

5 For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness. 6 But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: “DO NOT SAY IN YOUR HEART, ‘WHO WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN?’ (that is, to bring Messiah down), 7 or ‘WHO WILL DESCEND INTO THE ABYSS?’ (that is, to bring Messiah up from the dead).” 8 But what does it say? “THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART” [Deuteronomy 9:4; 30:12-14]—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching,

10:5 Having just asserted that Yeshua the Messiah is the *telos*, the culmination or the goal to which the Torah points, Paul further observes that “Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them” (ESV). Romans 10:5 obviously needs to be read within the context of the wider issues in view, which dominate much of Romans chs. 9-11, a major part of which is the widescale Jewish rejection of Yeshua the Messiah in the First Century. There is an obvious quotation of parts of Leviticus 18:5 in Romans 10:5, even though in some English Bibles it may not be that obvious (SMALL CAPITAL LETTERS are lacking in the NASB/NASU). As can be easily seen in the bold text provided in the *Greek New Testament, Fourth Revised Edition* (the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testament Graece* employs italicized Greek, which is less easier to read),

Μωϋσῆς γὰρ γράφει τὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐκ [τοῦ] νόμου ὅτι ὁ ποιήσας αὐτὰ ἄνθρωπος ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς.

*Mōusēs gar graphēi tēn dikaiosunēn tēn ek [tou] nomou hoti ho poiēsas auta anthrōpos zēsetai en autois.*⁴⁸

Some kind of observation is being made in Romans 10:5, about a righteousness originating from the Torah or the Law (*ek [tou] nomou*, ἐκ [τοῦ] νόμου). Within Romans 10:5, the concluding clause *zēsetai en autois* (ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς) is correctly rendered with “live in/by them,” and not “live by that righteousness” (NASU), as it obviously refers to the Torah’s commandments. Here, it is required for us to take a broader look, at least at what the surrounding context of Romans 10:1-6 says:

“Brethren, my heart’s desire and my prayer to God for them is for *their* salvation. For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God’s righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Messiah is the [goal] of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. **For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness.** But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: ‘DO NOT SAY IN YOUR HEART, “WHO WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN?” [Deuteronomy 9:4; 30:12-14] (that is, to bring Messiah down).’”

The main challenge for readers interpreting the statement about a righteousness rooted in the Torah in Romans 10:5, that eludes far too many readers and exegetes, is letting Leviticus 18:5 be read within its original context of defining life for those who live within the sphere of the Torah’s instruction. Hegg directs us, “The fundamental” and common “error that has been committed in the understanding of Paul’s use of Lev 18:5 is a hermeneutical one. First, the original context of Lev 18 has been ignored, and secondly, the meaning of the word ‘live’ has been presumed from a theological context rather than a historical, linguistic one.”⁴⁹ In his Romans commentary, he then goes on and summarizes some of the stipulations of Leviticus ch. 18, particularly in terms of how “The statutes of

⁴⁸ Aland, *GNT*, 546; cf. Nestle and Aland, *GNT*, 427.

⁴⁹ Hegg, *Romans 9-16*, 231.

God are put in opposition to the pagan ways of the nations, ways which are labeled ‘abominations.’”⁵⁰ Colin G. Kruse further concurs,

“The quotation itself is taken from Leviticus 18:5. In its original context, this text forms part of an introductory exhortation to a list of sexual prohibitions. By obeying these laws the Israelites would distinguish themselves from the Egyptians (from whom they had recently escaped) and the Canaanites (among whom they were soon to live). Those who failed to observe these laws would be cut off from the people (Lev 18:24-30), while those who kept them would continue to enjoy life within the promised land, that is, ‘the person who does these things will live by them’. The promise did not relate to life in the new age (eternal life) but life within the covenant community in the promised land. This interpretation was adopted by the early church fathers Origen, Jerome, and Diodore. To continue to experience this life, then, depended on obedience....Paul uses Leviticus 18:5 to depict a righteousness which is based on law observance, one that allows continuance in the promised land, and then in 10:6 contrasts that with the righteousness based on faith that brings life in the new age.”⁵¹

Romans 10:5 is an observation on what has been immediately stated in Romans 10:2-3. Paul states of the Jewish people of his day, “I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge” (v. 2, NIV). Paul’s further observation is, “Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness” (v. 3, NIV). Many of Paul’s fellow Jews had a genuine zeal for God, and they lived properly and morally, with a “righteousness that is based on *Torah*” (v. 5, TLV) present. Many Jews of the First Century understood how *Torah*-keeping was to make them holy and blessed, yet because of this *Torah*-righteousness which is of *human origin*—it kept many from seeing the *telos* (τέλος), the “goal” (CJB, Common English Bible, TLV) or “culmination” (TNIV) of the *Torah*, who is Yeshua the Messiah. In Hegg’s estimation, “Paul’s quote of Lev 18:5 makes perfect sense in Rom 10 as Paul continues to explain that Israel sought the righteous *Torah* (9:31) but did so with the wrong method: they missed the issue of faith in the Messiah Who is the very central message of the *Torah*.”⁵²

A righteousness rooted within the *Torah*, pursued not by faith but by human works (9:31-32; 10:3), is not good enough for redemption. For many First Century Jews, their human-originated righteousness via *Torah*-keeping may have been good on various levels. But, a human-originated righteousness, can prevent a person from seeing the Messiah. The testimony of Paul himself, in Philippians 3:6, was, “as to the righteousness which is in the Law⁵³, [I was] found blameless.” He would conclude, though, that “whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Messiah” (Philippians 3:7), as human achievements compared to the sacrifice and exaltation of the Lord Yeshua often just amount to “rubbish” (Philippians 3:8) or “refuse” (RSV).

A widescale problem for many First Century Jews—and certainly for many religious people since—was establishing a human righteousness rooted within God’s *Torah*. As Paul sadly stated, “they pursued it not by faith, but as if it were from works” (9:32, TLV). When human beings pursue their own righteousness, even if rooted within God’s Law, **at best** what you get are those who live generally good lives within the sphere of the Bible, and experience a high level of material blessing in following the Father’s safeguards for life on Earth. This, however, is often not a righteousness or trusting in the Lord,

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Kruse, pp 406-407.

⁵² Hegg, *Romans, Chapters 9-16*, 322.

⁵³ Grk. *en nomō* (ἐν νόμῳ); incorrectly rendered as “under the law” in RSV/NRSV/ESV.

Consult the author’s article “What Does ‘Under the Law’ Really Mean?—A Further Study” for some exegetical analysis of this (appearing in *The New Testament Validates Torah*).

which is definitively required for salvation (vs. 6-13). A mortal, human righteousness—even if rooted within God’s Torah—can mean very little to the One who asks for us to place our complete faith and trust in Him, and what He has planned for human history and individuals’ lives.

Romans 10:4 has previously asserted how the Messiah is the *telos*, the goal, aim, purpose, consummation, or climax even, of the Torah of Moses—as He provides righteousness to those who believe in Him. In Romans 10:5, we see that the most that those who seek a human righteousness originating from the Torah or Law, is that they will experience a degree of blessing by living its commandments. As good as this may be, it is not enough to have eternal redemption.

The reference to Leviticus 18:5 in Romans 10:5 should be taken as a positive assessment of the Torah, and that many First Century Jews—even though unable to see Yeshua in the Torah—were indeed doing good things, as they ordered their lives according to the Torah’s commandments. The most or the best that can be hoped for in just following Moses’ Teaching, though, is a blessed and prosperous life in this world. But, it is not human righteousness that is to be rooted within the Torah—holiness or sanctification is to be what is rooted within the Torah. Righteousness is to be rooted within the work of Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ), who provides redemption and can bestow “abounding...riches for all who call on Him” (v. 12). The Torah’s instruction is surely not nullified or abolished in the Messiah (3:31), but its condemnation upon sinners is lifted (8:1). As the redeemed in Yeshua walk by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit is to provide men and women the impetus to actually fulfill God’s Law (8:4).

Excursus: Different Approaches to Leviticus 18:5

On its own, Leviticus 18:5 says, “**So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the LORD.**”⁵⁴ The two verbs of interest first include *shamar* (שָׁמַר), generally meaning to “keep, watch, preserve” (*BDB*),⁵⁵ “The basic idea of the root is ‘to exercise great care over’” (*TWOT*).⁵⁶ The second is *chayah* (חָיָה), seen in the clause *ha’adam v’chai b’hem* (הָאָדָם וְחָי בְּהֵם), a very wooden translation of it being: “a person/mortal and will live in/by them.” The verb *v’chai* (וְחָי) is a third person, Qal vav consecutive perfect, here in Leviticus 18:5 likely having a “**Consequential**” usage, meaning that it “expresses logical result, describing an action or situation resulting from a previous action or situation” (*A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*).⁵⁷ If people keep God’s statutes and judgments, then they will live. The theological challenge, with approaching the verb *chayah*, is how it can range from meanings relating to physical life, a prosperous life, to eternal life.⁵⁸

What is intended by, “if a person does them, he shall live by them” (Leviticus 18:5, ESV)? This is where we need to be sure to read Leviticus 18:5 in view of its wider context, in which some important contextual and historical indicators are mentioned. This should give readers an appropriate perspective of what is being asserted by the Lord:

“Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, “I am the LORD your God. You shall not do what is done in the land of Egypt where you lived, nor are you to do what is done in the land of Canaan where I am bringing you; you shall not walk in their statutes. You are to perform My judgments and keep My statutes, to live in accord with them; I am the LORD your God. **So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the LORD**”’” (Leviticus 18:1-5).

⁵⁴ “You shall observe My decrees and My laws, which man shall carry out and by which he shall live—I am HASHEM” (ATS).

⁵⁵ *BDB*, 1036.

⁵⁶ John E. Hartley, “שָׁמַר,” in *TWOT*, 2:939.

⁵⁷ Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 88.

⁵⁸ Cf. Elmer B. Smick, “חָיָה,” in *TWOT*, 1:279-281.

Following this preface in Leviticus ch. 18 is largely a series of sexual instructions, prohibiting various incestuous relationships (Leviticus 18:6-18), sexual intercourse during a woman's menstruation cycle (Leviticus 18:19), sexual relationships between a man and another woman (Leviticus 18:20), male homosexuality (Leviticus 18:22), and bestiality (Leviticus 18:23). Also seen are a prohibition on presenting one's offspring to Molech (Leviticus 18:21), and how Israel will be cast out of the Promised Land if they perform any of these sins (Leviticus 18:24-30). The universal nature for all of those within the community to keep these instructions is emphasized (Leviticus 18:26). The essential summary is that the sexual practices observed in Egypt, and also observed in Canaan, are strictly off limits for the Ancient Israelites. Readers should notice that,

"So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the LORD...For whoever does any of these abominations, those persons who do *so* shall be cut off from among their people. Thus you are to keep My charge, that you do not practice any of the abominable customs which have been practiced before you, so as not to defile yourselves with them; I am the LORD your God" (Leviticus 18:5, 29-30).

With this all in view, the wider context and issues present in Leviticus ch. 18 should not guide readers in the direction of thinking that eternal life, or everlasting communion with God, is something that can be earned by keeping the Torah's commandments. Such a conclusion is something plainly absent from the text reviewed. It would, however, be most proper to conclude that Leviticus 18:5 says that a proper mode and quality of life, *b'hem* (בְּהֵם)—"in them" (KJV), "by them" (NIV/ESV), or "through them" (CJB)—can be present by those who keep the Torah's commandments. The Torah's high sexual instructions, for example, are surely intended to generate respect for other people in the community. For the Ancient Israelites who would be faithful to observe God's Torah, especially in regard to the immediate instructions seen in Leviticus ch. 18, they would not have been cut off or have faced capital punishment for their offenses. On the contrary, in guarding their sexual conduct, they would be contributing to a society where the value of all people was honored.

The tenor we see, from how Leviticus 18:5 is referenced elsewhere in the Tanach, would confirm that a high quality of Earthly life and conduct is in view:

"I gave them My statutes and informed them of My ordinances, by which, if a man observes them, he will live...But the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness. They did not walk in My statutes and they rejected My ordinances, by which, if a man observes them, he will live; and My sabbaths they greatly profaned. Then I resolved to pour out My wrath on them in the wilderness, to annihilate them...But the children rebelled against Me; they did not walk in My statutes, nor were they careful to observe My ordinances, by which, *if* a man observes them, he will live; they profaned My sabbaths. So I resolved to pour out My wrath on them, to accomplish My anger against them in the wilderness" (Ezekiel 20:11, 13, 21).

"And admonished them in order to turn them back to Your law. Yet they acted arrogantly and did not listen to Your commandments but sinned against Your ordinances, by which if a man observes them he shall live. And they turned a stubborn shoulder and stiffened their neck, and would not listen" (Nehemiah 9:29).

At the very most, what could be implied from Leviticus 18:5 is that the person, who keeps God's commandments, would remain on a straight and narrow path (cf. Matthew 7:13-14; Luke 13:24), that will consummate in entering into God's Kingdom—not that keeping commandments themselves will earn or merit one eternal life. Those who live within the right sphere of conduct on Planet Earth, by their behavior, should demonstrate themselves as those who are members of the Kingdom of Heaven.

In theological studies, both Jewish and Christian, one will certainly find a divergence of views on the meaning of Leviticus 18:5. The debate on how Leviticus 18:5 is to be approached, generally falls into two categories: those who see this as a quality of daily life in holiness on the path of faith that God has established for His people, and those who see this verse as implying that eternal life

can possibly be earned through human Torah observance.⁵⁹ The following chart is a summary of relatively current Jewish and Christian approaches:

LEVITICUS 18:5 IN THEOLOGICAL EXAMINATION	
A HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE	POSSIBLY EARN ETERNAL LIFE
<p>Verse 5 enjoins obedience to Yahweh's 'statutes' and 'judgments' with a reference to their life-giving effect—i.e. the prevention of sudden death in the framework of 'normal' earthly life.⁶⁰ Martin Noth, <i>liberal Christian</i></p>	<p>The simple sense of the clause <i>va-hai ba-hem</i>, "he shall live by them," is that one should live his life in accordance with God's laws and commandments and that he should obey them all his life or while he is alive. This clause has, however, stimulated other interpretations reflecting its unusual syntax and semantic nuances. Syntax allows us to understand this clause as one of result: "that man shall perform, so that [as a result] he may acquire life by them." Performance of God's laws and commandments holds forth the reward of life, whereas their violation threatens man with death. This interpretation is the basis for the traditional understanding of our verse by later commentaries [Targum Onkelos, Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Ramban], which state that observance of the commandments is rewarded by life in the world to come.⁶¹ Baruch A. Levine, <i>liberal Jew</i></p>
<p>As long as the chosen people kept the prescribed statutes and ordinances, they could expect to <i>live</i> (5). The kind of life which the law brought would be one of divine blessing and material prosperity, consonant with the covenantal promises, but contingent always upon implicit obedience to the will of God.⁶² R.K. Harrison, <i>evangelical Christian</i></p>	<p>This verse [Leviticus 18:5] may mean no more than that the pious Israelite should "live out life" in the sphere of the law. But the use of the language of "life" elsewhere in the Pentateuch to denote the reward God gives for obedience to the law (e.g., Deut. 30:15, 19) makes it more likely that "will live" in Lev. 18:5 is a reward for obedience....Leviticus 18:5 is not...a promise that the doer of the law will attain eternal life. On the other hand, one can make a good case for thinking that</p>

⁵⁹ For a useful approach to the various views, consult R. Laird Harris, "Leviticus," in Frank E. Gaebelin, ed. et. al., *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 2:597-599.

⁶⁰ Martin Noth, *Leviticus: A Commentary*, revised edition (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), 134.

⁶¹ Baruch A. Levine, *JPS Torah Commentary: Leviticus* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 119; cf. J.H. Hertz, ed., *Pentateuch & Haftorahs* (London: Soncino, 1960), 489; A. Cohen, ed., *The Soncino Chumash* (Brooklyn: Soncino Press, 1983), 716.

Levine, 119 also notes that Leviticus 18:5 has been used to support the Rabbinic principle of *Pikku'ach Nefesh*, in that certain commandments can be violated in order to preserve human life.

⁶² R.K. Harrison, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: Leviticus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1980), 185.

<p>Lev. 18:5 does not teach salvation by works. It teaches that the OT believers who trusted God and obeyed him from the heart received life abundant both here and hereafter....Observance of these laws in an attitude of faith resulted in spiritual life and power for the godly Israelite...Therefore it is best to take Lev 18:5 as a command to keep all God's laws by faith and thus attain a full spiritual life.⁶⁴ R. Laird Harris, <i>evangelical Christian</i></p>	<p>Paul, like later Jewish writers (cf. the Onkelos and Pseudo-Jon. Targums) understood Leviticus 18:5 to be promising eternal life for the doer.⁶³ Douglas J. Moo, <i>evangelical Christian</i></p>
<p>Men and women will fare much better if they will follow God's laws. This chapter is addressed to those who claim the Lord as their God...Only those who already have this Lord as their God are commanded to walk in God's laws so that they might live (v. 5). Keeping the law will not lead to eternal life, as some have mistakenly thought that this verse teaches, but it will lead to an abundant life. The phrase "will live by them" means that life will be lived in accordance with God's laws and commandments. The subsequent history of interpretation finds both Christian and Jewish commentators attempting to have this phrase reinterpreted to say, "[A person] shall perform, so that [as a result] he or she may acquire life by keeping them." But this result, as one can see, is contrived both in its understanding of "life" and in its unusual construal of the syntax.⁶⁵ Walter C. Kaiser, <i>evangelical Christian</i></p>	
<p><i>And by which he shall live.</i> Ramban writes that the term <i>by which he shall live</i> refers particularly to the 'social commandments' between man and his fellow man, such as the laws governing property and debts, and those forbidding murder and robbery. Only if society adheres to this body of law can life be peaceful and stable.⁶⁶ ArtScroll Chumash, <i>Orthodox Jewish</i></p>	

⁶⁴ Harris, in *EXP*, 2:598.

⁶³ Douglas J. Moo, "The Law of Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses: A Modified Lutheran View," in Wayne G. Strickland, ed., *Five Views on Law and Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), pp 325-326.

⁶⁵ Walter C. Kaiser, "The Book of Leviticus," in Leander E. Keck, ed., et. al., *New Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. 1 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 1125.

⁶⁶ Nosson Scherman, ed., *ArtScroll Chumash, Stone Edition* (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, Ltd., 2000), 650.

The call of Israel was a call to abundant life. Obedience to God's commands would result, not in poverty, death, or destruction, but in a fullness of life denied to those who lived by their own laws instead of by God's word. God promised to look on those who obeyed the terms of his covenant with favour (26:9) and to bestow on them the blessings of peace and prosperity. Rich and fruitful lives would be theirs.⁶⁷
Derek Tidball, *evangelical Christian*

Gordon J. Wenham is one whose observations on Leviticus 18:5 seem to move between Earthly and eternal views of life. He first states, "For the OT writers life means primarily physical life. But it is clear that in this and similar passages more than mere existence is being promised. What is envisaged is a happy life in which a man enjoys God's bounty of health, children, friends, and prosperity. Keeping the law is the path to divine blessing, to a happy and fulfilled life in the present (Lev. 26:3-13; Deut. 28:1-14)."⁶⁸ He goes on and adds, however, "it is Jesus and Paul who insist that the full meaning of life is eternal life. If anyone can keep the law, he will enjoy eternal life (Matt. 19:17; Rom. 10:5; Gal. 3:12)."⁶⁹ Wenham further takes this to the point of saying, "In John's Gospel man must keep the new law—the word of Christ."⁷⁰

There are those Christian examiners who lean toward, "So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them" (Leviticus 18:5), as relating to the obedience of Yeshua the Messiah to the Torah—and how born again Believers are to be associated with such obedience, as they are to be found in Him. A similar view would be how people keep a Torah that is intended to naturally point to the salvation of the Messiah (cf. Romans 10:4, Grk.).⁷¹ While we do surely all benefit as redeemed souls from the perfect obedience of Yeshua to the Torah, and a Believer's keeping of God's commandments is to always point to the salvation of Yeshua—this is probably a bit of a stretch for interpreting Leviticus 18:5.

For today's Messianics, who can be certainly said to have a faith practice significantly informed by Judaism, it is true that there are views expressed in ancient Jewish literature, such as the Targums, which would conclude that Leviticus 18:5 teaches that eternal life is attainable via keeping the Torah's commandments:

"And you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man do he shall live by them an everlasting life. I am the Lord" (Targum Onkelos on Leviticus 18:5).⁷²

"And you shall keep My statutes, and the order of My judgments, which if a man do he shall live in them, in the life of eternity, and his portion shall be with the just: I am the Lord" (Targum Jonathan on Leviticus 18:5).⁷³

⁶⁷ Derek Tidball, *The Message of Leviticus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 219.

⁶⁸ Gordon J. Wenham, *New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Leviticus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 253.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

John E. Hartley, *Word Biblical Commentary: Leviticus*, Vol 4 (Dallas: Word Books, 1992), 293 takes Leviticus 18:5 itself to not imply that there is any kind of promise of eternal life given to those who keep the Torah, concluding, "There is little support in the Pentateuch for such a reading of this text." Yet, he further thinks that "the language of the OT, while in itself not expressing a specific belief, nevertheless prepares the hearer for the fuller revelation of God," in that eternal life is promised to those who believe in the Messiah.

⁷¹ This is the basic thought expressed in Walter C. Kaiser, "Leviticus 18:5 and Paul: Do This and You Shall Live (Eternally?)" in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* Vol. 14 No. 1 (1971).

⁷² *BibleWorks 7.0: Targum Onkelos on the Pentateuch*. MS Windows XP. Norfolk: BibleWorks, LLC, 2006. CD-ROM.

⁷³ *BibleWorks 7.0: Targum Pseudo Jonathan on the Pentateuch*.

A lesser, although notable view, is seen in the Talmud, where a Rabbi Meir is said that a non-Jew who keeps the Torah may be regarded as though he were a high priest:

“R. Meir says, ‘Whence do we know that even an idolator, should he take up study of the Torah, is equivalent to a high priest? For it is said, “[You shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments,] which, if a man do them, he shall live by them” (Lev. 18:5); priests, Levites, and Israelites are not specified, but only a man. From that formulation you learn that even an idolator, should he engage in study of the Torah, is equivalent to a high priest” (b.*Sanhedrin* 59a).⁷⁴

There are ancient Jewish opinions that regarded Leviticus 18:5 as teaching that eternal life could be attained via keeping God’s commandments. This was an opinion surely present within the First Century Jewish world of Yeshua and the Apostles, but whether they actually agreed with it or endorsed it can probably be disputed.

A more modern Jewish approach to Leviticus 18:5, which can be appreciable, is how Richard Elliot Friedman renders the clause *ha’adam v’chai b’hem* as, “he’ll live through them.”⁷⁵ In his estimation, “This way of picturing the laws, as a path to *life*, begins here. It returns as the climax of the Torah in Deuteronomy. The path to the Tree of Life is blocked at the Torah’s beginning, and the way to recover it is emphasized at the Torah’s end. The laws are not presented as a burden but as a blessing.”⁷⁶ He goes on to chastise those “who have characterized the law as a weight that no human can possibly bear, as a curse from which one needs to be saved.”⁷⁷ Yet, Friedman’s view is probably a bit too conditioned by a Jewish theology which sees the Torah as the means of obtaining what was lost in Eden, rather than directing people to a coming Messiah who is to save God’s people (cf. Genesis 3:15).

From the actual text of Leviticus 18:5, we see that “life” is promised to those who keep God’s commandments. Readers are definitely on good footing to conclude that Leviticus 18:5 regards a **high quality of life lived on Earth**, one that is intended to be blessed and prosperous from the Lord. To conclude that eternal life can somehow be merited from keeping commandments, though, has to be eisegeted into the text, even though there are interpreters in history who have incorrectly held to it.

However, for those who have acknowledged Yeshua (Jesus) as Savior—to act as though daily life has no connection to future Heavenly life—would be most inappropriate. For those who obey God’s commandments in Messiah are surely to be regarded as men and women of the age to come living in the present evil age. They are to bear in their activities of daily life, the blessings to be fully consummated in future Heavenly life. Leviticus 18:5 does not promise eternal life via someone keeping God’s commandments, but Leviticus 18:5 can provide assurance that those who keep God’s commandments will be firmly planted within the sphere of His Kingdom. God’s commandments **do not provide the way of salvation from sins and eternal punishment**, but they do provide the way of sanctification and holiness. As Tidball properly describes,

“Some might wish to object to God’s right to say how his people should live, but it should really come as no surprise that the God who made us knows better than we ourselves know how we should function in his world. It should not surprise us that obeying the maker’s instructions is likely to bring the best out of us and lead us to live life to the full.”⁷⁸

10:6-7 The main intention of the Tanach Scriptures, as Paul elaborates, is not intended to be impossible, or that difficult, for people to find: “the righteousness that is by faith” (NIV), *ek pisteōs dikaiosunē* (ἐκ πίστεως δικαιοσύνη). This righteousness is something that can ultimately, only be found

⁷⁴ *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*.

⁷⁵ Richard Elliot Friedman, *Commentary on the Torah* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 375.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Tidball, 219.

by expressing trust in Yeshua the Messiah (v. 9). In vs. 6-7, Paul principally quotes from Deuteronomy 30:12-14 to make this point:

“But the righteousness based on faith speaks in this way: ‘Do not say in your heart, “Who will go up into heaven?” (that is, to bring Messiah down), or “Who will go down into the abyss?” (that is, to bring Messiah up from the dead).’ But what does it say? ‘The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart’—that is, the word of faith that we are proclaiming” (TLV).

Dunn describes how important a text like Deuteronomy 30:12-14 would have been for a Diaspora Jewish audience, such as the Jewish Believers in Rome—a text Paul imbued with great Messianic significance:

“This appeal to Deut 30:12-14 would resonate with a diaspora Jewish audience. It is self evident that Deut 30:1-10 would be greatly cherished by the devout of the diaspora, with its promise explicitly to those scattered among the nations that conversion and obedience would result in restoration and a circumcision of the heart which would produce love of God from the heart. This *a priori* likelihood is confirmed by Philo, *Praem.* {On Rewards and Punishments} 163-72, and the clear allusion to Deut 30:7 in Jewish tomb inscriptions of Asia Minor, where the curse is evoked as something well enough known to protect the tombs from abuse and robbery.”⁷⁹

In the estimation of Keener, with Deuteronomy 30:12-14 and Romans 10:6-10 in view, “In a closely argued midrash, Paul offers an analogy with God’s way of salvation in Deuteronomy, expecting structural continuity on the level of principle and how God deals with humanity. Both cases involve an obedient response to God’s gracious acts in salvation history, rather than authoring such salvation ourselves.”⁸⁰ There are certainly some important spiritual concepts that Paul deduced from Deuteronomy 30:12-14, detected in this section of his letter:⁸¹

DEUTERONOMY 30:12-14	PAUL’S APPLICATION IN ROMANS 10:6-10
It is not in heaven, that you should say, “Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?” (30:12).	“DO NOT SAY IN YOUR HEART, ‘WHO WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN?’ (that is, to bring Messiah down), (10:6).
Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, “Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?” (30:13).	or “WHO WILL DESCEND INTO THE ABYSS?” (that is, to bring Messiah up from the dead) (10:7).
But the word is very near you (30:14a).	But what does it say? “THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, (10:8a).
in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it (30:14b).	IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART”—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Yeshua as Lord,

⁷⁹ Dunn, *Romans*, 38b:603.

⁸⁰ Keener, 126.

⁸¹ Chart is adapted from Ibid.

	and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved (10:9-10).
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There is a textual issue to be considered from Deuteronomy 30:13 appearing in Romans 10:7. The Hebrew MT has *v'lo m'eiver l'yam* (וְלֹא־מֵעֵבֶר לַיָּם), “Nor is it across the sea” (ATS), which the Septuagint rendered as *oude peran tēs thalassēs* (οὐδὲ πέραν τῆς θαλάσσης), “Neither it is beyond the sea” (NETS). Paul has instead, *tis katabēsetai eis tēn abusson* (τίς καταβήσεται εἰς τὴν ἄβυσσον), “Who will go down into the abyss?” (HCSB) or “Who will descend into the deep?” (NIV). There is a distinct possibility that phraseology from the Septuagint version of Psalm 107:26 has been interjected, into what is *mainly* a quotation from Deuteronomy 30:12-14, here: “They mount up as far as the heavens, and they go down as far as the depths [*katabainousin heōs tōn abussōn*, καταβαίνουσιν ἕως τῶν ἀβύσσων]; their soul would met away in calamity” (NETS). The assertion that Yeshua would actually need to be brought up from the abyss, representing the realm of the dead (the CJB has “Sh’ol”), certainly plays a role in evaluating passages like 1 Peter 3:19, which affirms some sort of post-mortem, pre-resurrection activity on behalf of the Messiah: “He went and made proclamation to the spirits *now* in prison.”⁸²

The much bigger issue to be evaluated, for certain, is how Deuteronomy 30:11 offers the preface, “For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach.” Deuteronomy 30:12-14, which follows, intended to communicate to Ancient Israel how the instruction of God’s Torah was not to be too difficult or impossible to keep. The Apostle Paul, having just stated that the *telos* of the Law, its goal or culmination, is the Messiah Yeshua—has taken Deuteronomy 30:12-14 to speak of how it is not too difficult or impossible to find the good news or gospel. It does not require one to go far into Heaven, or deep into the netherworld, to find it. Cranfield makes the highly astute observation, that in adapting a Deuteronomy passage speaking of the Torah *to the Messiah*, how closely intertwined the two are, with the Messiah being the substance to which the Torah pointed:

“Deuteronomy is speaking about the law, and Paul refers what it says to Christ. But, if our understanding of Paul’s view of the law is right, he did not think of Christ and the law as two altogether unrelated entities; on the contrary, he saw the closest inner connexion between them. Christ is the goal, the essential meaning, the real substance of the law. It is therefore only as one sets one’s eyes on Christ, that one can see both the full significance of that graciousness of the law which comes to expression in this Deuteronomy passage and also the full seriousness of its imperatives.”⁸³

10:8 Paul testifies to the Romans, quoting from Deuteronomy 30:14, “But what does it say, ‘The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart’—that is, the word of faith that we are proclaiming” (TLV). The word, in view of the Deuteronomy 30:12-14 passage being referenced, is actually God’s Torah. Paul, however, applies this word in terms of the proclamation of the good news or gospel. The implication he issues is that just as heeding and obeying God’s Torah was imperative for his Israelite ancestors, so now it is just as imperative—even more so—for his fellow Jews to heed the message of Israel’s Messiah. And further implied, if the Lord is allowed to be the Lord, is how recognizing Yeshua as the Redeemer should not be something that difficult. As John R.W. Stott puts it,

“Storming the ramparts of heaven and potholing in Hades, in search of Christ, are equally unnecessary. For Christ has come and died, and been raised, and is therefore immediately accessible to faith. We do not need to do anything. Everything that is necessary has already been done. Moreover,

⁸² 1 Peter 3:18-20 is evaluated in the author’s publication *To Be Absent From the Body*.

⁸³ Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, 524.

because Christ himself is near, the gospel of Christ is also near. It is in the heart and mouth of every believer. The whole emphasis is on the close, ready, easy accessibility of Christ and his gospel.”⁸⁴

9 that if you confess with your mouth Yeshua as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; 10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, “WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED” [Isaiah 28:16].

10:9 Romans 10:9 is a statement which obviously played a very important part in Paul’s word of vs. 7-8 preceding, which is that finding the Savior is not too impossible, nor is salvation itself something entirely out of reach. As he asserts, “For if you confess with your mouth that *Yeshua* is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (TLV). Even with additional components of being people exposed to the gravity of their sins, turning from their wicked ways, and being committed to a path of sanctified living—v. 9 does encapsulate the core of the message of the good news.

One key element of v. 9 that need not be overlooked, is how it employs the verb *homologeō* (ὁμολογέω), which can mean “**to acknowledge someth., ordinarily in public, acknowledge, claim, profess, praise**” (BDAG).⁸⁵ The CJB actually renders it with, “acknowledge publicly,” with Stern asserting, “This public, open aspect of this agreeing is essential; this can be seen from the contexts elsewhere in the New Testament where the word ‘*omologein*’ is used—Mt. 10:32; Lk 12:8; Yn 1:20, 9:22, 12:42; 1 Ti 6:13; 1 Yn 4:2-3, 15; 2 Yn 7.”⁸⁶ This is important to recognize, given some of the difficult, modern contours of the Jewish evangelism which makes up a great deal of the Messianic movement’s mission—and how there are various Jewish people who, when (presumably) coming to faith in Messiah Yeshua, might not be too keen on letting others know about it (after a very long time).

Romans 10:9 also has a significant place in Christological studies, per the assertion that true Believers must acknowledge who *Kurion Iēsoun* (κύριον Ἰησοῦν) truly is. Is this just an acknowledgment of Yeshua as a man or woman’s Master—or is more intended? One need not overlook the Christological association of a passage like 1 Corinthians 8:6, “yet for us there is *but* one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we *exist* for Him; and one Lord, Yeshua the Messiah, by whom are all things, and we *exist* through Him,” and how a figure like the Apostle Paul has reworked the Deuteronomy 6:4 *Shema* around both the Father and the Son. It is widely and rightly recognized that there is some connection between the title *Kurios* (κύριος), which renders the proper name YHWH/YHVH (יהוה) throughout the Greek Septuagint, and how here in v. 9 Paul identifies the Lord Yeshua along the lines of the Lord God of Israel. As is summarized by Cranfield:

“What then did the confession ‘Jesus is Lord’ mean for Paul? The use of κύριος [*kurios*] more than six thousand times in the LXX to represent the Tetragrammaton must surely be regarded as of decisive importance here...[F]or Paul, the confession that Jesus is Lord meant the acknowledgment that Jesus shares the name and the nature, the holiness, the authority, power, majesty and eternity of the one and only true God. And, when, as is often the case, there is joined with the title *ku,rioj* a personal pronoun in the genitive, there is expressed in addition the sense of His ownership of those who acknowledge Him

⁸⁴ Stott, 284.

⁸⁵ BDAG, 708.

⁸⁶ Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 400.