

MESSIANIC

TORAH HELPER

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edited by **Margaret McKee Huey**
with J.K. McKee



Messianic Torah Helper

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Abbreviation Chart and Special Terms

The following is a chart of abbreviations for reference works and special terms that are used in publications by Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics. Please familiarize yourself with them as the text may reference a Bible version, i.e., RSV for the Revised Standard Version, or a source such as *TWOT* for the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, solely by its abbreviation. Detailed listings of these sources are provided in the Bibliography.

Special terms that may be used have been provided in this chart:

- ABD: *Anchor Bible Dictionary*
 AMG: *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament*
 ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)
 Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament
 Ara: Aramaic
 ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)
 b. Babylonian Talmud (*Talmud Bavli*)
 B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.
 BDAG: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)
 BDB: *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*
 BECNT: *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*
 BKCNT: *Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*
 C.E.: Common Era or A.D.
 CEV: Contemporary English Version (1995)
 CGEDNT: *Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Barclay M. Newman)
 CHALOT: *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*
 CJB: Complete Jewish Bible (1998)
 DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition
 DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls
 ECB: *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*
 EDB: *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*
 eisegesis: "reading meaning into," or interjecting a preconceived or foreign meaning into a Biblical text
 EJ: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*
 ESV: English Standard Version (2001)
 exegesis: "drawing meaning out of," or the process of trying to understand what a Biblical text means on its own
 EXP: *Expositor's Bible Commentary*
 Ger: German
 GNT: Greek New Testament
 Grk: Greek
halachah: Hebrew term for lit. "the way to walk," meaning how the Torah is lived out and applied within an individual's life and/or the faith community
 HALOT: *Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Koehler and Baumgartner)
 HCSB: Holman Christian Standard Bible (2004)
 Heb: Hebrew
 HNV: Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible
 ICC: *International Critical Commentary*
 IDB: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*
 IDBSup: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement*
 ISBE: *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*
 IVPBBC: *IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old & New Testament)*
 Jastrow: *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature* (Marcus Jastrow)
 JBK: New Jerusalem Bible-Koren (2000)
 JETS: *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
 KJV: King James Version
 Lattimore: The New Testament by Richmond Lattimore (1996)
 LITV: Literal Translation of the Holy Bible by Jay P. Green (1986)
 LS: *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell & Scott)
 LXE: *Septuagint with Apocrypha* by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
 LXX: Septuagint
 m. Mishnah
 MT: Masoretic Text
 NASB: New American Standard Bible (1977)
 NASU: New American Standard Update (1995)
 NBCR: *New Bible Commentary: Revised*
 NEB: New English Bible (1970)
 Nelson: *Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words*
 NETS: New English Translation of the Septuagint (2007)
 NIB: *New Interpreter's Bible*
 NIGTC: *New International Greek Testament Commentary*
 NICNT: *New International Commentary on the New Testament*
 NIDB: *New International Dictionary of the Bible*
 NIV: New International Version (1984)

NJB: New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic (1985)
NJS: Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures (1999)
NKJV: New King James Version (1982)
NRSV: New Revised Standard Version (1989)
NLT: New Living Translation (1996)
NT: New Testament
NTVT: *The New Testament Validates Torah* by J.K. McKee (2012)
orthopraxy: lit. "the right action," how the Bible or one's theology is lived out in the world
OT: Old Testament
PreachC: *The Preacher's Commentary*
REB: Revised English Bible (1989)
RSV: Revised Standard Version (1952)
t. Tosefta
Tanach (Tanakh): the Old Testament
Thayer: *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*

TDNT: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
TEV: Today's English Version (1976)
TLV: Tree of Life Messianic Family Bible—New Covenant (2011)
TNIV: Today's New International Version (2005)
TNTC: *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*
TWOT: *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*
UBSHNT: United Bible Societies' 1991 Hebrew New Testament revised edition v(s). verse(s)
Vine: *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*
Vul: Latin Vulgate
WBC: *Word Biblical Commentary*
Yid: Yiddish
YLT: Young's Literal Translation (1862/1898)

Introduction

The *Messianic Torah Helper* is one of numerous publications by Messianic Apologetics which has originated entirely out of circumstance. In the Winter of 2010 and Spring of 2011, when the 430-page paperback edition of *The New Testament Validates Torah* was being prepared by J.K. McKee, it was obvious to him that many of the things which he wanted to see addressed in that book, simply could not be, because of space limitations. Rather than cast away the various appendices from the previous, 2008 spiral comb edition of *NTVT*, it seemed more appropriate that they should be transplanted into a different, or even new book. As files began being shuffled around, and we began to consider various ideas, it became obvious that this new book needed to be a unique volume within our *Messianic Helper* series.

Up until the present time in 2013, the three previous releases within our *Messianic Helper* series have pertained to the Spring, Fall, and Winter holiday seasons. They concern how Jewish and non-Jewish Believers can be blessed and enriched in their Messianic faith, as they celebrate and honor Yeshua in the appointed times. Two volumes which have been planned for an extensive paperback release, and will hopefully be completed sometime in 2014, will address the issues of the seventh-day Sabbath and kosher eating for Messianic Believers. All of these different areas of Torah observance involve daily, weekly, and seasonal practices, various traditions and customs—as well as associated questions and debates. The *Messianic Torah Helper*, however, includes an array of far more than just important articles transplanted from the 2008 edition of *NTVT*.

When surveying not only the broad Messianic community, but also the theological heritage that the Messianic movement has inherited from both the Jewish Synagogue and Christian Church—it should be most obvious that the subject of the Torah or the Law of Moses, is rather big. If you are a person who has been a part of the Messianic movement for some period of time, or you are just now being exposed to it, the following list of questions, among others, are some which you have doubtlessly encountered:

- What is the best way to be familiar with the accounts and regulations of the Torah?
- Should the Torah ever be referred to as “the Law”?
- How should God’s people approach the issues contained in the Pentateuch? Are some commandments truly conditioned by an ancient context and setting, and are other commandments more universal to all times and settings?
- While the Torah is an undeniable part of the ethnic and cultural heritage of the Jewish people, what is the relationship of people from the nations to Moses’ Teaching?
- What about texts of the New Testament like Galatians, Romans, or Hebrews, and what they say about the Law?
- Can people actually be saved through their Torah observance?

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- Does the sacrifice of Yeshua (Jesus) the Messiah change anything, in terms of the relationship that God's people have toward the Law?
- What about the role of Jewish tradition and *halachah* for today's Messianics?
- What about the role of the Holy Spirit in obeying God's Instruction?
- What is the purpose of the contemporary Messianic movement, the salvation of the Jewish people, *and* why are so many non-Jewish Believers turning to the Torah?
- What about the distinct needs of Messianic Jews?

These are just a selection of the questions which are probed by the *Messianic Torah Helper*. Obviously, a single book cannot address the many issues and sub-issues which involve how today's Messianic people, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, should orient themselves to the varied areas which involve God's Torah. But, the *Messianic Torah Helper* composes a wide compilation of articles and analyses, which need to be read by many of today's Messianic people—especially those who have been subjected to a few unnecessary theological and spiritual extremes, and now need to be balanced out, acquiring some more information.

The difference between the preceding *New Testament Validates Torah* book, and this publication, is that *NTVT* largely addressed the general validity and relevance of the Torah or Law of Moses for God's people today, answering a great many arguments given by contemporary Christians. The *Messianic Torah Helper* addresses a number of significant, associated topics, as people within the broad—and still developing or emerging—Messianic movement, consider Moses' Teaching and apply it to their individual and congregational lives. The questions and issues this book analyzes—within the orbit of “Torah”—are those which many, many Messianic people encounter in their different fellowships and assemblies, either from teachings from the leadership (both positive and negative) or from individuals with whom they interact at gathering times. These same questions and issues have also been posed by many others within the Messianic movement, *especially including* those who make an avid use of online social media.

It should be obvious to each of us in the Twenty-First Century, that today's Messiah followers are not the original people to whom the Torah was first given at Mount Sinai in the Thirteenth Century B.C.E. And, we are not exactly like the First Century C.E. *ekklesia*, composed of Jews, Greeks, and Romans in the Mediterranean basin, either. As such, to properly appreciate the different articles and analyses that compose the *Messianic Torah Helper*, it needs to be stressed that **each of us needs to consciously be aware** of the context of the Torah or Pentateuch as given to its original recipients in Ancient Israel, how the Torah was approached by Yeshua and His Apostles—but most especially consider various post-resurrection realities, specially inaugurated via the work of Israel's Messiah—**and** then couple them with what is happening in our time with the Messianic movement.

Whether you are aware of it or not, today's Messianic community has already entered into a very decisive stage of its theological and spiritual development. We have already seen positive strides made in seeing a generation of Jewish people come to faith in Messiah Yeshua, and in seeing a wide number of evangelical

Christians embrace their Hebraic Roots in a very tangible way. *It is now time to move forward*, and it is our hope that this unique publication with the scope of subjects it addresses and the information it has compiled, will be able to assist in this endeavor.

In the early 2010s, those of us who serve in full time Messianic ministry—especially in some sort of educational capacity—have discerned some noticeable factors regarding our developing theology. **The Messianic community has already entered into that realm of examining the Bible as history, as law, as philosophy, and as psychology**—but far too many people at large do not even realize it, nor would they have an adequate orientation of what to do with it per some significant issues on the horizon. Considering the experiences of the Ancient Israelites, in the Ancient Near East, does not often appear on the radar of your average Messianic person.ⁱ Considering those experiences *and* factoring in the thoughts and teachings of the additional revelation of the Prophets, Writings, and Apostolic Scriptures, does not occur to as many as it should.

The three main contributors to the *Messianic Torah Helper* are the main writers and researchers for Outreach Israel Ministries: Mark Huey, Margaret Huey, and John McKee. There is certainly overlap among some of the chapters. There are also some critical, but we would hope constructive, remarks made in this publication, toward some of the thoughts, ideas, and ideologies seen in the present Messianic community. As you read the *Messianic Torah Helper*, the articles and analyses and FAQ entries which compose it, be aware of one thing: there are additional Messianic Apologetics publications which go into much more further detail, and others which are currently in various stages of completion. We certainly look forward to some of the possible, future publications, articles, and FAQ entries, which may emerge as we interact with readers of the *Messianic Torah Helper*, and see various reviews written on Amazon.com and other public forums.

While the teachers of Outreach Israel Ministries are all from evangelical Christian backgrounds, rather than be like some in the widely independent Hebrew/Hebraic Roots movement, who tend to exhibit a great deal of disrespect toward Christianity—we intend to instead be fair and respectful of those Believers who have preceded us in faith, especially as we come from spiritual backgrounds in Calvinism and Wesleyanism which have always believed that the so-called “moral law” of the Torah, and especially the Ten Commandments, has remained valid and godly instruction for Messiah followers.ⁱⁱ We intend to take the virtues of our evangelical Christian heritage, and see them properly complimented and merged with the edifying faith heritage that we have inherited via the Jewish Synagogue and Jewish people—so that both Jewish *and* non-Jewish Messianic Believers can employ all of their gifts, talents, and skills for God’s service.

We fully affirm those great words of the Psalmist, who decreed, “How happy are those whose way of life is blameless, who live by the *Torah* of *ADONAI!*” (Psalm 119:1, CJB). At the same time, we recognize that it is only by the power of the

ⁱ Some highly useful thoughts are offered by John N. Oswalt, *The Bible Among the Myths: Unique Revelation or Just Ancient Literature?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009).

ⁱⁱ Among some contemporary Christian examiners, our evangelical background being highly respectful of the presumed “moral law” of the Torah, might be best represented by Walter C. Kaiser, “The Law as God’s Guidance for the Promotion of Holiness,” in Wayne G. Strickland, ed., *Five Views on Law and Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), pp 177-199.

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Holy Spirit, upon a redeemed heart and mind, that the Torah can be truly fulfilled (Romans 8:1-4). So as you prepare to read through the various perspectives present and issues considered in the *Messianic Torah Helper*, let us “put away all moral filth and excess of evil and receive with humility the implanted word, which is able to save your souls” (James 1:21, TLV). For, as important as the Torah is, so much more important is the One to whom the Torah points (Romans 10:4, Grk.)ⁱⁱⁱ: Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ). **May we eagerly be about accomplishing the Messiah’s tasks in the Earth today, as we enter into the final stages of salvation history!**

*Margaret McKee Huey
with J.K. McKee*

ⁱⁱⁱ “For Christ is the goal of the Law, which leads to righteousness for all who have faith in God” (Romans 10:4, Common English Bible).

PART I

APPROACHING THE TORAH

- 1 -

The Importance of Studying the Torah 2003

Mark Huey

Perhaps the most life-changing trend present today in the Messianic movement is the return of many Believers to the foundations of our faith.¹ This is best exemplified by many individuals studying the Torah. In our examination of the Hebraic Roots of the faith, “the Torah” refers to the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, also commonly called the Law of Moses.

The return to the Hebraic Roots, or Ancient Paths of our faith, is taking place in direct fulfillment of some major end-time prophecies. The Prophet Malachi admonishes us, “Remember the law of Moses My servant, *even the statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel*” (Malachi 4:4). Moses himself prophesies in Deuteronomy 30:1-2, “So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call *them* to mind in all nations where the LORD your God has banished you, and you return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons.” In the Last Days, God’s people are going to return to following the totality of His Instruction.

This restoration will be evident because the end-time saints are known by two critical characteristics: (1) they will have the testimony of knowing Yeshua the Messiah as their Lord and Savior, and (2) they will obey God’s commandments (Revelation 12:17; 14:12). Our Heavenly Father is preparing a people who will have certain attributes present prior to the return of His Son. We believe that the study of the Torah is a crucial part of this preparation process. This importance should not be overlooked, because for the first time since that of the Apostles, we are witnessing that a significant number of non-Jewish Believers, as opposed to just Jewish Believers, are learning the basics of Torah observance *and practicing them*.

The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has a plan for His Creation and a plan for the people He has chosen to represent Himself among the nations. According

¹ This chapter is reproduced from William Mark Huey and J.K. McKee, *Hebraic Roots: An Introductory Study* (Kissimmee, FL: TNN Press, 2009).

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to the Scriptures, Israel has been called to be a “kingdom of priests” and “a holy nation.” The Lord says in Exodus 19:5-6, “Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.” This concept is not something new for us as Believers in Yeshua. It is reemphasized by the Apostle Peter, who writes, “But you are A CHOSEN RACE, a royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR *God’s* OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).² Of course, the challenge for many Believers over the centuries since these words were written is *how* they are to be practiced in the world.

The challenging if/then proposition by the Most High in the Book of Exodus is given after the Israelites’ deliverance from Egypt. Moses makes a definitive statement about how Israel will become God’s beloved treasure of all peoples. But did you also notice that there was a requirement placed upon the people of Israel in order to achieve the status as a people for His own possession? They were to obey His voice and keep His covenant that He has made with them. There was a responsibility placed upon Israel in order to achieve its chosen position among the nations. In the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses gives Israel additional instruction on how to achieve the goals of listening to and obeying the Lord:

“See, I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do thus in the land where you are entering to possess it. So keep and do *them*, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the LORD our God whenever we call on Him? Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today? Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons. *Remember* the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when the LORD said to me, ‘Assemble the people to Me, that I may let them hear My words so they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children’” (Deuteronomy 4:5-10).

In order to achieve and maintain their position as the chosen nation of priests, Moses tells the Israelites that they are to “Observe them faithfully” (v. 6, NJPS), meaning that they are to “carefully” (NIV) observe the commandments that God gave them. Likewise, they are to “Teach them to your children and to their children after them,” and in turn their children “may teach them to their children” (vs. 9, 10, NIV). The instructions given by God to His people were to be taught to the generations after, and they were also to be “your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes” (v. 6). By following God’s commandments, Ancient Israel would be blessed by Him, and hence their neighbors would see their being blessed and be in awe of them. As the *Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament* notes on Deuteronomy 4:1, 6,

² Cf. Deuteronomy 7:6; 10:15; Exodus 19:6; Isaiah 61:6; 43:21; Deuteronomy 4:20; 14:2; Hosea 2:23.

The Importance of Studying the Torah

“The Israelites were to hearken to the laws and rights which Moses taught to do (that they were to do), that they might live and attain to the possession of the land which the Lord would give them. ‘Hearkening’ involves laying to heart and observing. . . . Keeping and doing them were to be the wisdom and understanding of Israel in the eyes of the nations. . . . History has confirmed this. Not only did the wisdom of a Solomon astonish the queen of Sheba (1Ki 10:4), but the divine truth which Israel possessed in the law of Moses attracted all the more earnest minds of the heathen world to seek the satisfaction of the inmost necessities of their heart and the salvation of their souls in Israel’s knowledge of God.”³

Of course, as human nature demands, it takes a substantial effort to maintain a remembrance of the Torah. Unfortunately as we know from Biblical history, the Ancient Israelites did not always follow what they committed to do at the base of Mount Sinai. In spite of periods of faithful obedience to God, there were also periods of significant disobedience. Even upon entering the Promised Land there was a time when “every man did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6). Even though God gave Israel powerful kings like David and Solomon, who followed and obeyed Him the best they could, there was still difficulty. For almost a thousand years after entering the Promised Land, random attention was often paid to the Torah.

During the reign of King Josiah (640-609 B.C.E.), a scroll of Deuteronomy was discovered in the Temple complex and a revival of reading the teachings of Moses began (2 Kings 22:1-23:28; 2 Chronicles 34:1-35:27).⁴ For the first time in over five-hundred years the Passover was celebrated (2 Kings 22:21-23; 2 Chronicles 35:1-19). An interest in studying the words of Moses began in earnest:

“The king went up to the house of the LORD and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests and the prophets and all the people, both small and great; and he read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the LORD” (2 Kings 23:2; cf. 2 Chronicles 34:20).

Ironically, this return to the Torah occurred about fifty years before the Southern Kingdom of Judah was taken into the Babylonian Captivity (586-516 B.C.E.). A Psalmist records that the yearning for the things of Zion did not leave the Jews during their captivity:

“By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion. Upon the willows in the midst of it we hung our harps. For there our captors demanded of us songs, and our tormentors mirth, *saying*, ‘Sing us one of the songs of Zion.’ How can we sing the LORD’s song in a foreign land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget *her skill*’ (Psalm 135:1-5).

There is evidence from the testimonies of Ezra and Nehemiah that those who returned to Jerusalem after the exile in Babylon came back with a desire to learn the Torah and obey its commandments:

“For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice *it*, and to teach *His* statutes and ordinances in Israel” (Ezra 7:10).

³ C. Keil, and F. Delitzsch, eds. E-Sword 7.6.1: Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament. MS Windows 9x. Franklin, TN: Equipping Ministries Foundation, 2005.

⁴ Consult the article “The Message of Deuteronomy” by J.K. McKee for a further discussion.

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“And all the people gathered as one man at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the LORD had given to Israel. Then Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly of men, women and all who *could* listen with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month. He read from it before the square which was in front of the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of men and women, those who could understand; and all the people were attentive to the book of the law” (Nehemiah 8:1-3).

In due time, a system of study was established by the Rabbinical authorities who followed in the footsteps of Ezra, Nehemiah, and the returning Levites. Louis Jacobs remarks in *EJ* on how the present Torah cycle followed today came about:

“The practice of reading the Pentateuch (Torah) in public is undoubtedly ancient. The sources, however, do not permit the definite tracing of the historical development of the custom. The command to assemble the people at the end of every seven years to read the law ‘in their hearing’ (Deut. 31:10–13) is the earliest reference to a public Torah reading. A second mention is made in the time of Ezra when he read the Torah to all the people, both men and women, from early morning until midday, on the first day of the seventh month (Neh. 8:1–8). These two occasions are isolated instances, and do not help to establish when the custom of regular Torah readings arose.... Moses’ command that the Israelites should read the Torah on the Sabbath, on festivals, and on new moons, and Ezra’s that it should be read on Mondays, on Thursdays, and on Sabbath afternoons (TJ, Meg. 4:1, 75a; BK 82a) are not historical statements in themselves; they point, however, to an early date for the introduction of regular readings.... The passage in the Babylonian Talmud (Meg. 29b) is the earliest reference to a fixed cycle of consecutive readings. It states that ‘in the West’ (Palestine), they completed the reading of the Torah in three years.... In Babylon and other communities outside Palestine, an annual cycle was followed according to which the Pentateuch was divided into 54 *sedarim* (sing. *sidrah*, i.e., *parashah*). This became the universal Jewish practice, except for certain isolated instances. In Palestine, the triennial cycle was also superseded by the annual, possibly under the influence of Babylonian immigrants.”⁵

Following the Babylonian exile, Jews who returned developed varying traditions for studying the Torah on a consistent basis. Studying the Torah was considered extremely important by those returning from the Babylonian exile, because disobedience to it caused the Divine punishment. This is reflected in the final admonitions given by the Prophet Malachi, who lived about a century or so after the first exiles returned, who referred to the critical need to follow it:

“Remember the law of Moses My servant, *even the* statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel” (Malachi 4:4).

⁵ Louis Jacobs, “Torah, Reading of,” in *EJ*.