

Should Gentiles Keep Torah: Part 2

Last week's blog received more attention than any blog I have written since the one on the fact that Israeli teachers don't carry firearms in schools. There were more than 200 comments on Facebook, plus lots of *likes* and *shares*. *Charisma* posted it on both its news and magazine sites as well. I had no idea that the topic would attract such interest.

But not all of the response was favorable. One self-proclaimed authority, with an alarming number of followers, wrote me and said:

"REPENT and start teaching the TRUTH: TORAH to the NATIONS. You are a FALSE teacher. Just as is Michael Brown and every other Messianic Jewish rabbi who teaches like you."

Just in case I was not taking him seriously enough, he sent me another message, stating his credentials:

"I am a Levite Cohein. I read Torah and ALL of Scripture in Hebrew, not English. I teach from Hebrew. You would do well to learn from my teachings ... Read my WRITTEN teachings. They will blow you away and astound you ..."

Confident? Yes. Humble? Hmmm

Well, first of all, it is an honor to be included in the ranks of the foremost Messianic Jewish apologist in the world, Dr. Michael Brown. Secondly, anyone who uses ALL CAPS that much, should NOT be taken seriously.

He was not the only one that responded in disagreement. The arguments went like this: *Yeshua told us to make disciples, to teach His commands, Yeshua kept the Torah and said He did not come to take it away, so "clearly" we must teach Gentiles to*

keep all of the Torah, as there is one law for all people. Other passages were quoted regarding the alien living amongst Israel—that they were also expected to keep the Torah in ancient times.

Let's Deal With the Alien Passage

This is shoddy scholarship at best, that picks and chooses passages that seem to support their theology, while excluding others. The One Law Movement seems to have key Scriptures that appear to prove their point, regardless of context or full exegesis, no different from *Jesus Only Baptism* movements or even Mormons, who memorize specific verses for purposes of outreach—without really being familiar with the Scriptures.

For instance, one verse pointed out to me over and over by probably more than a dozen people was:

“One Torah shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who dwells among you.” (Ex. 12:49)

Seems clear until you look at it in context.

1. It is referring to those in Egypt who left with the Israelites. These were non-Hebrews who became convinced, probably during the Ten Plagues, that it was time to hightail it out of Egypt. (Ex. 12:38) They recognized that Yahweh was God and united with the Hebrews. The Hebrew word (גר) translated stranger or alien, can also mean convert in Modern Hebrew.

In other words, they were non-Hebrews *seeking to be one* with the Israelites. God was merely saying, *okay, if you want to be part of my people, you have to go all the way.*

2. The One Law folks (or at least the ones who responded to my blog) seem to entirely miss v. 48, which sheds great understanding on v. 49.

“And when a stranger dwells with you and wants to keep the

Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it" (Ex. 12:48).

We see here that in context it is referring to non-Jews who were living amongst Israel wanting to keep the Passover. So the inference is that non-Jews living amongst them could choose not to keep the Passover, and not be circumcised nor required to adhere to all ceremonial customs in Torah.

3. But even looking at v. 49 alone, *"One Torah shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who dwells among you"* it is clear that is not referring to the entire Gentile world, but those "who dwell among" Israel; who live in an Israeli community. I doubt that even one person who challenged me lives here in Israel! Or, is even part of a Messianic Jewish community!

A Fundamental Change

Nevertheless, as stated in the previous blog, there was a fundamental change after Acts 15, that permitted fellowship among believing Jews and Gentiles without the Gentiles being expected to follow all of the Torah. This was a revelation from God to the Apostles. Paul refers to the fact that the Nations are heirs together with Israel as a *mystery* in Ephesians 3.

With the coming of the New Covenant, there is a change of relationship between the circumcised and the uncircumcised. Since the New Testament teaches specifically on the relationship of Jew and Gentile in the new reality of the body of believers, we cannot simply transfer the practices of pre-Yeshua times into the New Covenant period. (Dr. Daniel C. Juster)

While I have fought long and hard against Replacement Theology (the Church is the New Israel), there were some changes

between the Old and New Covenants. Under the Old Covenant non-Jews who wanted to be part of the people of Israel had to convert to Judaism. By the leading of the Holy Spirit, this was changed in Acts 10 and 15, and restated in Acts 21:

“But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written and decided that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality” (Acts 21:25, emphasis mine).

Let me state again, Gentiles believers are free to be circumcised, keep the feasts, keep kosher and embrace all 613 laws identified in traditional Judaism. (To be clear, many of the laws are impossible to keep today—such as laws for owning slaves or making sacrifices, laws for the Levites and priests, laws for making war, and ones that only apply to a Theocratic state, etc.) But once we start *compelling* non-Jewish believers to do such things as God’s *perfect plan*, we head off into error.

What’s the Big Deal

“What do you care Ron, if Gentiles feel compelled to keep Torah?”

This is an important question. Messianic Jews are often accused of going back *under the Law*. We are often misunderstood in our desire to both serve Yeshua (enjoying the FREE gift of God, not obtained by keeping the Law) and live as Jews according to Torah.

It is very unhelpful to our cause, and the cause of the Lord, for non-Jews and even some misguided Messianic Jews, to pressure Gentile believers to do what so clearly the apostles told them was not required.

I can’t tell you how many times I have encountered people with only a peripheral knowledge of Messianic Judaism, who assume

that we want them to live as Jews. I get emails regularly, hearing stories of families split because one member decides not merely to keep the Sabbath, but goes on to condemn the rest of the family for not. That is why this is a big deal.

Next week, I will post 13 points displaying the error of the One Law Movement. To be clear, I am not saying that these folks are not *in the fold*. Other than a few crack pots, most of them love Yeshua and want to please Him. While in my opinion, this error needs to be addressed, I am by no means saying that those who embrace the One Law theology are not believers.

Let us continue to strive for truth.

Part 1 is here.

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