

OIM UPDATE

October 2017

With the official arrival of Autumn in the Northern Hemisphere, the Feast of Tabernacles or *Sukkot* commences. This last of the Fall high holidays, often referred to as the “season of our joy,” is generally eight days of pleasurable reminders of the Lord’s faithfulness to His people. Naturally, because opinionated individuals are involved, when the Leviticus 23 passage regarding the Feast of Books is considered, there are a variety of modern-day interpretations concerning just “how” to observe this appointed time:

“Speak to *Bnei-Yisrael*, and say, On the fifteenth day of this seventh month is the Feast of *Sukkot*, for seven days to *ADONAI*. On the first day there is to be a holy convocation—you are to do no laborious work. For seven days you are to bring an offering by fire to *ADONAI*. The eighth day will be a holy convocation to you, and you are to bring an offering by fire to *ADONAI*. It is a solemn assembly—you should do no laborious work. These are the *moadim* of *ADONAI*, which you are to proclaim to be holy convocations, to present an offering by fire to *ADONAI*—a burnt offering, a grain offering, a sacrifice and drink offerings, each on its own day, besides those of the *Shabbatot* of *ADONAI* and besides your gifts, all your vows and all your freewill offerings which you give to *ADONAI*. So on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruits of the land, you are to keep the Feast of *ADONAI* for seven days. The first day is to be a *Shabbat* rest, and the eighth day will also be a *Shabbat* rest. On the first day you are to take choice fruit of trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook, and rejoice before *ADONAI* your God for seven days. You are to celebrate it as a festival to *ADONAI* for seven days in the year. It is a statute forever throughout your generations—you are to celebrate it in the seventh month. You are to live in *sukkot* for seven days. All the native-born in Israel are to live in *sukkot*, so that your generations may know that I had *Bnei-Yisrael* to dwell in *sukkot* when I brought them out of the land of Egypt. I am *ADONAI* your God” (Leviticus 23:34-43, TLV).

Different people living in unique circumstances chose to do dissimilar things to observe *Sukkot*. Some simply build a family *sukkah* in their backyard or on a balcony, and then take some time during the eight days to have a meal or entertain a family member or friend or pray in the temporary structure. On the other hand, some people have decided to take a week off from work and go to the country or campgrounds to erect some kind of temporary dwelling (tent) and spend the week in celebration. The wide variance between the means of celebration simply reflects the diversity of people who take the time to not only recognize the Feast of Tabernacles, but actually

do something other than some mental ascent to its ancient existence. After all, the words **"perpetual statute throughout your generations"** (Leviticus 23:41, NASU) should always be considered. Hence, individuals, families, fellowships, and congregations have the latitude to celebrate according to what the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit) leads. The key for a Messianic follower of the Messiah is to recognize this convocation and impart it down through the generations!

For those studying the weekly Torah portions, the close of *Sukkot* is attended by *Shemini Atzeret* and *Simchat Torah*. I have written five *TorahScope* volumes available in either paperback or eBook format, for you to begin your annual journey through the Torah readings. And, with the importance for today's Messianic people to be paying attention to the Torah, in their understanding and reading of the Bible, this month's lead article by J.K. McKee is the first part of a two-part article, entitled **"A Torah Foundation."** This article goes into discussing some of the components of the weekly Torah portions, the Tanakh as the Bible of Yeshua, and begins addressing common Scriptures used to claim that the Torah is not important for born again Believers today—when it surely is!

We want to especially thank those of you who have faithfully supported our efforts over the years. We continue to need your financial support in order to dedicate the time and energy required to continue in the work that the Lord has assigned us. We particularly need many of you to sign up for a regular monthly contribution via PayPal at www.outreachisrael.net.

Finally, the U.S. and some of its citizens have been ravaged by yet another hurricane hitting Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, and a freak mass killing in Las Vegas. It is our prayer that God will use each of these circumstances to draw people unto Himself, and that any natural or man-made tragedies will turn people to the Messiah for salvation, hope, and restoration. *Father, we need your protection, healing, and peace!*

"*ADONAI* bless you and keep you! *ADONAI* make His face to shine on you and be gracious to you! *ADONAI* turn His face toward you and grant you *shalom!*" (Numbers 6:24-26, TLV).

Chag Samaech!

Mark Huey

A TORAH FOUNDATION PART I

by J.K. McKee

When anyone attends a Messianic congregation, they are immediately struck with a connection to traditions and practices of not only today's Jewish Synagogue, but of antiquity long standing. For Jewish Believers in Israel's Messiah, entering into a Messianic congregation for a Saturday morning *Shabbat* service—there is an instant connection not only to one's Biblical heritage, but also one's ethnic and cultural heritage going back millennia. When the traditional liturgy and prayers are recited—which incorporates Scripture, hymns once sung in the Temple, and compositions from post-Second Temple Judaism lauding the Creator—Jewish Believers feel a strong comfort level, as they seek to live out their Messiah faith by embracing and not rejecting their Jewish heritage.

Non-Jewish Believers from Protestant backgrounds, visiting or attending a Messianic congregation, have varied reactions to the traditions of the *Shabbat* service. Many are sincerely intrigued, and they appreciate the structure and reverence of a worship time with Hebrew and English liturgy. Many indeed appreciate the ancient tradition of reading from the Torah scroll, seeing that canting the Hebrew aloud to the assembly is an ancient art to be greatly cherished. Others, however, do not see the value of liturgy or canting from a Torah scroll, considering these to be vain human practices. In fact, many—visiting a Messianic congregation almost entirely out of curiosity—are actually quite negative toward anything having to do with the Torah.

There is no question when reading the historical record of the Tanach (Old Testament) that obedience to God's Instruction is required of His people. Israel's obedience to the commandments of God's Torah or Law was to bring it great blessings and fame (Deuteronomy 4:5-10), but disobedience would bring judgment (Deuteronomy 30:1-2). The history of Israel throughout the Tanach is, unfortunately, one of frequent disobedience—and Bible readers often witness the required punishment or chastisement of Israel by God (Deuteronomy 27:26). As soon as the Ancient Israelites entered into the Promised Land, one encounters how the period of the Judges was one where "Everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6, ESV). The Kingdom of Israel was split in two by the disobedience of King Solomon to God's Law (involving incessant polygamy, idolatry, and child sacrifice!), although there was a period of critical reform during the reign of King Josiah, which saw a renewed appreciation for God's Torah (2 Kings 22:1-23:28; 2 Chronicles 34:1-35:27). Following the Southern Kingdom's return from Babylonian exile, the custom of publicly reading the Scriptures to the community became established (Nehemiah 8:1-3). If the exile was caused by disobedience to God's Word, then it is logical that the Jewish community assemble to hear God's Word, so that such disobedience would never take place again.

The Torah Cycle

In today's Messianic community, just as in today's Jewish Synagogue, a major feature of the *Shabbat* service is reading from the weekly Torah portion. While Jewish history indicates that there have been different ways that the Synagogue has approached reading the Torah, with both annual and triennial cycles employed¹—the practice of the Jewish community reading through the Torah *is ancient*. In fact, the oblique statement appearing in Acts 15:21, "For from the earliest times, Moshe has had in every city those who proclaim him, with his words being read in the synagogues every *Shabbat*" (CJB/CJSB), is an historical attestation of the Torah being read and discussed in the ancient Synagogue.

Two significant Jewish figures from the First Century indicate how important it was for members of the Jewish community to come together, hear the Torah declared, and for it to be the centerpiece of education in holy conduct. The Jewish philosopher Philo, who lived in Alexandria and was contemporary to Yeshua and Paul, stated, "And would you still sit down in your synagogues, collecting your ordinary assemblies, and reading your sacred volumes in security, and explaining whatever is not quite clear, and devoting all your time and leisure with long discussions to the philosophy of your ancestors?" (*On Dreams* 2.127).² The historian Josephus recorded how members of the Jewish community were permitted "to leave off their other employments, and to assemble together for the hearing of the law, and learning it exactly, and this not once or twice, or oftener, but every week; which thing all the other legislators seem to have neglected" (*Against Apion* 2.175).³

It is seen in the evangelistic efforts of Paul, that after the public reading of the Torah and Prophets (Acts 13:15), that he would use the opportunity to speak of the salvation of Yeshua the Messiah. Within today's Messianic movement, the weekly Torah portion, and its associated Haftarah reading from the Prophets, frequently tends to be a venue for considering the work of Israel's Messiah. This is an excellent way to testify of Yeshua to Jewish non-Believers, and to see evangelical Protestant Believers drawn to Messianic things, significantly connect with their faith heritage in the Scriptures of Israel. Today's Messianic movement, on the whole, follows an annual Torah cycle, divided into 54 Torah portions. In addition to the associated Haftarah from the Prophets, Messianics also have tended to incorporate associated readings from the Apostolic Scriptures (New Testament).

The Bible of Yeshua

One of the significant pulls for many evangelical Protestant people, drawn by the Lord into the Messianic movement, is reconnecting with the Tanach or Old Testament Scriptures. As obvious as it may be, **the Tanach was the Bible of Yeshua and His Disciples**. Yeshua Himself spoke of how "all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled" (Luke 24:44,

¹ Consult Louis Jacobs. "Torah, Reading of," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. MS Windows 9x. Brooklyn: Judaica Multimedia (Israel) Ltd, 1997.

² Flavius Josephus: trans. William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), 805.

³ Philo Judeaus: trans. C.D. Yonge, *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 397.

NASU). When a figure like Paul speaks of how “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16, NIV), much of what we today call the “New Testament” had yet to be collected together or even written. The Scriptures to which Paul was referring would have composed the “Old Testament.” Theologian John Goldingay emphasizes,

“One of the New Testament’s own convictions is that the Old Testament is part of the Scriptures (indeed, *is* the Scriptures). . . and that the Old Testament provides the theological framework within which Jesus needs to be understood. The New Testament is then a series of Christian and ecclesial footnotes to the Old Testament, and one cannot produce a theology out of footnotes.”⁴

The Tanach Scriptures, and consequently also the Messianic Writings, are built upon the foundation of the Torah (the Pentateuch or Chumash). If you do not understand the Torah, you are liable to misunderstand what is being said in the remainder of Scripture. You have to understand the foundational stories of the Patriarchs of the faith: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the formation of Ancient Israel as a nation. **Understanding the Exodus is imperative to properly appreciating one’s salvation and the sacrifice of Yeshua as the Lamb of God.** You have to understand that the theological patterns established in the Torah are repeated in the remainder of the Tanach, and indeed also, in the Apostolic Scriptures. The Torah forms the foundation of the Bible and Scripture progressively builds upon it as God’s plan of salvation history unfolds. The ethical and moral values of the Torah, for certain, affected the worldview and perspectives of Yeshua and His Disciples!

As Jon D. Levenson remarks in *The Jewish Study Bible*, “both Jewish and Christian traditions view the books Genesis through Deuteronomy in this order as a single unit, standing first in the Bible. The unanimity of tradition and the initial placement of these five books reflect their significant place within religious life. In Judaism, the Torah is accorded the highest level of sanctity, above that of the other books of the Bible.”⁵ Even though Christianity does accord the Torah some strong status, this status is not as high as it is in Judaism. W.D. Davies notes in *IDB* that “The coming of Jesus has inaugurated a new order in which, in some sense, the law is superseded.”⁶ While the Messiah Yeshua is always to be our primary focus of faith as Believers, and Yeshua as God in the flesh and thus our “Lawgiver” (James 4:12) must by necessity exceed the Torah itself in importance, does Yeshua supersede and make the Torah to none effect? Or, is the Torah fully realized in Yeshua, who has final authority?

How should we approach the Torah of Moses?

While the Torah of Moses is the foundation of the rest of Scripture—and all Bible readers should have a good understanding of—it would be a mistake to say that

⁴ John Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology: Israel’s Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 24.

⁵ Jon D. Levenson, “Torah,” in Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Study Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1.

⁶ W.D. Davies, “Law in the NT,” in George Buttrick, ed. et. al., *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, 4 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 3:96.

with the coming of the Messiah, there have not been some changes resultant of His sacrifice for human sins. In Protestant theology, for certain, there are varied approaches witnessed to the role that the Law of Moses plays in the life of a Believer. There are theological traditions such as Lutheranism which see a strong contrast between the law and grace of God, considering the Torah to be a part of a previous time. There are other theological traditions such as Calvinism and Wesleyanism, which have historically sub-divided the Torah's commandments into the civil law, ceremonial law, and moral law. It is thought that now with the arrival of the Messiah, that only the moral law remains to be followed by God's people. (My own family, with mixed Presbyterian and Methodist roots, comes from a heritage which emphasized the "moral law" of God remaining valid for God's people.)

Within today's broad Messianic movement, different perspectives are witnessed as they involve the ongoing relevance of the Torah or Moses' Teaching for God's people. For sure, it is agreed that the Torah composes the ethnic and cultural heritage of today's Jewish people, to which they should be faithful. Yet, how do we approach the Torah as our spiritual heritage?

As far as it involves the continuity of the Torah for the Body of Messiah, there are those who believe, often following dispensational theology, that the Law of Moses was for a previous era. There are others—perhaps or perhaps not influenced by theological traditions that have emphasized the so-called "moral law" as continuing—which have thought that a review of practices believed abolished such as the seventh-day Sabbath/*Shabbat*, appointed times or *moedim* of Leviticus 23, and the kosher dietary laws, is important. Those who believe in a widespread continuity of Torah practices in the post-resurrection era, tend to focus on the themes of the prophesied New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Ezekiel 36:25-27, and how God's commandments are to be written on the heart, **and is a decisive work of the Holy Spirit**. Concurrent with this would be the necessity for God's people today to recapture a proper understanding of how "sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4), the need to be holy (Deuteronomy 14:2; 28:9), and how blessings are given to those who obey the Lord (Deuteronomy 30:9-10). Unfortunately, given the great importance of a Torah foundation for those in Messiah, there are those who we will encounter, who can be very legalistic and inflexible.

Does the New Testament Really Do Away With the Law?

Today's broad Messianic movement does adhere to some form of **post-resurrection era validity to the Torah of Moses**. At the very least, today's Messianic people believe that the weekly Torah portions should be read and contemplated, as we let its accounts inform our understanding of how God works in history, and how we need the salvation of Yeshua the Messiah. By virtue of holding its main worship services on *Shabbat* or the seventh-day Sabbath, observing holidays and festivals not adhered to by most of today's Messiah followers, and being concerned about clean and unclean meats—today's Messianic people do inevitably have some conflict with a great deal of contemporary Christian thought and theology, which teaches that the Torah or Law of Moses has been abolished. In the minds of many Messianics, the idea that the Law has been abolished, has not only been a significant cause of

many (claiming) Christians today being engrossed in great sins—ranging from abortion, pre-marital sex, and homosexuality—but has also caused many to be *utterly anemic* in their approach to the Scriptures, and how relevant the Bible is for their lives.

What did Yeshua the Messiah say about the Torah? In His famed words of the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord communicated, “Do not think that I came to abolish the Torah or the Prophets! I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. Amen, I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or serif shall ever pass away from the Torah until all things come to pass. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever keeps and teaches them, this one shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:17-19, TLV). Many people in today’s Messianic community, either Jewish Believers who originally came to faith via an evangelical Christian experience—and especially non-Jewish Believers who have been drawn into Messianic things—can testify to being convicted by these words. Yeshua the Messiah says that the Torah or Law of Moses remains in effect until our present universe passes away. And, the venerable Apostle Paul, whose writings are often purported to say that the Torah has been abolished, notably did say that proper doctrine must “agree with sound words, those of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, and with the instruction in keeping with godliness” (1 Timothy 6:3, TLV).

If Yeshua says that the Torah is to be regarded as valid instruction for His followers, and if Paul says that proper doctrine must be in alignment with the Messiah’s words—then some necessary reevaluation of many Bible passages is in order. Today’s Messianic movement, in addition to simply wanting to have a *fully Biblical and holistically Scriptural view*, has to have a high view of the Torah of Moses for God’s people today, given its mission involving Jewish outreach and evangelism. Deuteronomy 13:1-5 specifically warned Ancient Israel against any figure who would come and perform signs and wonders for the people, and then teach against God’s commandments. Such a person was to be regarded as a false prophet. Unfortunately, this is precisely how much of Christianity has historically presented Yeshua the Messiah:

“Whatever I command you, you must take care to do—you are not to add to it or take away from it. Suppose a prophet or a dreamer of dreams rises up among you and gives you a sign or wonder, and the sign or wonder he spoke to you comes true, while saying, ‘Let’s follow other gods’—that you have not known, and—‘Let’s serve them!’ You must not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams—for *ADONAI* your God is testing you, to find out whether you love *ADONAI* your God with all your heart and with all your soul. *ADONAI* your God you will follow and Him you will fear. His *mitzvot* you will keep, to His voice you will listen, Him you will serve and to Him you will cling” (Deuteronomy 13:1-5, TLV).

Many of us, whether we be Jewish or non-Jewish Believers, can testify to how when we informed various friends, acquaintances, or even family members *that we were simply attending a Messianic congregation that held its worship service on Saturday*, that we were in danger of falling from grace, committed some kind of sacrilege, or at the very least were trying to earn our salvation via works. We have each been confronted with a barrage of accusations, mainly quoting texts from the Apos-

toxic Scriptures or New Testament, about why the Torah or significant aspects of it, are no longer relevant for today's Messiah followers. Few are aware of how debated the issue of the Law of Moses has been, for the holiness and sanctification of born again Believers, in Protestant theology over the past three centuries.⁷ But more importantly, too many people have been subjected to sub-standard interpretations and approaches to Bible passages, which were issued in a specific ancient context, and to which there might be various transmission debates from the source text into English.

Does the New Testament really do away with the Law? Our ministry has actually produced a substantial book (764 pages) on this issue, ***The New Testament Validates Torah MAXIMUM EDITION***. The bulk of this resource examines fifty Bible passages, mainly from the Apostolic Scriptures, which are frequently invoked to claim that the Torah of Moses is no longer relevant for God's people today. Certainly, while we do stress that we live in a post-resurrection era with new realities that have been inaugurated by the sacrifice of the Messiah,⁸ a widescale dismissal of the Torah is untenable—not only given Yeshua's own words about the matter (Matthew 5:17-19), but also the steadfast reality that the New Covenant He has brought about (Luke 22:20) involves the supernatural writing of the commandments onto the new hearts of those cleansed by His work (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27).

The following is an abbreviated synopsis (Part I) of the fifty Bible passages examined in *The New Testament Validates Torah MAXIMUM EDITION*, addressing common Christian approaches which see the Torah as something for a previous time:

Isaiah 1:13-14: "God hates the Jewish feasts of the Old Testament"

The Lord actually says that He hates people who sacrifice and pray to Him, whose hands are covered with the blood of the innocent (Isaiah 1:15-17). The festivals and observances in view are notably labeled as "yours," which places a huge burden of proof on the human people observing them inappropriately, not that they have all of a sudden been rejected by God as having value as instructions given by Him. Going through external religious motions, while at the same time facilitating injustice, is the problem.

Ezekiel 20:12-26: "God actually gave His people bad laws that they could not follow"

The Prophet Ezekiel describes the challenges that existed with the Israelites delivered from Egypt via the Exodus, and their children, in their difficulties with obeying God's Instruction to them (Ezekiel 20:12-24). Their descendants, being engrossed by sin and rebellion against God, were turned over to bad laws (Ezekiel 20:25) such as child sacrifice (Ezekiel 20:26). Such bad laws involved either outright paganism, or a perversion of a good Biblical commandment, such as the dedication of the firstborn (Exodus 22:9).

Hosea 2:11: "God has put an end to the Old Testament Sabbath and feast days"

The Northern Kingdom of Israel practiced syncretism, where Biblical practices such as the Sabbath were kept in conjunction with the worship of pagan deities. Its disloyalty to God is depicted

⁷ Consult the varied perspectives presented in Wayne G. Strickland, ed., *Five Views on Law and Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).

⁸ Consult the article "The Significance of the Messiah Event" by Margaret McKee Huey and J.K. McKee, appearing in the *Messianic Torah Helper*.

ed as an act of harlotry (Hosea 2:1-7), with the people not realizing how their prosperity came from the Lord and not Baal (Hosea 2:12-13). The religious observances that will cease are notably labeled as “her new moons, her Sabbaths” (Hosea 2:11), an indication how they had been taken up into the idolatry of the Northern Kingdom.

Matthew 5:17: “Jesus fulfilled every jot and tittle of the Law”

The Messiah’s expressed purpose in association with the Torah of Moses was precisely not “to destroy but to fulfill” (Matthew 5:17, NKJV). Whether Yeshua’s fulfillment of the Torah be viewed as His proper interpretation of Moses’ Teaching, and/or His fulfillment of Messianic prophecies, our Lord says that “not the smallest letter or serif shall ever pass away from the Torah until all things come to pass” (Matthew 5:18, TLV), and that the present Heaven and Earth must disappear in order for the Torah to be regarded as unimportant.

Matthew 11:13: “The Law of Moses was only in effect until John the Baptist”

What is actually said is, “For all the prophets and the Torah prophesied until John” (Matthew 11:13, PME). With the arrival of John the Immerser, a shift in salvation history was taking place. The arrival of John was prophesied, and subsequently the Messiah and the new realities He would inaugurate would follow (Matthew 11:12). No disparagement of the Tanach Scriptures or Torah of Moses is intended here, but what is intended is that they are incomplete without the Messiah they anticipate.

Mark 7:1-23: “Jesus Christ declared the dietary laws to be obsolete”

There was a controversy present because Yeshua’s Disciples did not ritually wash their hands before eating, as did various Pharisees (Mark 7:1-5). Yeshua highlights some significant hypocrisy present here (Mark 7:6-13), and then addresses how what enters into a person does not defile him (Mark 7:14-15), as what is spoken by someone is what truly defiles (Mark 7:20-23). In informing His Disciples that what proceeds from a person is what truly defiles (Mark 7:18), Yeshua said, as is properly translated from the Greek of Mark 7:19, “because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and goes out into the latrine, purging all the foods [*katharizōn panta ta brōmata, καθαρίζων πάντα τὰ βρώματα*]” (PME). Ultimately, what is eaten is excreted from the human body.

John 1:17: “The Law was given through Moses; grace and truth realized through Christ”

Speaking of the arrival of the Messiah on the scene of history, John 1:16 narrates, “For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace” (NASU). It is then stated, “Torah was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Yeshua the Messiah” (John 1:17, TLV). The Torah of Moses is actually to be regarded as a revelation of God’s grace, but its grace has now been surpassed—as God’s grace is continuous—with the grace available in the work of the Messiah. This does not abrogate the Torah of Moses, but does reveal its incompleteness without the presence of Yeshua.

John 13:34: “Jesus Christ gave us a new law of love to replace the laws of the Old Testament”

Responsible Bible readers are aware that the commands to love God and neighbor are actually a part of the Tanach or Old Testament (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18). When Yeshua directed, “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, so also you must love one another” (John 13:34, TLV), this can be taken as either (a) a new quality of demonstrating love for others, as seen in the Messiah’s own ministry, or (b) a love manifested via the power of the prophesied New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27).

Acts 10:1-48: "Peter was shown a vision nullifying the dietary laws"

Peter did see a vision of a sheet of unclean animals, which he was commanded to eat (Acts 10:9-13). God told Peter not to regard as unholy that which He cleansed (Acts 10:14-15). Following this, Peter goes to declare the good news to the Roman centurion Cornelius, informing him, per his vision, that "God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean" (Acts 10:28, ESV). The main intention of Peter's vision was to communicate how all human beings have been made clean by the sacrifice of Israel's Messiah, and that as a Jew Peter should not fear interacting with those of the nations.

Acts 15:19-21: "The Apostolic decree says nothing about new Christians observing the Mosaic Law"

The Jerusalem Council specifically met to answer the claim of some hyper-conservative Jewish Believers, that the new, non-Jewish Believers had to be circumcised and keep the Torah of Moses to be saved (Acts 15:1, 5). Peter made it clear that all are saved by God's grace (Acts 15:7-9, 11), and that a heavy yoke or burden was being unnecessarily imposed (Acts 15:10). James the Just testified that the salvation of the nations was prophesied in the Tanach, per the restoration of the Tabernacle of David (Acts 15:14-18; Amos 9:11-12). The Apostolic decree mandated only four things, which could have been construed as a "burden" (Acts 15:28), requiring immediate changes from those turning to the Messiah of Israel (Acts 15:20). When followed, these new Believers would be cut off from their spheres of social and religious influence in Greco-Roman paganism. Far from these people being "order[ed]...to keep the law of Moses" (Acts 15:5, ESV) by demanding mortals, Tanach prophecy and the plan of God were to instead be facilitated (Acts 15:15). This would necessarily involve the nations coming to Zion to be taught God's Instruction (Micah 4:1-3; Isaiah 2:2-4), a work that could only take place at the prompting of the Holy Spirit per the Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Ezekiel 36:25-27 New Covenant.

Acts 20:7: "The early Christians met on the first day of the week, a clear abolishment of the Jewish Sabbath"

Scholars debate what is intended by "first of the week" (Acts 20:7, PME), as to whether this was a meeting "on Sunday to worship" (The Message) or "On the Saturday night" (NEB/REB) after the Sabbath or *Shabbat* had closed. This could make the meeting in Troas "*Motza'ei-Shabbat*" (CJB/CJSB), a get together of the Believers remembering the departure of the Sabbath.

Romans 3:19-22: "Through the works of the Law no one will be justified."

Traditionally, Romans 3:19-22 has been interpreted as meaning that human action in association with the Law of Moses will not bring one a status of redemption. Alternatively, various scholars have proposed that "works of the Law" involves ancient Jewish *halachah*, and that "justification" here primarily involves membership among God's people. The actual purpose of the Torah is not justification; instead "through the Torah *comes* the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20b, PME).

Romans 3:28: "Justified by faith apart from works of the Law"

Even with components of "justification" likely involving membership among God's people, the purpose of the Torah is not to provide justification. Justification is to take place via faith, for both Jewish people and those of the nations (Romans 3:29-30). Yet as Paul also asserts, "Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law" (Romans 3:31, RSV).

Romans 4:5: "God justifies those who do not work"

A bad interpretation of Romans 4:5 would conclude that God is not concerned about born again Believers demonstrating good works resultant of their faith. The issue instead is people thinking that their human actions will merit some kind of justification, forgiveness, and a declaration of innocence before God—like a laborer would receive his wages (Romans 4:4).

Romans 6:14: "We are not under law, but under grace"

Born again Believers not being "under the law" is commonly interpreted as meaning that they should not concern themselves with the commandments of God's Torah. The actual status of "under the law" is something contrary to being "under grace," meaning being forgiven and remitted of sins. Many Protestant theologians throughout history have advocated that being "under the law" is a status possessed by non-Believers, who stand condemned as unrighteous sinners by God's Torah—a clear antithesis to being "under grace."

Romans 6:23: "Eternal life is a free gift"

Salvation is a free gift that human actions cannot earn. Debates always ensue about the behavior and obedience required of those who receive salvation—activities which are to result because of the supernatural action of God's Spirit on the hearts of the redeemed.

Romans 7:1-25: "We were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ"

The main bulk of the discussion in Romans 7:7-25 describes the status of someone who recognizes the high value of God's Torah, but cannot quite seem to keep it due to innate human limitations. Paul says that born again Believers have been "made dead to the Torah through the body of Messiah" (Romans 7:4, PME), which is like how a widow "is discharged from the law concerning the husband" (Romans 7:2, PME; cf. Numbers 5:20, 29). The relationship of the unredeemed person is like the law of marriage being applicable to a wife. When the husband dies the law or instruction pertaining to marriage is no longer applicable to the wife—but this hardly means a widescale abandonment of the Torah's code in other matters. Just like the law of marriage is not applicable to a widow, so is the Torah's condemnation of sinners no longer applicable to the redeemed, and what Believers are actually "made dead" to is the Torah's condemnation, which was taken upon Yeshua the Messiah.

Romans 8:1-4: "The law of the Spirit of life has set us free from the law of sin and death"

"The law of the Spirit of life in Messiah Yeshua" is a spiritual law or constant demonstrated within a person, who recognizes Yeshua as Lord, is declared free of guilt and condemnation from Torah disobedience, is spiritually regenerated, and receives the gift of the Holy Spirit. A second spiritual law or constant, "the law of sin and death," is that once a person commits sin, he or she will die spiritually and experience a condition of exile from the Creator, and exist in a permanent state of condemnation and punishment if never rectified. A definite purpose of being saved and set free from sin is "that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us" (Romans 8:4, NIV).

Romans 10:4: "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes"

Longstanding theological debates have ensued over the word *telos* (τέλος) in Romans 10:4, a term which can also mean aim, purpose, or goal, as witnessed in various alternative translations: "Christ is the goal of the Law, which leads to righteousness for all who have faith in God" (Common English Bible).

PART II of "A Torah Foundation"