

Torah

Our Expression of Love to the Lord

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"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."

Yeshua (Jesus) John 14:15



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Preface

God wants His people to love Him. This is evident from the many passages of Scripture that says so.

The question I raise in this book is not so much a question of, “Should we love God?” I believe most people of God can come to an agreement on this point, but rather of the question, “How *is* loving God to be *expressed* by us?”

I think this is where we would find a difference of understanding in our expression to Him. For example, in our expressions of love within the range of human experience we kiss, we touch, we hug, we say words of endearment, we give cards, flowers and gifts, we do good things for, and lastly, for the one we are most deeply committed in love toward, we express sexual intimacy with the person of our affection.

This is well and good when it comes to expressions of human intimacy because we have flesh and emotion to bring into this equation: We can actually *touch* and have intercourse (sexual and non-sexual) with the other person to express intimacy. Not so with God, for He is Spirit.

Yet, many of us who love God desire to become intimate with Him and to express our love without reservation to Him. That should be all of our desire.

True love does not *count* how often one expresses love toward the other person. It simply *does* the expression without consideration of the cost!

Many poems and songs have been written through the centuries about love and sharing how far one would go to express it to another. There is no limit, no boundaries, placed on what a person would do for another whom they love – at least, according to the poets and song-writers:



Love Knows No Bounds¹

As I walked along through this world
Each foot neatly in a row
I wondered where the road would take me
If I'd walk the trail alone
Now you give my life direction
Though it's never a straight line
So we'll forge a path together
Your tiny steps with mine

Chorus:

And for you I'd walk through fire
I would swim the deepest sea
I would climb the highest mountain
Oppose all adversity
For in you I see the miracle I found
Love knows no bounds
Love knows no bounds

But for as noble as the above song lyrics sound, is this indicative of what true, everlasting love is all about? Or is it what we make of it in our own minds?

If our expression of love is true, and for life, I ask: why is the divorce rate so high, even among believers in God; and especially when we take our vows expressing our love before Him?

I am afraid that too many of us (believers included) have fallen for the Hollywood version of what love is. We have fallen for the “warm, gushy feelings” of intimacy (or what we think of is intimacy) that Hollywood says it is.

We have fallen for a “touchy-feely,” non-lasting substitute that depends upon the feelings of the individuals involved and not the substance of the meaning of love.

¹ Song lyrics from “*The Shores of Les Cheneaux*,” Mary Gerwin, © 2004 Gifted Music, ASCAP All Rights Reserved.

In today's society, we see people who once "loved" each other deeply and would do *anything* for the other person now come and say to the partner, "I don't feel love for you anymore. I need to find my own way; to do my own thing."

What was once considered "unbounded" for them toward the other person is now too much bondage for them.

We need to realize that love does not consist of "feelings," though it *will* have feelings for the other person. Instead, we must learn that love is a covenant: a commitment to the other person that no matter what happens, through thick and thin, we will loyally stay by the other – till death do we part.

And that brings me to the heart of this book: that is what love for God is all about! Loving Him all the way to the end!

We need to have a covenant, a commitment towards Him that must be reflected in our expressions of love toward Him!

From the Scriptures, we learn that God is a covenant-making God and He is the One who institutes the covenant we have with Him. He is the One who instituted the covenant of marriage in human institutions to give us an earthly touch of what it means to have a covenant with Him and He is the One who institutes the covenant we have with Him: which is likened to the marriage covenant!

He says of His relationship to us in Isaiah 54: "For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called..."

We are betrothed to Him (2 Corinthians 11:2): "For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ."

Though the covenant of marriage between humans with each other and between He and us are similar and relate to each other in similar terms as found in Scripture – the expression of our love-commitment to Him is different!

Why? Because we are flesh and blood and He is spirit!

We cannot express our love to Him by kissing Him, or hugging Him, or giving Him a gift, or by saying words of love, or “climbing the highest mountain,” or “swimming the deepest sea”...or anything else we would use in our human love expressions to reflect and show our love for Him! They are inadequate, in fact, even impossible!

Yet, we need to express our love for Him in some way: but how? How can we give “hands” to someone who is incorporeal, who cannot be held, or touched, or embraced?

Well, He tells us how in His Word: “If you love Me, keep My commandments.”

So, if you want to know how to express your love for Him, He has told you.

Some believers think that all we have to do is simply praise and worship Him and pray to Him and this is all that we need to do to show our love to Him. Well, it is true that these expressions are ways of expressing our love to Him, but I need to remind you what Yeshua/Jesus said to the Pharisees about words and lip-service:

¹³ Then the Lord said, "Because this people draw near with their words And honor Me with their lip service, But they remove their hearts far from Me, And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned *by rote*... **Isaiah 29**

Many words do not worship make – at least to God. Yeshua said (Matthew 6:7):

"And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their **many words**."

The fact that you go to church or synagogue and sing songs, or pray prayers, or do religious things does not mean that God is pleased with your expression of love. Word expressions of love are not substitutes for the covenant-relationship one should have with Him!

And that covenant-relationship is expressed by Him in the passage that says:

“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”

Thus, if you truly want to *express your love towards Him*, keep His commandments – else if you reject His Law, even your prayers may be an abomination!

In Proverbs 28:9, He says:

He who turns away his ear from listening to the law, Even his **prayer** is an **abomination**.

You may pray and pray, but if you are *disobeying Him* (not expressing love toward Him in the way He defines it) you may be on the *wrong side* of the fence with Him.

Yeshua/Jesus asked in Luke 6:46, “Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?”

There are many in this world today who call upon the Lord, but Yeshua/Jesus said that not everyone who cries “Lord, Lord” will be saved, but he who does the will of the Father (Matthew 7:21):

"Not everyone who says to Me, '**Lord, Lord**,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who *does* the will of My Father who is in heaven {will enter.}

Here again, we have that pesky word “do.”

And just what is the will of the Father? The will of the Father is for us to *obey Him*:

“So you shall **keep** My **commandments**, and do them; I am the LORD.” (Leviticus 22:31)

"So you shall **keep** His statutes and His **commandments** which I am giving you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may live long on the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time." (Deuteronomy 4:40)

“Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and **keep** all My **commandments** always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever!” (Deuteronomy 5:29)

"Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and **keep** His **commandments**; (Deuteronomy 7:9)

"You shall follow the LORD your God and fear Him; and you shall **keep** His **commandments**, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him." (Deuteronomy 13:4)

"The LORD has today declared you to be His people, a treasured possession, as He promised you, and that you should **keep** all His **commandments**..." (Deuteronomy 26:18)

"The LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself, as He swore to you, if you **keep** the **commandments** of the LORD your God and walk in His ways." (Deuteronomy 28:9)

"Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God and walk in all His ways and **keep** His **commandments** and hold fast to Him and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul." (Joshua 22:5)

"The conclusion, when all has been heard, {is:} fear God and **keep** His **commandments**, because this {applies to} every person." (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

"And He said to him, "Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is {only} One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, **keep** the **commandments**." (Matthew 19:17)

"If you love Me, you will **keep** My **commandments**." (John 14:15)

"If you **keep** My **commandments**, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's **commandments** and abide in His love." (John 15:10)

“By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we **keep His commandments**.” (1 John 2:3)

“The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not **keep His commandments**, is a liar, and the truth is not in him...” (1 John 2:4)

“For this is the love of God, that we **keep His commandments**; and His **commandments** are not burdensome.” (1 John 5:3)

“So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who **keep the commandments** of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.” (Revelation 12:17)

“Here is the perseverance of the saints who **keep the commandments** of God and their faith in Jesus.” (Revelation 14:12)

Evidently, as seen by these (and many more) Scriptures in both the Older and Newer Testaments of the Bible: *obedience* to His commandments *is* the *evidence* of your *love* for Him. It is evidence you have a relationship with Him.

It is not many prayers, speaking in tongues, lifting up your hands, many words, many songs, many good deeds (apart from the Torah – and even that is conditioned by your motives) that show that you have a relationship with Him! It is your obedience to His commandments that does!

So you may wonder, and the question you need to ask yourself: “Am I truly one of His? Do I truly know Him?”

The answer is found in 1 John 2, a passage which tells us how we can know that we truly know Him: ³By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴ The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; ⁵ but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: ⁶ the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked. ⁷ Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard.”

Do you think that you have a heart-felt relationship with Him? Do you want to know? Then obey His commandments. Do you really love Him? Do you really want to know? Then keep His commandments.

Not out of legalistic, self righteous observance to the commandments; but rather, out of love to Him! Not by the letter, but by the Spirit of the Law! You will discover that the Torah is not a set of legalistic rules, of do's and don'ts that you have to follow into bondage. It is as David expressed in Psalm 119 (I encourage you to read the whole thing. And, yes, we're talking about what is often called "the Law." It is better translated, "Instructions":

¹ How blessed are those whose way is blameless,
Who walk in the law of the LORD.

² How blessed are those who observe His testimonies,
Who seek Him with all *their* heart.

³ They also do no unrighteousness;
They walk in His ways.

¹⁰ With all my heart I have sought You;
Do not let me wander from Your commandments.

¹¹ Your word I have treasured in my heart,
That I may not sin against You.

¹⁵ I will meditate on Your precepts
And regard Your ways.

¹⁶ I shall delight in Your statutes;
I shall not forget Your word.

¹⁷ Deal bountifully with Your servant,
That I may live and keep Your word.

¹⁸ Open my eyes, that I may behold
Wonderful things from Your law.

- ³³ Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes,
And I shall observe it to the end.
- ³⁴ Give me understanding, that I may observe Your law
And keep it with all *my* heart.
- ³⁵ Make me walk in the path of Your commandments,
For I delight in it.
- ⁴⁴ So I will keep Your law continually,
Forever and ever.
- ⁴⁵ And I will walk at liberty,
For I seek Your precepts.
- ⁴⁷ I shall delight in Your commandments,
Which I love.
- ⁴⁸ And I shall lift up my hands to Your commandments,
Which I love;
And I will meditate on Your statutes.
- ⁶⁶ Teach me good discernment and knowledge,
For I believe in Your commandments.
- ⁶⁷ Before I was afflicted I went astray,
But now I keep Your word.
- ⁶⁸ You are good and do good;
Teach me Your statutes.
- ⁹⁷ O how I love Your law!
It is my meditation all the day.
- ⁹⁸ Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies,
For they are ever mine.
- ⁹⁹ I have more insight than all my teachers,
For Your testimonies are my meditation.

¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp to my feet

And a light to my path.

¹⁰⁶ I have sworn and I will confirm it,

That I will keep Your righteous ordinances.

These (and many more) passages from this Psalm teach us that the Law of God is not, as some would think it, bondage! Instead, it is *liberty*, it is *delight*, it is *wisdom*, it is a *lamp unto our feet*, it is *good*!

Even the Apostle Sha'ul/Paul, from whose writings are most often used to disparage the Law, said in Romans 7:12: "So then, the Law is *holy*, and the commandment is *holy* and *righteous* and *good*."

AND, it is *spiritual* (Romans 7:14)! "¹⁴ For we know that the Law is *spiritual*..."

We may not be able to, in a physical way, touch God or kiss Him, but we sure can love Him in a spiritual way:

We *can* keep His commandments!

Acknowledgements

First and foremost I wish to express my gratitude to God and His unfailing mercy and love who gave me the strength to write this book. It is He who made it clear to me that grace and Law work hand-in-hand and are not in mutual opposition the one to the other. He also showed me that to truly love Him and to walk as Yeshua/Jesus walked; we need to keep His commandments.

Secondly, I wish to thank my wife Trish who had to persevere with me as I dedicated my time and energies to this book. Her faithfulness in being my “help-meet” allows me to be able to devote the time and effort necessary toward the work of the ministry.

Chapter 1 – Torah, *Our Expression of Love*

When the seventy rabbis translated the Hebrew Scriptures into the Greek for the Septuagint (LXX)², they used the word “*nomos*” to indicate “Law.”

From the Septuagint, the Fifth Book of the Bible is called “Deuteronomy,” which translated means, “Second Law.” The Greek word *deuteros* means second or secondary; the word *nomos* refers not only to explicit laws, but to all of the normal rules and forms which people take for granted in their day to day activities. In this sense it is closer to the use of the term in Plato, than in the more specific sense of the word "law" as a codified set of external rules.

So, by translating the Fifth Book of the Bible, known by its Hebrew name as “Devarim” (Words) and not “Second Law” - there is the unfortunate connotation that the Torah is actually “the Law.”

Actually, Torah does *NOT* mean “Law.” Though the Torah *contains* Gods laws, statutes, commandments and regulations, it, in itself, is NOT the Law!

Torah simply means “instruction.” The term "**Torah**" (Hebrew: "learning" or "instruction," sometimes translated as "Law"), refers either to the **Five Books of Moses** (or **Pentateuch**) or to the entirety of Judaism's founding legal and ethical religious texts.

² The Septuagint is the Koine Greek version of the Hebrew Bible, translated in stages between the 3rd and 1st centuries BC in Alexandria, Egypt. The word *septuaginta* means "seventy" in Latin and derives from a tradition that seventy (or seventy-two) Jewish scholars translated the Pentateuch (Torah) from Hebrew into Greek for Ptolemy II Philadelphus, 285–246 BC. The Septuagint enjoyed widespread use in the Hellenistic Jewish diaspora and even in Jerusalem, which had become a rather cosmopolitan (and therefore Greek-speaking) town. Both Philo and Josephus show a reliance on the Septuagint in their citations of Jewish scripture.

Starting approximately in the 2nd century AD, several factors led most Jews to abandon use of the LXX. The earliest gentile Christians of necessity used the LXX, as it was at the time the only Greek version of the bible, and most, if not all, of these early non-Jewish Christians could not read Hebrew. The association of the LXX with a rival religion may have rendered it suspect in the eyes of the newer generation of Jews and Jewish scholars.

The early Christian Church used the Greek texts since Greek was a lingua franca of the Roman Empire at the time, and the language of the Church. In addition the Church Fathers tended to accept Philo's account of the LXX's miraculous and inspired origin. Furthermore, the New Testament writers, when citing the Jewish scriptures or when quoting Jesus doing so, freely used the Greek translation, implying that the Apostles and their followers considered it reliable. - <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Septuagint>

Literally, the **word "Torah"** in Hebrew "is derived from the root **yawraw** (**Strong's Number:** 03384) which means "to throw, cast"; "to shoot;" "to point out, show;" "to direct, teach, instruct;" "to throw water, rain" (cf. Leviticus 10:11 "...and so as to **teach** the sons of Israel all the statutes which the LORD has spoken to them through Moses").

- a. (Hiphil)
 1. to throw, cast
 2. to shoot
 3. to point out, show
 4. to direct, teach, instruct
 5. to throw water, rain

Let me illustrate what this means in everyday language: Imagine a father teaching his son how to catch a ball.

If the father wants his young son to learn to catch the ball, initially he has to stand very close to the boy. He has to show him how to hold the glove, how to prepare for the ball to come into the glove and how to close the glove when the ball is inside of the glove.

Initially, the father has to place the ball *into* the boy's glove the first few times to help his son grasp on to this simple concept.

As the boy masters the "catch" up close, the father begins to move farther away. Yet, even at this stage he still needs to almost toss the ball into the glove.

Now, as his son learns to catch the ball, he moves farther and farther away – each time throwing the ball at the height and level that his son needs to be able to easily catch the ball.

Time passes and eventually the son learns how to catch the ball from across the playing field!

Even so, if the father wants the son to actually catch the ball, so he must throw it in the direction of the son. He cannot throw it to the other side of the field from his son and expect his son to catch it!

Hence, the root concept of “Torah.” The teacher of Torah must start with the very basics of what is being taught in such a manner so the student can grasp those basics. The language of the teacher must be simple and able to be grasped by the student. The teacher must teach the concepts he wishes to teach the student at the height that the student can grasp them – and even initially throwing what is being taught into the “glove” of the student. Examples, then, are clearly given.

If he doesn’t do that: if he throws too high, the student may attempt to catch it, but will be unable to grasp it and eventually, with too many such throws, the student may not even attempt to catch it at all. If he throws in the wrong direction, the student will not be able to run fast enough to get it.

If the teacher looks at the student and sees that the student is not “catching” the teaching, the teacher needs to go *back* to the earlier level necessary (where the student actually mastered catching the “ball”) to bring the student from that level to the one he is bringing him to.

That is the meaning of Torah. It is incumbent upon the teacher (thrower) to throw to the level of mastery of the student and it is incumbent upon the student (catcher) to do what is necessary to catch (learn) the ball (instruction) thrown to him by his teacher.

The meaning of the word Torah is therefore "teaching," "doctrine," or "instruction"; the commonly accepted meaning of "law" gives a wrong impression.

This being said, Torah is *not*, as predominant Christian teaching says, “Law,” “legalism,” “bondage,” or “the law of sin and death.” Instead, it is teaching us what God *wants us to know* so that we can *have a relationship* with Him!

It is to teach us how to “Love” Him!

Yet, there will be many in the Church who will argue that the Apostle Paul taught that the Law was *legalism* (Greek: “hupo nomos” - “under the Law”) and that we as believers are under no obligation to the Law:

“For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not **under law** but **under grace**.” (Romans 6:14)

“But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not **under the Law**.” (Galatians 5:18)

I deal with this subject more in depth in my books (See Bibliography at end of this book), “*A Call To Holiness: A Call To The Church To Leave Harlot Babylon*,” “*Depart From Me...*,” and “*The Problem With Paul: Why The Epistles Of The Apostle Paul Cannot Be Used To Justify The Non-Observance Of The Torah*.”

I will say this about Sha’ul/Paul: he is being “twisted” by “unstable” and “uninstructed” men who are taking him out of context and making him say things that he did not say - and that is from Kefa/Peter in 2 Peter 3:15-16:

“...and regard the patience of our Lord {as} salvation; just as also our beloved brother **Paul**, according to the wisdom given him, **wrote to you, as also in all {his} letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as {they do} also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.**” [Emphasis Mine]

Just as people were making Sha’ul/Paul say things he didn’t say back in his day, so they are continuing to do so to this very day! In fact, the *very accusations* they had against him back then are the *same ones* that are being made today!

Acts 21:20-24:

“And when they heard it they {began} glorifying God; and they said to him, “You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law; and they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs.

"What, then, is {to be done?} They will certainly hear that you have come. "Therefore do this that we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow; take them and purify yourself along with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads; and all will know that there is *nothing to the things which they have been told about you, but that you yourself also walk orderly, keeping the Law.* [Emphasis Mine]

So, when you hear that "Paul says we are no longer *under the Law.*" Be careful! He proved that he wasn't back in Acts 21!

I will not go into more depth with it in this book, but to say this: it is extremely important to note that there is NO separate word in First Century Greek to distinguish between "Law" and "legalism." (I may add, there is no word-group in First Century Hebrew for those terms, either.)

-it will be well to bear in mind the fact (which, so far as we know, had not received attention before it was noted in [Cranfield's article] the Scottish Journal of Theology, Volume 17, 1964, p.55) that the Greek language of Paul's day possessed no word-group corresponding to our 'legalism,' 'legalist' and 'legalistic.' This means that he lacked a convenient terminology for expressing a vital distinction, and so was surely seriously hampered in the work of clarifying the Christian position with regard to the law. In view of this, we should always, we think, be ready to reckon with the possibility that Pauline statements which at first sight seem to disparage the law, were really directed not against the law itself but against that understanding and misuse of it for which we now have a convenient terminology. In this very difficult terrain, Paul was pioneering. If we make allowances for these circumstances, we shall not be so easily baffled or misled by a certain impreciseness of statement which we shall sometimes encounter.³

³ THE INTERNATIONAL CRITICAL COMMENTARY, ROMANS, Copyright 1979, C.E.B. Cranfield, page 853

That being the case, when Sha'ul/Paul speaks negatively of the "Law," it is more likely that he is speaking negatively about "legalism." Legalism is the observance of the Law to seek justification or salvation by it.

If he was speaking against the Law of God, then Shaul/Paul would be not only speaking against the God of the Older Testament, but also against Yeshua/Jesus, for Yeshua/Jesus reaffirmed the continuation of the Law until heaven and earth pass away!

When asked what the greatest commandment in the Law was, Yeshua/Jesus did not cite one of the Ten Commandments⁴. He did not quote from the "Moral Law" or any other "Law!" Instead, He quotes from two other passages in the Torah.

In Matthew 22:33-40 it says:

³⁴ But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together. ³⁵ One of them, a lawyer, asked Him *a question*, testing Him, ³⁶ "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" ³⁷ And He said to him, "'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND⁵.'" ³⁸ "This is the great and foremost commandment. ³⁹ "The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF⁶.'" ⁴⁰ "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

We see here that in these two passages, Yeshua/Jesus distills the entire Torah and the Prophets into these essentials and reaffirms their continuity.

Later, it is the Apostle Sha'ul/Paul himself who wrote in Romans 13:

⁸ Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled *the* law. ⁹ For this, "YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS

⁴ Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5:6-18

⁵ Deuteronomy 6:5

⁶ Leviticus 19:18

YOURSELF." ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of *the* law.

In short, "Love" is the fulfillment of the "Law."

Why is this?

Because "God is love" (1 John 4:8).

If we truly know Him and truly love Him, we will truly *obey* Him; because it is in our obedience to them that we are truly loving: both God and our fellow-man!

"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14:15). We do this not out of a sense of legalistic observances to His, or any other, Law; but out of a sense of grateful "Love."

This is how Yeshua/Jesus was (John 8:29): "And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him."

He always obeyed and pleased the Father! We need to walk the same way:

1 John 2:5-6: "By this we know that we are in Him: ⁶ the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked."

If you are a believer in Yeshua/Jesus, walk as He walked.

Since God is love that is what we should be, since we as believers have His Holy Spirit within us (1 Corinthians 6:19) and He walked in the power of the Holy Spirit – Luke 4:14.

"Or do you not know that your body is a **temple** of the **Holy Spirit** who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?"

Furthermore, in 1 John 4:10, we learn:

“In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son {to be} the propitiation for our sins.”

We learn that God is not reactive with us, but proactive! His love to us came FIRST – before we even loved Him back!

We need to do the same thing with Him and with others. We must be proactive by being *first* in doing love and not reactive, waiting for others to be first in doing love to us!

We see this in the difference in the teaching of Yeshua/Jesus and the Pharisees. In the generation before Yeshua/Jesus there were two Pharasitic schools of thought: the House of Hillel and the House of Shammai.

Rabbi Hillel⁷ taught:

“That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow...”

But this is not love - it is simply “getting along” with others – even the Gentiles (non-believers) know how to do that!

Yeshua/Jesus had a more positive and proactive approach to this:

He said: ““In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets...” (Matthew 7:12)

In short, God’s “Love” is not simply *refraining* from doing evil or hateful unto another, but rather taking the initiative and *doing good* to them *first* – even if they are not doing good to you.

⁷ Hillel lived in Jerusalem during the time of King Herod and the Roman Emperor Augustus. His activity of forty years likely covered the period of 30 BCE to 10 CE. - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hillel_the_Elder

In Matthew 5, Yeshua/Jesus said:

⁴³ "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous. ⁴⁶ "For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ "If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing *than others*? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸ "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

As sons and daughters of the Father, we need to “Love” as the Father (and Yeshua) loves. We need to do – not only with each other – but with Him – “Love.”

And not in a *reactive*, but a *proactive* way: we, like He, need to be the first to do good to others –even our enemies!

So, now, in a proactive way – let’s look at the verse by Yeshua/Jesus in John 14:15:

"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."

Many Christians react negatively when reminded of this verse. They take it as a word of condemnation by those who teach Torah observance: that, because they are obviously not keeping God’s Torah [that is what they have been taught in the Church], that we are judging them and saying that they are obviously not loving God, since they obviously are not keeping His commandments.

In all honesty, if we look at that passage in a retrospective way (looking back at our non-observance of His Torah and realizing that we are not loving Him as we should), we could easily come to that conclusion.

However, if we look at that passage in a here and now *and* in the future sense, we can take a *proactive* approach by saying: “I realize that God is my Lord and God and that it is He who defines how I am to express my love for Him. At this point I now understand how to express my love for Him,

according to His desires and will now keep His commandments out of my love for Him!”

If we approach it in that sense, we can look at the commandments of God as expressions of our love for Him and not as legalistic observances we need to perform in order to gain His love for us!

The issue of His love for us is settled and done for by the passage in John 3:16:

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

He did this for us while we were yet sinners (Romans 5:8)!

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that **while we were yet sinners**, Christ died for us.”

All we needed to do was to respond to that already demonstrated love for us in faith. You see, He was proactive in His love for us; we must respond as a wife to her husband and be proactive in our love for Him.

Chapter 2 – What is Love?

In asking this question, I am reminded of the song that Reb Tevye and his wife Golde sang to each other in the movie *Fiddler on the Roof*. Its' dialog goes like this:

(Tevye)

"Golde, I have decided to give Perchik permission to become engaged to our daughter, Hodel."

(Golde)

"What??? He's poor! He has nothing, absolutely nothing!"

(Tevye)

"He's a good man, Golde.

I like him. And what's more important, Hodel likes him. Hodel loves him.
So what can we do?

It's a new world... A new world. Love. Golde..."

Do you love me?

(Golde)

Do I what?

(Tevye)

Do you love me?

(Golde)

Do I love you?

With our daughters getting married
And this trouble in the town
You're upset, you're worn out
Go inside, go lie down!
Maybe it's indigestion

(Tevye)

"Golde I'm asking you a question..."

Do you love me?

(Golde)
You're a fool

(Tevye)
"I know..."

But do you love me?

(Golde)
Do I love you?
For twenty-five years I've washed your clothes
Cooked your meals, cleaned your house
Given you children, milked the cow
After twenty-five years, why talk about love right now?

(Tevye)
Golde, The first time I met you
Was on our wedding day
I was scared

(Golde)
I was shy

(Tevye)
I was nervous

(Golde)
So was I

(Tevye)
But my father and my mother
Said we'd learn to love each other
And now I'm asking, Golde
Do you love me?

(Golde)
I'm your wife

(Tevye)
"I know..."
But do you love me?

(Golde)
Do I love him?
For twenty-five years I've lived with him
Fought him, starved with him
Twenty-five years my bed is his
If that's not love, what is?

(Tevye)
Then you love me?

(Golde)
I suppose I do

(Tevye)
And I suppose I love you too

(Both)
It doesn't change a thing
But even so
After twenty-five years
It's nice to know

Here, in this dialog, we see the essence of what love is from a Hebraic (and may I say, from a more Biblical perspective): it is not just *saying*; it is *doing*.

We see a couple who had never met until their wedding day and were told that eventually, in time, they would learn to love each other. It is not that they "fell in love" in the conventional sense and decided to get married. No, they never even knew each other before the marriage! Yet, they learned to love each other!

When asked, "Do you love me?" Reb Tevye's wife Golde would share how she did all these things for him over the year they were married. In other words, she responded to the question by answering what she ***DID*** for him!

We need to understand this perspective is not far from the Biblical truth of, “it is not hearers of the word who are justified, but the doers of the word.”

Romans 2: ¹² For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law; ¹³ for ***it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.***

James 1:22 says:

“But prove yourselves **doers** of the **word**, and not merely **hearers** who delude themselves.”

James 1:25 goes on:

But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the {law} of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful **hearer** but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

Since the perfect Law is love, we are to **DO** love. We are to reflect His love (Law) in our lives!

To define what true love is, in the sense of loving God and our fellow man, we need to seek the words of Sha’ul/Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:

¹ If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have *the gift of* prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ And if I give all my possessions to feed *the poor*, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind *and* is not jealous; love does not brag *and* is not arrogant, ⁵ does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong *suffered*, ⁶ does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; ⁷ bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸ Love never fails...”

As God is, so must we be and God’s character is reflected in His Word!

We must never forget verse 8, "Love never fails..." for it is our hope.

In Romans 8, Sha'ul/Paul writes:

³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us? ³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? ³³ Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; ³⁴ who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. ³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED." ³⁷ But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

How certain is God's love for us, even when we fail Him? It is forever!

Nothing can separate us from His love!

Chapter 3 – Sin – Falling short of His Glory – “Loving God a Little Less...”

If Scripturally “love” is expressed in our keeping Gods’ commandments, then loving God less must be called “sin,” for “Sin is the transgression of the Law” (1 John 3:4). Sin is where we put our will over Gods’ will, where we put loving ourselves or our own interests over His.

The Scripture tells us in no uncertain terms that we ALL sin and fall short of the glory of God:

Romans 3:23 –

“...for **all** have **sinned** and fall short of the glory of God...”

Romans 3:10

“...as it is written, "THERE IS None Righteous, NOT EVEN ONE...”

1 John 1:8

“If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.”

From these few (and there are many more) verses of Scripture, we discover that each one of us sins – without exception. We do not always do what God wants us to do; though by His Word we know what He wants us to do.

Shaul/Paul struggled with this in his life. He writes about this struggle in Romans 7:14-23:

“For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that it is good. So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the

wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish. But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.” (New American Standard)

Often, we place the Apostles on a pedestal where they do these great miracles and do not struggle with the same things that we do. It reassures me to know that even they struggled with sins in their lives, for it “humanizes” them!

Even Yeshua/Jesus was tempted as we are, yet without sin:

Hebrews 4:15 tells us, “For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as {we are, yet} without sin.”

There is only One who never sinned, and that is Yeshua/Jesus.

Yeshua was tempted in all things! We see Him being tempted in the Wilderness in Luke 4:1-12. But that was not the only temptations that Yeshua experienced, for verse 13 of that same passage says: “When the Adversary ended all his testings, he let him alone until an opportune time.” (*Complete Jewish Bible*, David Stern)

Yeshua was personally tested by the Adversary, and since haSatan (the Adversary) is only a finite being, he is not omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient or in any sense equal with God; so he can only personally tempt a single person at a time. Most of us are not important enough to draw his personal energies and attention (though he does have his minions of fallen angels who help him and indeed they do work to tempt us).

When I hear the old adage, “The Devil made me do it...” I need to remind myself that I do a fine enough job with my own sin nature to commit sin, without needing a devil or the Adversary to help me.

The Scripture in Romans 6:23: “The wages of sin is death...” tells me that I earned the result of my sin, which is death. A wage is something you work for, that you earn and get paid for.

This passage says that I worked for this; so I shouldn't be surprised at my wages for my efforts! In fact, death is what I should expect for all the work that I do in earning it (sin)!

So, what is “Sin?”

In the Hebrew a word to describe sin is chata' (**Strong's Number:** 02398 - or to “miss the mark”). The analogy of an archer shooting an arrow down range to a target and missing the mark is a good one, because as believers, we should be seeking the mark which is holiness, because God says we are to “be holy as He is holy” (Leviticus 11:44, 45; cf. 1 Peter 1:14-16).

If we “miss the mark” i.e. “sin” then we are falling short of God's glory (Romans 3:23).

For a believer, it is one thing to sin and miss the mark, and quite another to “practice sin.”

The Bible says in 1 John 3:4: “Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.”

Here we find a distinctive between sin and one who practices sin (lawlessness – Greek: “anomia”).

As believers we ALL *do* sin. No doubt about it according to 1 John 1:8, since John is writing to believers!

“If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.”

I know believers who say that they no longer sin. Ahhh, nope...sorry – bad theology – you're deceiving yourself and making God out to be a liar.

As believers we DO sin, BUT, as believers we must not “practice” sin!

There is a BIG distinctive here. Let's give an example:

When I first picked up a guitar, I *immediately* started playing the most complex guitar music ever written, right? Nope, I couldn't even play the F or the G chords correctly. It sounded lousy!

So, I began to practice and practice and practice until I got them, and other chords right. Eventually I practiced so much that I learned to play well enough for people to want to listen to me! It wasn't like that when I first started!

Now, when I first picked up the guitar I played a C chord. It didn't sound so good either. However, with practice I improved. "Practice makes perfect," the old adage goes.

Practice means you work at something till you perfect it. If I didn't practice playing the guitar, chances are I would not get very good at playing it!

Same thing with sin: We may sin from time to time, and to remind you of the Biblical definition of "sin" it is the transgression of the Law of God, therefore, we may transgress the Law of God from time-to-time as believers in God, but we should not desire to make this a "practice" in our lives!

We should not want to transgress God's Laws! Nor, should we want to perfect our ability to violate God's Laws.

If keeping God's Laws expresses our love for Him, as He says, then violating His Laws does just the opposite: it shows our lack of love for Him.

We should want to practice doing good (as He does) and not practice doing evil.

Yet, when we do sin as believers we have the reassuring words of 1 John 2:1-2 to comfort us:

"My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for {those of} the whole world."

Here in this one passage we see first of all, that God does *not* want us to sin (i.e. violate His Law), second, He acknowledges that we *will* sin (i.e. violate His Law), and thirdly, that He has provided the righteous One (One who did not sin) who will *atone* for our sins when we *do*.

So, we need to understand that our keeping the Torah of God is a love expression to Him and that when we fail to love Him as we should, He makes up the difference! That is what Grace (Chesed) is ALL about!

As a small child reaches up to the father to be picked up, so the father reaches down to pick the child up.

The father reaches farther than the child, expends more energy than the child and demonstrates greater capacity than the child; our Father does the same with us.

Whatever the gap or separation between us reaching up in love to the Father is infinitely made up by the Father reaching down to bridge that gap.

That's what the Torah and Grace is all about! It's not about man-made effort to bridge that gap. There is nothing we can do – EVER – to bridge it.

Attempts by man to do so results in, and IS, legalism. We are saved by faith alone (Ephesians 3:8), and just as the child has faith that the Father is reaching down to pick them up, so too must we have the faith of that child. That's what the Kingdom of Heaven is all about (Mark 10:13-16).

A child trusts without reflecting. Children cannot live without trusting those around them. Their trust is not a virtue; it is a vital reality. To encounter God, the best thing we have is our child's heart that is spontaneously open, that dares simply to ask, that wants to be loved.

As children of God, we must understand that "Grace" is the Father bending down *as much as it takes* to reach us, then grasping us and bringing us up to His bosom to love us. All we need do is to reach up and seek His love. That is what Torah teaches us: how to reach up so that the Father will know that we truly love Him and want to be held by Him.

It's not about us – it's about Him! It's not about what we do – it's all about what He does – because all we're doing is reaching up!

Chapter 4 – Grace – Making up the difference

1 John 1:9

“If we acknowledge our sins, then, since he is trustworthy and just, he will forgive them and purify us from all wrongdoing.”

Grace, or “Chesed” in Hebrew (lovingkindness) is God’s unmerited favor towards us. God makes us righteous through what His Son Yeshua/Jesus did on our behalf.

We don’t earn it, we don’t deserve it, we don’t merit it in any way, shape or form, but by faith we appropriate it Philippians 3:9:

“...and may be found in Him, not having a **righteousness** of my own derived from {the} Law, but that which is through **faith** in Christ, the **righteousness** which {comes} from God on the basis of **faith...**”

Our faith in what He did makes us righteous before Him. The Law does not make us righteous because we cannot keep it good enough to earn our righteousness by it.

That’s where Grace comes in. Grace says: “Even though you are not good enough to earn your righteousness by keeping the Law, by your faith in the Righteous One who paid the debt incurred by your not keeping the Law, you are now declared righteous.”

Yet Grace *doesn’t* say, “Oh, go on violating God’s commandments (sinning); it’s all paid for by the blood of Jesus.”

No! As Shau’l/Paul says in Romans 6:

¹ “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? ² May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?”

No, grace says, “Since it is a certainty that we will all violate the law at some time in our lives, because we have faith in God and His atonement for us, we will be saved not condemned.”

Someone recently asked me, “How many of the commandments of God do I have to keep?” As if keeping commandments merited some reward.

I said, “The Rabbis have deduced that there are 613 commandments in the Torah.” I went on, “But not all the commandments pertain to every person. For instance, there are commandments that pertain solely to women (in their period) and don’t pertain to men. Yet, even among the laws of niddah (menstrual laws) there are those that DO pertain to men: they are not to sit on a couch or bed where a woman who is menstruating sat. So there are even places where there is a cross-over between the sexes on this issue. One pertains to the woman who is menstruating and another on the male. Another thing, a man is not to have sex with a menstruating woman....

“...But Torah has laws that pertain to priests, other laws that pertain to the rulers of the people, laws that pertain to slavery, etc. and, unless you are one of these, they do not apply to you!”

Yet, the Laws that apply to the people of Israel apply to you. Yeshua/Jesus was not a priest, or a woman, or a slave or a slave-holder, or a ruler of Israel as He first walked upon this earth, so those Laws did not apply to Him. Yet, when Scripture says He did not sin (i.e. transgress the Law) it means that of those 613 Laws of Torah that applied to Him, He kept them perfectly!

In fact, since Yeshua/Jesus tightened the Torah in Matthew 5 to say that even if a person thinks in his heart sinfully, it is sin:

²¹ "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.'²² "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty *enough to go* into the fiery hell.²³ "Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,²⁴ leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.²⁵ "Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, so that your opponent may not hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.²⁶ "Truly I

say to you, you will not come out of there until you have paid up the last cent.

²⁷ "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY'; ²⁸ but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ "If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰ "If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.

So, when it comes to "sin" by Yeshua/Jesus' definition, it is not simply what you DO, but even what you think!

This makes it impossible for us to be totally obedient to the Torah of God, even when we want to be, since we all sin in our thought life from time-to-time.

Sha'ul/Paul had the same quandary as he wrote in Romans 7:

¹⁴ For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. ¹⁵ For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I *would* like to *do*, but I am doing the very thing I hate. ¹⁶ But if I do the very thing I do not want *to do*, I agree with the Law, *confessing* that the Law is good. ¹⁷ So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. ¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good *is* not. ¹⁹ For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. ²⁰ But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

²¹ I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. ²² For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, ²³ but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. ²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on

the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

Please allow me to clarify a serious misconception of the Church at this juncture: the Torah (or Law) given by God on Sinai is *not* the “law of sin and death” mentioned in this passage – contrary to contemporary Christian teaching.

Instead, in the preceding chapter of Romans, Sha’ul/Paul says the **Torah is holy; that is, the commandment is holy, just and good.** (Romans 7, verses 12, 13)

It is *not* the Law (*Torah*) which is the law of sin and death; instead, there is another law which Sha’ul/Paul is talking about: that “Law” which *exists in the members of my body*. That Law *rebels* against God’s Law and makes me want not to keep it. That is the law of “sin and death.”

But in my various parts, I see a different “Torah,” one that battles with the Torah in my mind and makes me a prisoner of sin’s “Torah,” which is operating in my various parts. What a miserable creature I am! Who will rescue me from this body bound for death? Thanks be to God, he will! –through Jesus the Messiah, our Lord! (Romans 7:23-25).

Notice in these verses that we are talking about two distinct laws – one is the law of sin and death *found in the flesh*, and the other is holy, just and good, *found in the Law of God*.

And, though we all realize that we can’t keep the Law of God good enough to obtain our righteousness by keeping it (else, why did Jesus have to come and die for us?), does that mean that we shouldn’t try to keep God’s Law at all? Heavens no!

Notice in the preceding verses how Sha’ul/Paul desired to keep God’s Law?

It should be even so with every believer the earnest desire to keep God’s Law and not the law of sin found within the members of our bodies. Wherever sin (the transgression of God’s laws) is found, it needs to be uprooted and destroyed.

As believers, we can all want to love God and keep His commandments as He wants us to. Yet, we find ourselves actually doing the very thing we don't want to do, "sin" or violate God's commandments!

We find in Romans 8 what the dynamic behind this is: The Torah requires us that we keep it, but gives us no power to do so:

³ "For what the Law could not do, *weak as it was through the flesh*, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."

You can see by Romans 7 that Sha'ul/Paul is struggling with this very thing (as do we all): ²⁴ "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?"

I know the feeling! When I sin I feel guilty, condemned! I feel like the Adversary is laughing at me and saying: "Look, you blew it again! God is never going to love you or accept you again since you broke His law!"

Yet the answer to his question is found in the very next passage (Romans 8):

¹ "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death (**interject here: Shaul/Paul already answered this in Romans 7: the law of sin and death is NOT the Torah, it is in your flesh!**). ³ For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵ For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, ⁷ because the mind set on the flesh is

hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*,⁸ and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”

Thus, it is God’s Holy Spirit whom He gives to us and who indwells us, that gives us life and enables us to walk according to God’s Laws!

That’s what 1 John 2 says:

⁷ Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard.⁸ On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining.

In the Newer Covenant, there are no new commandments. They are the same commandments that were already from the beginning, the word which we have already heard.

In fact, we are told what the nature of the New Testament or Covenant will be back in Jeremiah 31!

³¹ "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,³² not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD.³³ "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."³⁴ "They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

The nature of the New Covenant is that God's Laws (yes, the very ones given in the "Old" Covenant) will be written upon our hearts and within His people! Same Law/Different Medium!

So, instead of the Law being written upon tablets of stone or parchment, it is written upon our hearts! And though the Law is actually written within us, there is something additional about the New Testament that the Older does not have, "the true Light."

It is in that true Light, Yeshua/Jesus that we are empowered through His Spirit to keep the Torah! Same commandments/Different Spirit! And, it is His Spirit who will *cause* us to keep the Laws of God (Ezekiel 36):

²⁶ "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ "I will put My Spirit within you and *cause you* [Emphasis Mine] to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances."

In fact, it was the *same* Holy Spirit who *caused* the Word to be written, so who better to indwell us and empower us than the very One through whom the Scriptures were written (2 Peter 1):

²⁰ "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is *a matter* of one's own interpretation, ²¹ for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

In a sentence: "The Holy Spirit *empowers us* to live God's Laws, which *He caused* to be written."

So, when we don't keep the Law. And when we *DO* sin (i.e. transgress God's Laws), we have forgiveness through the blood of Yeshua/Jesus which cleanses us from ALL sin (1 John 1:7): "...but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son **cleanses us from all sin,**" AND we have the Holy Spirit who enables us to pick ourselves back up again in our faith-walk with Him and continue on without condemnation.

So, what shall we do, brethren? We are to *stop sinning* (i.e. transgressing Torah) as a way of life (as a practice). Sha'ul/Paul says:

¹ What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? ² May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? ³ Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, ⁶ knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; ⁷ for he who has died is freed from sin.”

I believe that there are three basic reasons why we break God's commandments (that is, we sin)⁸;

1) Through Ignorance/Not Knowing.

Most often, we break God's commandments through ignorance; that is, we honestly don't know what His commandments are or how they apply to us. I don't know many true believers in Jesus who consciously want to rebel against God by saying: “Well, I know this behavior is prohibited but I'm going to spite God and do it anyway, 'cause I'm saved by grace and not by works.”

In all fairness, most believers *do* have a love for God and want to please Him. To avoid this type of transgression, we must study the Word of God as the Apostle Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:16-17:

All Scripture is God-breathed and is valuable for teaching and truth, convicting of sin, correcting faults and training in right living; thus anyone who belongs to God may be fully equipped for every good work.

It is important to remember that at the time of this writing, the New Testament was not yet complete. What Paul was referring to Timothy were the writings found in the Older Testament.

⁸ Bruce R. Booker, *A Call to Holiness*, copyright 2008, pages 27-33

The point is: Paul was *only* speaking to Timothy about the Hebrew Scriptures, though it would *eventually* apply to the New Testament Scriptures as well. In brief, if the Older Covenant was a good enough standard for Paul to recommend to Timothy, is it not good enough for us today? It still speaks to us today of what is sin and what is holy.

We repent of our sin when we read God's Word and he convicts us of our sins by the power of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8). It is the Holy Spirit's job to convict us of sin; it is our job to study His Word and find our God's position on a particular matter.

2) Through Misinformation/Being Mistold.

We can find several examples in Scripture where people have added to the Word of God with disastrous results. The first one that comes to mind is the original sin in the Garden of Eden. In Genesis 3:3, we see three seemingly innocuous words "**nor touch it**" added to the original prohibition of Genesis 2:17. It is not certain who added these words, perhaps Adam, in trying to prevent Eve from touching the tree, or Eve through a misunderstanding by Adam (since Adam received the commandment before Eve was fashioned). Nonetheless, the rule is absolute: whenever we add to, or subject from, God's commandments or "principlize" it away, we run contrary to the Word of Almighty God. That's why we are expressly commanded not to alter it by adding to, or subtracting from, God's Word:

In order to obey the mitzvot of Adonai your God which I am giving to you, do not add to what I am saying, and do not subtract from it. (Deuteronomy 4:2).

I warn everyone hearing the words of the prophecy in this book that if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues written in this book. And if anyone takes anything away from the words in the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the Tree of Life and the holy city, as described in this book. (Revelation 22:18, 19).

It is a serious thing to add to, or subtract from, God's Word. The consequences resulting from Adam and Eve's adding to God's Word resulting in sin have affected all mankind, even to this day. It did not matter that the error came about as a misunderstanding or mis-telling, the price of

sin was death. Likewise, the result of adding to or subtracting to God's commandments by believers today will reap the same consequences.

On Judgment Day, we can't simply point a finger at our theologian or pastor and say, "Well, he told me it wasn't a sin." They are not God. They will not be standing at your side to defend you. You can't say, "It's their fault." No, we will each be held responsible for finding the truth of the Scriptures.

3) Through Willful Disobedience/To Know what is right yet deliberately transgress. (James 4:17).

This is the most dangerous position for a believer (or anyone else) to take. Such behavior is rebelliousness, and 1 Samuel 15:23 equates rebelliousness with the sin of witchcraft. Unfortunately, there are some in the Body of Messiah who are rebellious.

The reason why Jesus couldn't perform miracles in His hometown of Nazareth was because of unbelief (Mark 6:5, 6), for which the underlying cause was *rebellion* to what God wanted to do there. [I wish to add: Jesus' ability was not limited, but the peoples' unbelief hindered the purposes of the miracles.]

Likewise, if we wonder why the believing community of today has lost the power of the First Century Believing community, we need only look at our deliberate fall from God's standards of holiness. I believe the greatest reason why the Body of Messiah today does not exhibit the power and miracles as seen in the First Century is because it is not a holy people by God's definition. The farther away we get from the original, the weaker we become. Exposure to God's holiness produces power. The farther away we move away from it, the less power we exhibit.

If we liken the body of Messiah to a conduit of God's power, and our corruption as corrosion within the conduit, we can easily see how the more corrupted and corroded the believing community becomes, the less God's power and love can flow through her. What we in the body of Messiah need is a good, healthy dose of spiritual "Liquid Plumber." We need to get the centuries of accumulated rebelliousness flushed out of us so that God can once again use us as He used the believer in the First Century! This means that we have to get back to the Biblical standards, following God's Law under the empowerment of His Holy Spirit!

Jesus said that we as a body of Messiah should be doing *greater* things (in extent, not in quality) than He did as He walked the earth (John 14:12)! The signs and wonders following the believers should be the *norm*, not the *exception*! Today's believing community finds just the opposite to be true! Have we lost something as the Body of Messiah? Indeed we have! We have lost the standard of holiness to which we have been called. We are not to be holy in title or name only, but to partake of the Divine Nature, which is holy. How are we to know what a "holy" person behaves like? Well, since God is so much greater than we, we must look to His Word. Jesus, the Word made flesh, walked in the holiness that was His nature as God Incarnate. That is how we are to walk. We are to walk in the same manner (1 John 2) as He walked and the *evidence* of our being a true believer is that we are living holy lives; keeping His commandments out of a sincere heartfelt love for God.

Paul in Romans 7:12 stated that **the Law is holy; that is, the commandment is holy, just and good.** The Law therefore, being a reflection of the nature of God, is the written standard of what "holy" is. This is what we are commanded to be, just as God is holy (Leviticus 11:44, 45).

Chapter 5 – One Torah for All God’s People

There will be some believers who will concede at this point that the Law is still valid for believers, but only for the *Jewish* believers!

It saddens me that in the Messianic Movement that many Messianic leaders believe and teach this! Whereas once the Messianic Movement proclaimed, “Yeshua, the Torah made flesh” and said that we all must all walk like Him, today has walked away from that position to say that for Jewish believers this is so, but that non-Jewish believers (i.e. Christians) don’t have to walk by the precepts of Torah in their lives. Many Messianic leaders say that Torah is a “Jewish Identifier” that distinguishes Jewish believers from non-Jewish believers.

I disagree with this because the Scripture, however, paints a different picture. The Law given at Sinai was given to Jews and to “sojourners” (Hebrew: “gerim” – Gentiles who left Egypt along with the Israelites and attached themselves to the Hebrew people) – eventually to be known as “converts” or “proselytes,” Exodus 12:49; Leviticus 24:22; Numbers 15:14-16). Anyone who joined themselves to Israel was subject to the same Law, and since Gentile believers are grafted into Israel (Romans 11), they technically are “sojourners.”⁹

In Ephesians 2 we see Sha’ul/Paul writing to his non-Jewish believers:

¹¹ Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," *which is performed in the flesh by human hands--* ¹² *remember* that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into one* and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, ¹⁵ 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*, ¹⁶ and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. ¹⁷ AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO

⁹ Bruce R. Booker, *A Call to Holiness*, copyright 2008, Bruce R. Booker, pages 89-91

WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR;¹⁸ for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household,²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*,²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord,²² in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

In Yeshua/Jesus, those who were formerly “far off” are now “brought near” through His shed blood. They are no longer “strangers” and “aliens” but are now “fellow citizens” of the commonwealth of Israel.

Every nation there is on the earth has laws! It is the same in God's Kingdom! And all the laws pertain to all the people equally! An alien cannot say that because he or she is not a citizen of this nation that he doesn't have to obey the laws of the Land! That would be preposterous!

So, both the native AND the alien have to follow the law of the Land! When the alien becomes a citizen, all the more he or she would be obedient to the laws! Yet, when in this country a person seeks to become a citizen, they begin to learn the laws of the new country they now seek to belong to.

They may not know what all the laws are, but they do begin to learn them. They start from the basics and go from there. The same thing happens in God's Kingdom with the new citizens!

Acts 15 says that Gentiles are to “**abstain from things polluted by idols, from fornication, from what is strangled and from blood.**” But that does not mean that is all that is non-Jewish believers will have to follow. Verse 21 of that chapter states that Moses is preached in the synagogue, where, by the way, the early Gentile believers went (Acts 17:4, 17; 18:1-4) every Sabbath. There were no Catholics, Methodists, Baptists or other denominations at that time. This means that since non-Jewish believers (sojourners) were there in the synagogue, they heard Moses speak through Torah and learned what it meant to be holy.

The question answered in Acts 15 is this – Do Gentiles have to first become Jews – observing the Laws of Moses – before they can be saved? The answer is a resounding, “NO!” Rather, Gentiles are to follow the principles

of an earlier covenant than the covenant given at Mount Sinai. Once they are saved, they are to follow the covenant God made with mankind through Noah, known as the Noachide Laws (Genesis 9).

This is not to say that Gentiles are not required to learn from the complete Word, which at that time was *solely* the Hebrew Scriptures of the Old Testament, so that they can move from a paganistic state of life to a holy life. The implication of Acts 15:21 is that since Moses (the Law) is read every Sabbath in the Synagogue, and since believing Gentiles had nowhere else to study the Word but the synagogue, they would hear the Law and begin to apply its principles in their lives. How far they went depended upon them and their relationship with God.

It is obvious from Acts Chapter 10 that Cornelius, the first convert to the believing community of Messiah, observed many Jewish customs and practices in his life. He gave many alms to the Jewish people, and he prayed continually. Verse 2 says he was a devout man, a **“God-fearer.”**

The **“God-fearers,”** as they were known, identified with the Jewish faith, but did not necessarily subject themselves to circumcision (which was a requirement should a male choose to join himself totally as a convert to Judaism).

What makes Acts 10 interesting is verse 3, where Cornelius was praying at the ninth hour of the day. This was the time of the Temple sacrifice, and currently is the time when Jews pray in memorial to the sacrificial offering of the Temple. In other words, Cornelius was doing a very “Jewish” thing, though he was not Jewish. God never stopped a Gentile from observing “Jewish” things, nor, by the way, from going all the way into Judaism.

If the Acts 15 injunction were *all* there was for a Gentile believer to observe, why did Paul put even *one* single verse of the Torah, the Writings, or the Prophets in *any* of his writings to the Gentiles? For instance, in Romans 4:3 he cites Genesis 15:6; in Romans 3:10 he cites Psalm 53:3; in Romans 11:26 he cites Isaiah 59:20; in 1 Corinthians 9:9 he cites Deuteronomy 25:4; in 1 Corinthians 15:32 he quotes Isaiah 22:13; in 1 Corinthians 3:20 he cites Psalm 94:11. Get the point? If *all* a Gentile believer had to do was found in Acts 15, he or she wouldn’t need to *know or do* anything more.

But just as Ruth, the Moabitess said to Naomi, **“Your people shall be my people and your God shall be my God”** (Ruth 1:16); so Gentiles throughout the centuries have joined themselves to the people of God, worshipping Him as He desires to be worshipped, keeping His commandments alongside the Jewish people. God especially blesses the full convert to Judaism saving him separately from the **“God-fearer”** like Cornelius in the first outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Shavuot, or Pentecost (Acts 2:10). The full proselytes (alongside full-fledged, believing Jews) were baptized with the Spirit a full 10 years before Cornelius and others like him.

It is important to remember here that the intention of the Law was never to make one righteous (hence the sacrificial system). Instead, its teaching was two-fold: *it taught how one became a part of the covenant community of God through grace* (Deuteronomy 7:7-9; cf Ephesians 2:8-9) and *how a person was to behave within this covenant community*.

Both Jew and Gentile alike are brought into covenant community by *grace alone* and not by works, yet, it is through a person’s obedience to the commandments found within the covenant that he proves he is part of the covenant community. How many commandments a covenant person keeps or ignores does not make him more or less righteous than another covenant person. It is by faith alone that righteousness is imputed (Genesis 15:6; cf Romans 4:3, 9; Galatians 3:6, James 2:23).

The Jew is made righteous by the same standard as the full proselyte and non-convert: by the standard of faith found in Romans 9:30-33. Yet, obedience to God’s commandments is *assumed* of the faithful (Genesis 26:5; cf James 2:14-26). All should be desirous of being faithful to God’s commandments due to a sense of gratitude and love for Him (Deuteronomy 10:12-13). All should desire to move from a less holy behavior to a more holy behavior. This can only be accomplished by following God’s commandments as laid out in the whole Bible.

Even the New Testament teaches that we were created for **good works** (Ephesians 2:10). What standard did they go by (remembering that no “New Testament” was available at this time)? Of course, it was the standard found within the Law.

Chapter 6 - “*Oh That They had such a Heart...*”

²⁸ "The LORD heard the voice of your words when you spoke to me, and the LORD said to me, 'I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken to you. They have done well in all that they have spoken. ²⁹ 'Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever! - Deuteronomy 5

If we could ever hear wishful thinking from the Master, this would be the passage: “Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always...”

It is always the attitude of our hearts that keep us from obeying God and His commandments.

That’s why He has to give us “new” hearts and a “new” spirit to empower us to keep His Laws (Ezekiel 36):

²⁶ "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.”

As noted earlier, it is our flesh that fights against Him and His commandments (Romans 7). The “Torah” of our flesh (“law of sin and death”) fights against God and His commandments:

Romans 8:

⁵ For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, ⁷ because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*, ⁸ and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

I assure you, from this passage, if within you as a believer in Yeshua/Jesus, you find yourself hostile and fighting against God's Law, it is not because the Holy Spirit is causing that within you! It is a fleshly spirit "because the mind set on the flesh...does not subject itself to the law of God...it is not even able to do so..."

If you find within yourself hostility to God's Law, you are really hostile to God Himself because He wants you to be obedient to His Laws as a means of expression of love toward Him!

1 John 5:2, 3:

Here is how we know that we love God's children: when we love God, we also do what he commands. For loving God means obeying his commands. Moreover his commands are not burdensome.

No, the Torah is not bondage, but liberty! With it, God wants to bless His people:

³⁶ "Out of the heavens He let you hear His voice to discipline you; and on earth He let you see His great fire, and you heard His words from the midst of the fire. ³⁷ "Because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them. And He personally brought you from Egypt by His great power, ³⁸ driving out from before you nations greater and mightier than you, to bring you in *and* to give you their land for an inheritance, as it is today. ³⁹ "Know therefore today, and take it to your heart, that the LORD, He is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other. ⁴⁰ "**So you shall keep His statutes and His commandments which I am giving you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may live long on the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time.**" (Deuteronomy 4)

If you think that with all this that the commandments are beyond you hear what Deuteronomy 31 has to say:

¹¹ "For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach. ¹² "It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we

may observe it?' ¹³ "Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?' ¹⁴ "But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it."

What kind of Heart do you have? Are you willing to do anything to express your love for Him? Even if it means keeping the Torah? It is not impossible!

Chapter 7 – In the Image of His Son

Romans 8

²⁸ And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. ²⁹ For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become conformed to the image of His Son* [Emphasis Mine], so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; ³⁰ and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

When Yeshua/Jesus comes back the Scripture says (1 John 3:2):

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like **Him**, because we will **see Him** just as He is.

God's ultimate goal is to make and mould us into the image of His Son: As the Son is holy, so we are to be holy, as the Son raised from the dead, so shall we, as the Son is in a glorified body, so shall we. As the Son was lawful and kept the Torah perfectly as an Israelite, so shall we in our glorified, sinless bodies!

So saying, even in our current sinful flesh, believers who are made righteous through faith should not be lawless and rebellious to God and His Law because the new nature of Jesus is taking over in their lives even now enabling them to be *obedient* to God's Laws.

This is because the Law is "holy, just and good" (Romans 7:12) and is "spiritual" (Romans 7:14); just as God is holy, just, good and spiritual.

Yeshua/Jesus did not come and do away with the Torah, He came to fulfill it. In Matthew 5 He says:

¹⁷ "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. ¹⁸ "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these

commandments, and teaches others *to do* the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

²⁰ "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses *that* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven."

No man has the authority to change God's Word. Even Jesus did not change God's Word or Law, though He had the authority as God Incarnate to do so! Matthew 5:17-19 affirms Jesus' position on the Law. He said that He did not come to abolish or destroy the Law, but to fulfill it:

Don't think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete. Yes indeed! I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a yud or stroke will pass from the Torah – not until everything that must happen has happened. So whoever disobeys the least of these mitzvot and teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of Heaven. (Complete Jewish Bible, David Stern)

David Bivin and Roy Blizzard, Jr. in their book, *Understanding the difficult words of Jesus*, seeks to address a misunderstanding in the body of Messiah regarding the terms "abolish" and "fulfill":

In Matthew 5:17, Jesus claims he has no intention of abolishing or suspending the Mosaic Law. For most Christians, this comes as a shock. After all, did not the Apostle Paul say, "Christ is the end of the Law" (Romans 10:4)? Jesus' statement seems such a contradiction that many Christian commentators have tried to explain it away by suggesting that his words do not really mean what they seem to mean. Their attempts are futile.

The meaning of Jesus' words is clear. As long as the world lasts, he goes on to say in verse 18, the Law will last. Here Jesus is in complete agreement with the Rabbis: "Everything has an end heaven and earth have an end except one thing which has no end. And what is that? The Law" (Genesis Rabbah 10:1); "No letter will ever be abolished from the Law" (Exodus Rabbah 6:1), "Should the

world unite to uproot one word of the Law, they would be unable to do it” (Leviticus Rabbah 19:2).

... Undoubtedly, in trying to understand this passage, everything hinges on the meaning of the words “destroy” and “fulfill” In verse 17. What does Jesus mean by “destroying the law” and “fulfilling the Law?”

“Destroy” and “fulfill” are technical terms used in rabbinical argumentation. When a rabbi felt that a colleague had misinterpreted a passage of Scripture, he would say, “You are destroying the Law!” Needless to say, in most cases his colleague strongly disagreed. What was “destroying the Law” for one rabbi, was “fulfilling the Law” (correctly interpreting Scripture) for another.

What we see in Matthew 5:17ff is a rabbinical discussion. Someone has accused Jesus of “destroying” the Law. Of course, neither Jesus nor his accuser would ever think of literally destroying the Law. Furthermore, it would never enter the accuser’s mind to charge Jesus with intent to abolish part or all of the Mosaic Law. What is being called into question is Jesus’ system of interpretation, the way he interprets Scripture.

When accused, Jesus strongly denies that his method of interpreting Scripture “destroys” or weakens its meaning. He claims, on the contrary, to be more orthodox than his accuser. For Jesus, a “light” commandment (“Do not bear hatred in your heart”) is as important as a “heavy” commandment (“Do not murder”). And a disciple who breaks even a “light” commandment will be considered “light” (have an inferior position) in Jesus’ movement (Matthew 5:19).

“Never imagine for a moment,” Jesus says, “that I intend to abrogate the Law by misinterpreting it. My intent is not to weaken or negate the Law, but by properly interpreting God’s written Word I aim to establish it, that is, make it even more lasting. I would never invalidate the Law by

effectively removing something from it through misinterpretation.

Heaven and earth would sooner disappear than something disappear from the Law. Not the smallest letter in the alphabet, the yod, nor even its decorative spur, will ever disappear from the Law.”¹⁰

Furthermore He warns us against anyone who nullifies even the least of the commandments and so teaches others. **“If anyone disobeys the least of these mitzvot,”** He says, **“he will be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whoever obeys them and so teaches others will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.”**

If there is any New Testament passage that wholeheartedly supports what was written in the Law in the lives of believers, this is it. This means that no one (short of God Himself) has the authority to annul, abolish, destroy, change, or set aside the Law – not Peter, not Paul, not James, nor any other man! And since Jesus didn’t do it, then no one else has the authority to do it either!

Those who say that Paul’s writings support an anti-Nomian (anti-Law) stance have only to look back to Jesus’ statement in Matthew 5. If Paul *was* against the keeping of the Law in the life of a New Testament believer, then he *is* least in the kingdom of heaven! (I personally do not believe that he is anti-Law, nor least in the Kingdom. Again, read my book, *The Problem with Paul*)

Confirming Torah in a believer’s life, Shaul/Paul asks in Romans 3:

³¹ “Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law.”

Sha’ul/Pauls’ answer?

¹⁰ *Understanding the difficult words of Jesus*, David Bivin & Roy Blizzard, Jr., CENTER FOR BIBLICAL ANALYSIS, Division of DESTINY IMAGE PUBLISHERS, Shippensburg, PA, Copyright 1984, pages 154-155

A resounding *NO!*

As believers we should want to be like Yeshua/Jesus! As He is, so must we be! We need to walk like Him, talk like Him, live like Him, teach like Him!

In short, we need to be His Disciples!

And a Disciple walks as does the Master! God's intent is to make us like Him!

Conclusion

And in the end, when all is said and done, Solomon writes in Ecclesiastes 12:13-14:

¹³ The conclusion, when all has been heard, *is*: fear God and keep His commandments, because this *applies to* every person. ¹⁴ For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.

Before you lies a choice: you can choose to obey Him (love) or to disobey Him (sin). You can either choose life, or you can choose death.

Deuteronomy 31

¹⁵ "See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity; ¹⁶ in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply, and that the LORD your God may bless you in the land where you are entering to possess it. ¹⁷ "But if your heart turns away and you will not obey, but are drawn away and worship other gods and serve them, ¹⁸ I declare to you today that you shall surely perish. You will not prolong *your* days in the land where you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess it. ¹⁹ "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, ²⁰ by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."

Choose Life

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