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ANSWERING: THE LAW AS A UNIT

Pastor: Most people believe that the Law is “Laws” rather than “Law.” If we keep the entire Law and break **only one**, we are guilty of breaking them all. “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all” (James 2:10). The Law is not like a carton of eggs, where if you break 5 you still have 7 unbroken eggs. It is like a sheet of glass—if you break one part, the whole sheet is broken. If you keep one part of the Law, you are obligated to keep them all.

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The intention of our pastor is to try to communicate to Christians that obeying God’s Law and His commandments is so impossible a task for many people, that it is probably best that no Believer really try to expel that much effort in doing so. The basic logic offered is: *No person can really keep the Law, so why make that big a deal out of it?* The problem witnessed is that while it is true that a perfect obedience on the part of human beings to God’s Law is impossible, should not a commitment to obedience be something that is encouraged? In the opening greeting of 1 Peter, the Apostle affirms how Believers “are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Yeshua the Messiah and be sprinkled with His blood” (1 Peter 1:1-2). While faith in Yeshua secures us redemption, the Messiah Himself bid His followers to obey Moses’ Teaching, with eschatological penalties issued to those who would advocate against it (Matthew 5:19).

Yeshua’s half-brother, James the Just, does make observations in his Epistle on some of the difficulties incumbent with those who claim to keep the Torah, yet who fail to remember some of its most significant instructions. James rebukes those in the assembly who have shown preferential treatment to the rich (James 2:2-4), and in particular how there were poor and needy people who needed basic essentials and were not given them (James 2:5-7). The good works of service and in providing help to neighbors (James 2:14-19) are precisely what he labels as being “the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF’ [Leviticus 19:18]” (James 2:8). If there is any dereliction from these imperative good works—providing things like food, clothing, and shelter for not only one’s fellow human beings (cf. 1 Timothy 6:8), but those *within* the community of faith—then one could be “show[ing] partiality...committing sin *and*...[be] convicted by the law as transgressors” (James 2:9). Such “law” is not just a single commandment or principle, but the whole scope of the Torah’s instructions. James uses the argument that violation of the Sixth Commandment, but adherence to the Seventh Commandment, still makes someone out to be a lawbreaker:

“For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all. For He who said, ‘DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY [Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 5:18],’ also said, ‘DO NOT COMMIT MURDER

[Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17].’ Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law” (James 2:10-11).

James makes it clear that if you regard yourself as a member of God’s people, keeping His Torah—but break only one of its commandments—then you are to be regarded as violating it in its entirety. Injunctions prohibiting adultery and murder were not just originally given as a part of the Ten Commandments, but the negative consequences of these two crimes are commented on affluently throughout the Bible. Those who break their marriage vows, or who regard human life as meaningless, have to often decide deep down in their heart and mind to willfully commit a heinous act, which will most frequently damage those *beyond* simply the spouse who has been cheated or the one whose life ends and who leaves behind survivors.

James’ point in emphasizing that the one who commits murder, but who does not commit adultery, *is still a lawbreaker*—can in no way be used to support an idea that dismissing the Torah’s commandments as relevant for obedience is valid. The attitude that since as human beings we are probably going to disobey God’s commandments at some point, whether knowingly or unknowingly—and probably on issues far less severe than adultery or murder—that any attempt to follow the Law is not worthwhile, **is by no means an attitude of spiritual maturity.**

Those who are in the Messiah and have experienced redemption are to recognize that when we do falter, God’s grace and mercy are there to cover us! James told his audience, “speak and so act as those who are to be judged by *the law of liberty*” (James 2:12) or “by the law that gives freedom” (NIV). In the view of Ben Witherington III, a theologian who is not too favorable toward the validity of the Torah, even he has to observe that obedience to God is required by Believers *along with* their various personal limitations:

“Those who strive do to God’s will and still fall short have both repentance and the mercy of God to fall back on, or otherwise no one will stand on the judgment day (1 Cor 3:13-14). But more than this, James would have us know that if believers are merciful instead of judgmental they are mirroring the character of God and fulfilling an essential requirement of the royal law.”²

Douglas J. Moo, who also does not have a very high view for the Torah in the post-resurrection era, similarly states,

“God’s gracious acceptance of us does not end our obligation to obey him; it sets it on a new footing. No longer is God’s law a threatening, confining burden. For the will of God now confronts us as a *law of liberty*—an obligation we discharge in the joyful knowledge that God has both ‘liberated’ us from the penalty of sin and given us, in his Spirit, the power to obey his will. To use James’s own description, this law is an ‘implanted word,’ ‘written on the heart,’ that has the power to save us (Jas. 1:21).”³

While there will be times in the lives of born again Believers when errors are made, transgression of the commandments of God should never be encouraged—and the pastor’s claim “If we keep the entire Law and break only one, we are guilty of breaking them all” is actually delivered in a tone that is more likely to encourage *disobedience* rather than obedience.

A valid argument can be made that observing the entirety of the Torah is extremely difficult. But this argument has some flaws in that no single person can observe the 613 commandments of the Law of Moses, because not all of the 613 commandments apply to a single person. A male is not going to have to follow the commandments related to a woman’s menstruation cycle, just like a woman is not going to have to be circumcised on the eighth day. Jewish theology largely recognizes that the commandments of the Torah

¹ Grk. *dia nomou eleutherias mellontes* (διὰ νόμου ἐλευθερίας μέλλοντες); “by a Torah which gives freedom” (CJB/CJSB) or “by the law that sets you free” (NLT).

² Ben Witherington III, *Letters and Homilies for Jewish Christians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Hebrews, James and Jude* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 463.

³ Douglas J. Moo, *Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Letter of James* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 117.

naturally categorize themselves by one's status in society. And, those of us in Biblical Studies, who believe in the continued value of the Torah for Messiah followers, have to acknowledge that there are various commandments that could have only been observed in the Ancient Near East, as they largely pertained to an economic and technology level that does not exist today. *Still, all of the mitzvot of the Torah do inform God's people about His character and interactions in early human history.* God's Instruction in the Torah should be read and probed, so that we can learn to think and act more like Him.

What is interesting to remember is that when a Believer begins a consistent study of God's Torah—be it through the weekly *parashot* or not—he or she is likely to find that the significant majority of commandments that we are to follow *and that we can follow* in the Twenty-First Century, largely deal with one's ethics, morality, and how a person conducts himself or herself in society. God's commandments and a person's reaction to them can especially reveal one's heart attitude and motives in relationship toward both Himself and one's fellow human beings. Too frequently, what the Torah shows us is that as mortals we too often fail to be the people that God has created us to be. Even born again Believers can sometimes be limited in their maturing to be everything they should be in the Lord.

While it is said, somewhat validly, that observing the commandments in the Law of Moses can be difficult—it should be observed how Yeshua the Messiah Himself, the Word of God made manifest in the flesh (cf. John 1:1ff)—raised the bar of obedience *even higher*. The Messiah emphasized that the commandments are even *more difficult* for people to obey in His teachings. While James 2:10-11 principally argues from the perspective of the physical acts of adultery and murder,⁴ Yeshua is specific on how an entire host of commandments are violated in someone's mind and thought life. Consider some of our Lord's most significant words in His Sermon on the Mount:

“You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER [Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17]’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ 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... You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY’ [Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 5:18]; 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. 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. 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. It was said, ‘WHOEVER SENDS HIS WIFE AWAY, LET HIM GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE’ [Deuteronomy 24:1]; but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for *the* reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery” (Matthew 5:21-22, 27-32).

In these commonly known verses from the Apostolic Scriptures, Yeshua talks about the essential substance of what the commandments of Moses' Teaching are to reveal to those who serve the God of Israel. It is not just enough, according to Yeshua, for people not to commit physical murder and take another person's life in cold blood. The Lord says that whoever is angry with his fellow without justification, calling him a fool, an idiot, or some other slur, is guilty of murdering him in the heart. In fact, such a person is guilty enough to be thrown into Hell. How many of us, when someone has done something wrong to us, do not consider these words and curse someone person and harbor unforgiveness (cf. Mark 11:25-26; Matthew 6:14-15), when we should be praying for the person *and* perhaps even for his or her salvation?

⁴ James the Just is, of course, absolutely concerned with a person's thought life by expressing to his audience, “have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives?” (James 2:4).

Yeshua also speaks about adultery. According to the Messiah, it is not enough not to commit physical acts of sexual promiscuity and immorality to violate the Torah’s code related to sexuality. If a person has inappropriate sexual thoughts, looking at others as objects of sexual desire and fantasy, then the commandments have already been violated. Today, quite sadly, this is all too commonplace where both men and women in our society are viewed as sexual objects, rather than as human beings made in God’s image and loved by Him. Because society today has decided that the commandments of God have little or no relevance for us, many do not have respect for the bodies that the Lord gave them, nor recognize that He expects us to honor and obey Him in the flesh every bit as much as the spirit.

Yeshua also talks about divorce, quoting Deuteronomy 24:1: “When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her...he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts *it* in her hand and sends her out from his house.” This commandment originally gave a husband in Ancient Israel the legal right to divorce his wife, specifically on the grounds of “immorality” (ATS).⁵ Yeshua’s words on divorce were given against a First Century backdrop, likely the divisions between the Pharisaical School of Shammai which held to a conservative view of Deuteronomy 24:1, and the School of Hillel which held to a rather liberal view.⁶ As expressed by the historian Josephus, a common attitude of the period was “He that desires to be divorced from his wife for any cause whatever, (and many such causes happen among men,) let him in writing give assurance that he will never use her as his wife any more...” (*Antiquities of the Jews* 4.253).⁷ Yeshua’s teaching, in stark contrast, only allows for the most extreme circumstances for divorce to be an option for a married couple.⁸

From His Sermon on the Mount, Yeshua’s **clear emphasis** is that if a person *thinks* about sinning, violating one of the Torah’s commandments, then one has already sinned. *How often do we do this in our human weaknesses?* How often when we think about the commandments of God might we also think about violating them? In Ephesians 5:3-4 the Apostle Paul observes the kind of character that Messiah followers are to observe, instructing, “But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and *there must be no* filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.” Here, we see an emphasis on not even talking about sin when we encounter transgression, minimizing our contemplation of it when we see or hear about sin. As I. Howard Marshall explains, “even talking about these things can become sinful when it becomes a way of enjoying acts of sin by proxy.”⁹

By no means is sin something that is “fun”; but how many “Believers” today are so immature and uncommitted to a path of obedience that instruction in what sin is could actually lead to a season of struggle? *How many have fleshly reactions to God’s commandments, and are not led by His Spirit?*

If we are born again Believers, and we have the Spirit of God resident inside of us and the commandments of God written on our hearts as the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34 promises us—then even though it may be a process for us to have our wills conformed to the will of our Heavenly Father—**it will happen**. If we earnestly seek Him, and if we sincerely have a desire to obey Him, He will answer our prayers and give us the spiritual empowerment and fortitude we need. As we grow and mature in our walk of faith, obeying the Torah through the guidance of the Holy Spirit becomes something that is to be *easier*, not harder.

⁵ Heb. *ervah* (ערוה); “nakedness, genital area of a man or of a woman” (*HALOT*, 1:882).

⁶ Summarized in Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, 93.

⁷ Flavius Josephus: *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*, trans. William Whiston (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), 120.

⁸ For some additional thoughts, consult Mark Huey’s commentary on *Ki-Teitzei* (Deuteronomy 21:10-25:19), “From Curse to Blessing,” appearing in *TorahScope Apostolic Scripture Reflections*.

⁹ I. Howard Marshall, “Ephesians,” in James D.G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson, eds., *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 1391.

Antinomians who wish to disregard God's commandments prefer to tell us that since they cannot observe all of the commandments as fallen human beings with a fallen sin nature, then they will not really attempt to even obey them. All that really matters is love for God and love for neighbor, right? Yet a love for God, that is not accompanied by obedience, is no different than how faith without actions is completely worthless. James the Just is clear about this:

"But someone may *well* say, 'You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.' You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?" (James 2:18-20).

Many of today's evangelical Protestants recognize this foundational Biblical truth. Contrary to some of the over-stated claims seen in parts of the Messianic movement, these Believers have been faithful to help out their fellow man in the spirit of Micah 6:8.¹⁰ But today, there are many who would disregard and mock the message "that faith without works is dead" (KJV), or "faith divorced from deeds is barren"¹¹ (NEB).

There can be a distinct difference easily detected at times, between common Jewish and Christian views of approaching God's commandments. Many in contemporary Christianity are of the opinion that since we cannot keep God's commandments in the Law of Moses perfectly, that we should not even really try to keep them. *Why put yourself through the hassle since God has forgiven us in Jesus?* This is most evident in the widescale abandonment of the Biblical appointments of Leviticus 23. It is a fact that according to the Torah in order for these holidays to be followed perfectly, that animal sacrifices must be made, and these sacrifices can only be offered on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Many Christians reject the Biblical holidays because we are incapable of observing them to the specific letter of the Law. So, these people feel justified in replacing Biblical holidays such as Passover or the Day of Atonement with holidays of their own choosing.

Judaism has a completely different view. The Jewish people recognize that they are in the Diaspora and dispersed into the nations because they have disobeyed God and the commandments of the Torah. But they also recognize God's promises to preserve and restore Israel, and that it is ultimately God's grace and mercy which have preserved them some two millennia in dispersion, in spite of terrible persecution and near annihilation (much of which, unfortunately, has been at the hands of various Church leaders). They recognize the reality that the commandments of the Torah cannot be kept perfectly. But rather than throw God's commandments out the proverbial window, and ignore them entirely, Jewish theology approaches the *mitzvot* from the view that the faithful do the best they can given their circumstances, and observe the most that they can where they are.

Which is the attitude of maturity? Willfully ignoring God's commandments because we cannot keep them perfectly? Or, doing the best that we can given our circumstances, recognizing that His grace and mercy will cover us when we come up short?

The question that we are all going to have to individually answer in the years ahead, as the Messianic movement gets larger and more and more people are convicted about the need to be Torah obedient, **is how much of God we want in our lives.** Do we want to be in 100% compliance with Scripture? Or, do we want to find ourselves dawdling in immaturity, because we think that if we just do what is "minimally required," we will make it into the Kingdom?

We are living in days when the commandments of God are being attacked, by those both outside and inside the realm of Biblical faith. The Lord directs us that we are to observe His commandments so that we might be on the correct path, and not go to the right or the left, but remain on course. I fear that there are

¹⁰ "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8).

¹¹ Grk. *argos* (ἀργός); "generally, inactive, slothful, idle, lazy" (LS, 114).

going to be many who go off course, because they have decided to ignore His commandments and consider them irrelevant. This is something we should not want to see, and Messianics today have the responsibility of demonstrating the examples of people who have spiritually changed for the better by becoming Torah obedient. We have the responsibility of being a positive testimony to others, where one can be Torah observant and have faith in Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ). As our Heavenly Father instructs,

“But as for you, stand here by Me, that I may speak to you all the commandments and the statutes and the judgments which you shall teach them, that they may observe *them* in the land which I give them to possess.’ So you shall observe to do just as the LORD your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right or to the left” (Deuteronomy 5:31-32).

“The Law is not like a carton of eggs, where if you break 5 you still have 7 unbroken eggs. It is like a sheet of glass—if you break one part, the whole sheet is broken. If you keep one part of the law, you are obligated to keep them all.”

The pastor is correct in his analogy of the carton of eggs and the sheet of glass, in explaining that if a person is guilty of breaking one of God’s commandments, he or she is to be regarded as being guilty of breaking the entire Torah. But our pastor’s reasoning in presenting this is flawed. His logic, as we have already observed, is that because human beings cannot keep the Torah perfectly and will err at times, then why should we really even attempt to keep it? I feel that these sorts of statements are designed to appeal to not only someone’s under-developed reading of the Torah—but especially various dislikes, prejudices against the Law of Moses, and most of all the flesh of the pastor’s hearers (especially if they are dispensationalists like himself) who do not have any inclination to want to obey what they perceive to be something that is “Jewish.” *Why do they not wish to obey the commandments of the Torah?* We can only hope and pray that it is an immature reaction.

The pastor’s comparison of Torah-breaking to the sheet of glass that has been broken is one which has been used by interpreters before. In his reflective commentary *The Message of James*, J.A. Motyer makes the following assertions on James 2:10-11:

“There is no way in which we can pick and choose between the commandments, because to break one is to break ‘the law’....[T]he whole law of God is represented in every individual precept. Or, to put it another way, the law is not like a heap of stones but like a sheet of glass. We could take one stone from a heap and leave the heap itself still intact; but when we throw a brick through a window, it strikes only one place but it fragments the whole. The law of God is like the glass: a break at one point cannot be contained; the cracking and crazing spreads over the entire area.”¹²

The difference between an interpreter like Motyer, and our hypothetical pastor, is that he recognizes the value of God’s Law for those who intend to live a life like Jesus. Motyer further states, “To take away a precept from the law is to damage the revelation of God which he has given us in his law. To say that one of the commands does not apply to me is to say that there is some aspect of the nature of God which does not matter, as far as I am concerned.”¹³ Obviously, there are commandments which do not apply to some people based on their station in life or gender/anatomy—but the point made is that willful omission of commandments, and/or remaining deliberately ignorant of Moses’ Teaching, is tantamount to saying that God’s holiness and righteousness cannot be learned by studying it. Surely, if born again Believers have been spiritually regenerated and have a new heart, then the Lord has written His commandments upon our hearts by His Spirit so that we might not only respect them, **but keep them** (Jeremiah 31:32-33; cf. Hebrews 8:10)!

¹² J.A. Motyer, *The Message of James* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1985), 99.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 100.

As limited human beings, all of us are going to make mistakes at some time or another in our quest to be obedient to God's Torah. *It is an impossibility for us to keep the Law perfectly.* But, rather than use momentary transgression as a justification for continual disobedience—it should instead cause us to recognize that this is precisely why we must have the blood covering of Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) present in our lives, **having provided us with salvation and forgiveness.**

The very fact that people cannot perfectly keep all of God's Torah—especially because we will all have weak moments when we entertain the possibility of sinning *in our minds*, per Yeshua's words in His Sermon on the Mount—is **perhaps the very reason why we are to obey it.** Moses' Teaching is to serve as a regular reminder of our need to appreciate the salvation we have been given in Yeshua, our need to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12), lest “we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth” (Hebrews 10:26). The Torah is to serve as a guide so that we will continue to move ahead on the correct path of holiness in our walk of faith, so we do not lose sight of what the Lord considers acceptable and unacceptable. God's Torah and God's salvation in Yeshua are locked into a continual symbiosis, as the Torah points us to our need for Yeshua's sacrifice and a permanent cleansing for our sins *along with* how Yeshua's sacrifice can only be fully understood by us realizing the value of God's commandments.

Many faithful Christian men and women throughout the centuries have recognized this. While already quoted earlier in this publication, it is most useful for us to understand that this was the perspective of John Wesley in his Sermon #34, “Properties of the Law.” He observed how the Law points one to Christ, but Christ points one back to the Law:

“I am afraid this great and important truth is little understood, not only by the world, but even by many whom God hath taken out of the world, who are real children of God by faith. Many of these lay it down as an unquestioned truth, that when we come to Christ, we have done with the law; and that, in this sense, ‘Christ is the end of the law to every one that believeth.’ ‘the end of the law:’—so he is, ‘for the righteousness,’ for justification, ‘to every one that believeth.’ Herein the law is at an end. It justifies none, but only brings them to Christ; who is also, in another respect, the end, or scope of the law,—the point at which it continually aims. But when it has brought us to him, it has yet a farther office, namely, to keep us with him. For it is continually exciting all believers, the more they see of its height, and depth, and length, and breadth, to exhort one another so much the more....

“Therefore, I cannot spare the law one moment, nor more than I can spare Christ: seeing I now want it as much, to keep me to Christ, as I ever wanted it to bring me to him. Otherwise, this ‘evil heart of unbelief’ would immediately ‘depart from the living God.’ Indeed each is continually sending me to the other,—the law to Christ, and Christ to the law. On the one hand, the height and depth of the law constrain me to fly to the love of God in Christ; on the other, the love of God in Christ endears the law to me ‘above gold or precious stones;’ seeing I know every part of it as a gracious promise, which my Lord will fulfill in its season.”¹⁴

Yeshua the Messiah is the One who does the saving; the Torah reveals the need for the saving as one cannot fully keep it. It is most unfortunate that too many of today's evangelical Believers, and even a few Messianics you may encounter, have lost sight of such a vital truth!

The consequences of casting aside God's Torah as revealing the need for Yeshua the Messiah, and the Savior pointing back to the way of holy obedience in the Torah—are going to grow in intensity as we get closer to His return. The Torah defines sin, and gives us a very straightforward explanation of what people should and should not be doing, and how God's own should conduct themselves in the world. Would there

¹⁴ Burwash, pp 349, 350.

even be debates in mainstream Christianity over whether pre-marital sex or homosexuality were sin, if it were not popularly taught that the Law of Moses was abolished by the Messiah? These debates would not exist because these are high crimes in the Torah.

Yeshua the Messiah is our final sacrifice and atonement for sin. He provides a permanent atonement that the animal sacrifices of the Torah could not offer, which is that blood be spilt for the covering of our sin as human beings. But even with His having provided a permanent atonement and covering (Hebrews 9:26; 10:12), the Lord's sacrifice on the tree at Golgotha (Calvary) did not annul or abolish the code of conduct that the Torah defines for us. Messiah followers do not have the license to cheat, steal, adulterate, murder, blaspheme, and worship gods other than the Holy One of Israel. Nor do Messiah followers have any kind of "freedom" to disregard the value and substance of the seventh-day Sabbath/*Shabbat*, appointed times of Leviticus 23, or kosher dietary laws.

If God's Torah were truly abolished as many claim it has been, **then idolatry is no longer sin.** If we carry the claims that the Law of Moses was fully abolished to its logical end, this is where it leads you. *Thankfully, most of today's Christians who think the Torah was abolished do not do this.*

The Apostle Paul admonishes Believers to "uphold the law" (Romans 3:31, RSV/NIV), because in our daily walk of faith we are to follow its series of standards which is intended to keep us set-apart from the world and holy unto our God. However, the Torah of Moses, as was foretold by the Prophet Hosea, has become alien to many of those who believe in the God of Israel: "Though I wrote for him ten thousand *precepts* of My law, they are regarded as a strange thing¹⁵" (Hosea 8:12). Thankfully, the Prophet Jeremiah has also told us that in the Last Days, men and women will return to the Lord and be properly instructed and trained up in the Torah: "For after I turned back, I repented; and after I was instructed¹⁶, I smote on *my* thigh; I was ashamed and also humiliated because I bore the reproach of my youth" (Jeremiah 31:19).

Just as the Prodigal Son returned home to his father after wallowing in the ways of sin and despair (Luke 15:11-32), so are many evangelical Christian Believers taking a hold of their Hebraic and Jewish Roots in a very real and tangible way, recognizing themselves as a part of the Commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:11-12; Galatians 6:16), standing in common cause with the Jewish people. They are confessing their sins and various discrepancies before the Lord, and are being instructed to live Torah obedient lives. For families like my own, this is not out of some quest to become rigidly legalistic or in trying to earn our salvation, as some mistakenly believe. It is, rather, the result of the urgent cries of God's people wanting to know Him more intimately and do what is right. *We want to live like Jesus did, as much as we can!*

The result of this is that many are experiencing spiritual fulfillment like never before, and are embarking on a walk of faith that has largely not been seen since the days of the First Century. No longer are many people having a stagnant faith that is not growing, as they try to read the New Testament from a perspective separated, if not divorced, from the Old Testament—but people are being challenged to dig deeper into the Bible, seek God more, and pray like never before for wisdom and discernment. Our Heavenly Father is in the process of raising up a unique Messianic community that can fulfill the mission of being a blessing to the world *par excellence*, with the restoration of His people surely at hand!

¹⁵ Heb. *k'mo-zar* (כְּמוֹ-זָר).

¹⁶ Heb. *yada* (יָדָא); or, "after I came to understand" (NIV).