

Messianic Rabbi: A Zeal for the Torah

In the book of John chapter 17, we read a beautiful prayer about unity that Yeshua prayed for all those who would follow Him.

“I pray not on behalf of these only, but also for those who believe in Me through their message, that they all may be one. Just as You, Father, are in Me and I am in You, so also may they be one in Us, so the world may believe that You sent Me” (John 17:20-21).

While I wish that we could look at the body of Messiah today and confidently state Yeshua’s prayer has been answered, the truth is that there are many rifts within the body of Messiah. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of different denominations each with their own doctrinal differences and reasons that they are correct, while all others are wrong.

I believe that this division is the result of a purposeful removal of the zeal for Torah from those who follow Yeshua. Now, before you angrily quit reading this blog, please give me the chance to explain further. I understand and completely agree that we are redeemed not through Torah observance, but through faith in Yeshua as our Messiah. I do not believe that we can work our way to heaven. I also do not believe that Gentile believers have the same responsibilities to all Torah commandments that Jewish believers do. (I also don’t believe all Jews have the same responsibility to all Torah commandments.)

However, having said all of the above, we must believe and understand that the Torah is the foundation of all that we believe, and that Torah has not yet completed its work of leading people to Yeshua. I believe we have allowed Torah to

be reduced from the foundation of our faith to the point that it is largely viewed as an introduction to the important part of the Bible, the New Covenant writings.

The result of our allowing and, in some cases, encouraging this depreciation of the value and importance of Torah is that the New Covenant writings have been severed from its roots and reasoning. Because the roots which had once anchored us to the Torah have been removed, we've ended up with people being tossed by every wind and doctrine that has come along. And in doing so, we have forcefully worked to keep Yeshua's prayer for unity from being brought to fullness.

Now, I know that some people who read the headline to this article immediately responded negatively just because the word Torah was used. Others responded negatively because the words "zealous for Torah" were used. But, it is my hope that if you have read this far, you will continue reading on because it appears from New Covenant writings that the apostles didn't consider being zealous for Torah to be a bad thing, nor did they consider being zealous for Torah to be in conflict in any way with having faith in Yeshua as Messiah.

In Acts 21:20-21, we read these words spoken by Jacob (James) to Paul:

"And when they heard, they began glorifying God. They said, "You see, brother, how many myriads there are among the Jewish people who have believed—and they are all zealous for the Torah. They have been told about you—that you teach all the Jewish people among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or to walk according to the custom."

When Jacob spoke these words to Paul, his proclamation of "Torah zealousness" was a positive statement. So positive, in fact, that the entire reason for making the statement was so that he could ask Paul to pay for sacrifices to be made by

Paul and other men to demonstrate Paul also was still zealous for Torah.

Now in this article, I am not going to have space to define what Torah zealousness is for us today, nor what Torah zealousness looks like for Jewish believers or Gentile believers.

But we should at least come away at this point with an understanding that the early believers didn't have an aversion to being zealous for Torah, and if we ever want to have the unity that Yeshua paid for, we are going to have to accept that zealousness to Torah, fidelity to Torah, is the glue that will join the separate parts of the body together to become one.

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