מצות האומה אבל הגוים שלא היו במצרים ורוצים להיות אומה בפני עצמה, אומת היונים, אומת

הרומיים, אומת האשכנזים וכו' ולא להספח על אומת ישראל כלל, ובעבור הצדקה אין צורך עוד כנ"ל למה להם לקבל על עצמם התורה בחנם.

Acts 15 (excerpt #3)

וע"כ למה נשים עול על תלמודי הגוים אשר גם אנחנו גם אבותינו לא יוכלנו לשאת כי נכשלונו בחטאים ואין איש אשר לא יחטא (מלכים א' ח' 46) ואך בחסד המשיח נושע, ואולם אנחנו אסור לנו להסיר העול הזה מעל צוארנו כי התורה העילה עלינו אבל תלמידי הגוים שהתורה לא העילה עליהם והם לפי המשיח א ח י ם ג מ ו ל י ם לנו לכל דבר למה יקבלו עליהם עול כזה שאינו נצרך עוד.

Acts 21

וכל העמל אל חכמי הנוצרים בא, כי מן אגרות פולוס אל הגוים נראה שמבטל התורה אף לבני ישראל לפי ההשקפה שלא בדקדוק... כל דברי פולוס באגרותיו בביטול התורה הוא רק בענין הצדקה כמ"ש לרומיים י' 4 כי המשיח סוף התורה לצדקה לכל המאמין בו, ויוצא מזה כי הגוים אשר להם לא נתנה התורה כלל (כי בכל התורה נאמר דבר אל בני ישראל) ואך מצות בני נח, והם רצו לקיים התורה רק בעבור הצדקה וצעק פולוס ע"ז כי צדקת המשיח לבדו די. אבל בני ישראל שלהם נתנה התורה לחקת עולם מחויבים לקיים אותה אף כעת לא בעבור הצדקה...

Rabbeinu Bachya on Deuteronomy 6:24

רבינו בחיי על התורה: דברים ו' כ"ד

(כד) ויצונו ה' לעשות את כל החקים האלה ליראה את ה' אלהינו. באר בכאן שכר המצות ואמר כי העיקר והכוונה שנצטוונו בכל החקים האלה הוא יראת השם והוא יסוד לכל המצות. וכשאמר לטוב לנו כל הימים לחיותינו כהיום הזה. באר כי המצות יש בהן תועלת לגוף ולנפש. לטוב לנו כל הימים זה תועלת הנפש לעוה"ב כי הם הנקראים ימים וזהו מש"כ בצדיקים (בראשית כ"ד) בא בימים בלשון ידיעה כי הוא מתקרב לאותן הימים הארוכים הנצחיים אותן שהזכיר דוד עליהם (תהלים ל"ד) מי האיש תחפץ חיים אוהב ימים לראות טוב כי באותן הימים יזכה האדם לטוב הצפון, לחיותנו כהיום הזה תועלת הגוף בעוה"ז והוסיף בו ה"א לפי שהעולם הזה נברא בה', ומה שתקדים תחלה תועלת הנפש למעלתו ועוד כי העוה"ב נברא קודם העוה"ז, ואח"כ אמר וצדקה תהי' לנו לפני ה' אלהינו הוסיף לבאר כי אותו טוב שיהיה לנו יהיה לפני ה' אלהינו וקראו צדקה ז"ש וצדקה תהי' לנו לפני ה' אלהינו וזה בעולם הנשמות ולכך ת"א ע"ה זוכו. והנה נתבאר בכאן בפ' שכר העוה"ב והוא סיום התשובה וחתמתה לשאלת הבנים לדורות למען יאמינו וישכילו וידעו כי יש במעשה המצות גמול ושכר גופני ונפשי, גופני הוא שאמר לתת לנו את הארץ שהיא כוללת כל טובת העוה"ז ושלותו בהיותה ארץ זבת חלב ודבש. נפשי הוא שאמר לטוב לנו כל הימים וצדקה תהי' לנו לפני ה' אלהינו והנה זה עיקר גדות תזכור אותו תמיד: