

Romans 2:7-8. Further engagement with more passages of Scripture is required. (See the author's publication *Why Hell Must Be Eternal* for a more detailed examination of this subject matter.)

9 There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, 10 but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 11 For there is no partiality with God.

2:9-10 Humanity on the whole, of both Jews and those from the nations, will be treated with equity by God. In one of the most important words appearing in his epistle, Paul says, "There will be trouble and hardship for every human soul that does evil—to the Jew first and also to the Greek. But there will be glory, honor, and *shalom* to everyone who does good—to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (TLV). Judgment for sin—whether it be eternal punishment *or* simply difficulty in life (often designed to bring people to Him)—is something that will come to both the Jewish people and all others. Yet concurrent with this is also the promise that restoration to God is also available to all. James R. Edwards interjects how for the purpose of this part of Paul's letter, "He may begin with Jews in order to acknowledge their priority in the history of redemption (see Amos 3:2; Luke 12:48), but he does so with the reminder that priority in redemption entails priority in judgment!"¹⁵ Amos 3:2 has a very sobering message: "You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."

2:11 Readers encounter a variety of English renderings for *prosōpolēmpsia* (προσωποληψία): "For there is no respect of persons with God" (KJV), "For there is no acceptance of faces with God" (YLT), "For there is no preferential treatment with God" (Phillips New Testament), "For God does not show favoritism" (NIV), "For God shows no partiality" (RSV). The Torah includes the steadfast word, "For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe" (Deuteronomy 10:17). An important thought is expressed by *Testament of Job* 43:13 in the Pseudepigrapha: "Righteous is the Lord, true are his judgments. With him there is no favoritism. *He will judge us all together.*"¹⁶

12 For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law; 13 for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified. 14 For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, 15 in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, 16 on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Messiah Yeshua.

2:12 It is often, and to a wide degree, correct, to assume that vs. 12-16 pertain to how God will judge people according to the light that they have. The main thrust of what Paul is trying to communicate to the Jews in Rome, is how Jewish possession of the Torah—and with it specific knowledge of its instruction—is not going to merit Jewish people some sort of special favors before Him. If anything, Jewish possession of the Torah, knowledge of its instruction, and documented Tanach

¹⁵ Edwards, 69.

¹⁶ R.P. Spittler, trans., "Testament of Job," in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 862.

accounts of what happens when God's Law is disobeyed, **will merit an even higher responsibility before Him.**

One of the Apostle Paul's main intentions, with the instructions of Romans chs. 1-3, is to help explain to the mixed groupings of Messiah followers in Rome that both Jewish and non-Jewish people are equally accountable before God because of the propensity of human sin. Pagans are doubtlessly to be regarded as sinners, because even though they have been shown the majesty of the Almighty in His Creation, they have been turned over to activities like idolatry and sexual immorality (1:18-32). At the same time, though, Paul's own Jewish people will be held just as accountable before God (vs. 1-8). As he has explained, "There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for every one who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality" (vs. 9-11, RSV). Without repentance, no person will be able to escape His wrath (vs. 4-6).

What is communicated in Romans 2:12, is the assertion: "For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law" (NASU). That two groups of people are being referenced is obvious. The first is *Hosoi gar anomōs hēmarton, anomōs kai apolountai* ("Ὅσοι γὰρ ἀνόμως ἥμαρτον, ἀνόμως καὶ ἀπολοῦνται"), "for as many as without law did sin, without law also shall perish" (YLT).¹⁷ The second group is *kai hosoi en nomō hēmarton, dia nomou krithēsontai* (καὶ ὅσοι ἐν νόμῳ ἥμαρτον, διὰ νόμου κριθήσονται), "and as many as did sin in law, through law shall be judged" (YLT).¹⁸ Most versions do not correctly render the clause *en nomō* (ἐν νόμῳ) as either "in law" (YLT) or "within the law" (*Lattimore*, Kingdom New Testament), and instead use "under the Law" (RSV, NASU, NRSV, ESV, HCSB, etc.), even though *hupo nomon* (ὑπὸ νόμον)—which is legitimately rendered "under (the) Law" (Romans 6:14, 15; 1 Corinthians 9:20 [4x]; Galatians 3:23; 4:4, 5, 21; 5:18)—is noticeably missing.

Even with *en nomō* (ἐν νόμῳ) incorrectly rendered as "under the Law" in many Bible versions, in their deliberations Romans commentators have had to recognize the correct terminology that is used in Romans 2:12. Douglas J. Moo acknowledges, "'Without the law' translates the Greek adverb ἀνόμως [*anomōs*], while 'in the law' translates ἐν νόμῳ [*en nomō*]." ¹⁹ Dunn further states that in Romans 2:12, "ἀνόμως...[means] 'lacking the law' and 'outside the law,' and ἐν νόμῳ...[means] 'with the law' and 'within the law.'" ²⁰ It is not easy to find a specific reason from expositors why Bible versions typically render Romans 2:12 with "under the Law," when *hupo nomon* (ὑπὸ νόμον) certainly does not appear in the source text.

In Romans 2:12, one group is "without the law," and another group is "in/within the law." Who are these people? Moo is correct in his conclusion, "The division of the world into those who sin 'without the law' and those who sin 'in the law' corresponds to the distinction between Jews and Gentiles."²¹ In the First Century, the pagans did not have God's Torah, but the Jewish people did. Paul highlights that those who are within the Torah "will be judged." Those who not only have specific knowledge of God's righteous and holy commandments, but also historical records of what happens when they are disobeyed (i.e., the Book of Judges), are surely going to be held seriously accountable—perhaps even more so than those pagans who are just turned over to sin because of their flat rejection of the One True Creator (1:26).

¹⁷ "For all who have sinned outside of *Torah* will also perish outside of *Torah*" (TLV).

¹⁸ "and all who have sinned according to *Torah* will be judged by *Torah*" (TLV).

¹⁹ Moo, 145 fn#6.

²⁰ Dunn, *Romans*, 38b:95-96.

²¹ Moo, 145.

While Paul in his letter will later specify how a principal purpose of God's Torah is to define sin (3:20), this was not always the widespread First Century Jewish view of the Torah. In much of First Century Jewish thought, the view was that Jewish ethnicity guaranteed one a place in God's Kingdom: "All Israelites have a share in the world to come..." (m.*Sanhedrin* 10:1).²² Wright informs us how in Romans 2:12, "Paul may well be responding to an implicit Jewish interjection: 'We at least have Torah; that sets us apart from the Gentiles,'" further observing how "Possession of Torah had become, in much Jewish thought, a badge of privilege, a talisman, a sign that Israel was inalienably God's people. No, says Paul."²³ The purpose of possessing God's Torah was not as a kind of get-out-of-jail-free card for judgment before the Eternal One, but instead to lay forth what His holiness and righteousness were all about (cf. 8:1-4; 10:5-11).

Paul explicitly denies that having Jewish ethnicity will guarantee any of his people a place among the redeemed in the age to come, as *all human beings* are to be judged fairly before their Creator. Those who sit "within the {sphere of} of the Torah," are ultimately no better off than the pagan idolater—if there is no repentance before the Lord of All. In fact, possession and specific knowledge of the Torah will not be a huge benefit, unless what the Torah asks is correctly demonstrated forth by all those who hear it (v. 13).

A certain area of tension resides in v. 12a, between Paul's assertion about the nations, "For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law," and then what he observes later about how there are those from the nations—lacking specific knowledge of the Torah—who can still keep some of its statutes. It is not uncommon, for example, to see a conclusion like that of Bruce assert, "Gentiles will not be condemned for failure to conform to a law-code which was not accessible to them."²⁴ However, as John Calvin would conclude, "[Paul] attacks the Gentiles who, though they had no Moses given to them to promulgate and ratify the law from the Lord, were not, he maintains, prevented by this from bringing upon themselves the just sentence of death by their sins."²⁵ Is it fair for an Eternal God to judge as sinners, those who lack specific knowledge of His Instruction? Obviously, while only He alone can mete out the proper and correct punishment on the unrepentant, high sins like idolatry or homosexuality (1:18-32) are capital offenses in the Torah, and can be regarded as those principles imbued on the conscience via His Divine image. Furthermore, in the view of James the Just, the violation of a single Torah commandment will merit one being a violator of the whole Torah: "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all" (James 2:10).

How can the nations ever observe God's Torah, when they are those who certainly do not sit *en nomō* or "in the law"? It is because the pagans at large, as human beings made in God's image (Genesis 1:26) and bearing intelligence from Him, *do have* a conscience and they *do have* a basic sense of right and wrong impressed upon them. Isaiah 24:5 does state how, "The earth [*ha'eret*z, אֶרֶץ] is also polluted by its inhabitants, for they transgressed laws, violated statutes, broke the everlasting covenant." The nations at large are very much accountable to their Creator for violating His Law and covenant. The kind of Torah instructions that the Jews could observe their pagan Greek and Roman neighbors keeping in their daily affairs, simply because God made all people to reflect His goodness and attributes to some degree, are largely thought to be the last six of the Ten Commandments. Stott observes,

²² Jacob Neusner, trans., *The Mishnah: A New Translation* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), 604.

Notable exceptions would, however, include "He who says, the resurrection of the dead is a teaching which does not derive from the Torah."

²³ Wright, in *NIB*, 10:440.

²⁴ Bruce, 85.

²⁵ Calvin, 46.

“[S]ome Gentiles sometimes do some of what the law requires. This is an observable, verifiable fact, which anthropologists have everywhere discovered. Not all human beings are crooks, blackguards, thieves, adulterers and murderers. On the contrary, some honour their parents, recognize the sanctity of human life, are loyal to their spouses, practise honesty, speak the truth and cultivate contentment, just as the last six of the ten commandments require.”²⁶

Paul will be keen to inquire of the Jewish Believers in Rome whether or not, in their keeping of God’s Torah, they are ever found violating it (vs. 17-29). He asks them questions like, “You who preach that one shall not steal, do you steal? You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?” (vs. 21b-22). His poignant question is: “You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God?” (v. 23). The fact of the matter is that Jewish possession of God’s Torah (v. 17) means relatively nothing if not acted upon properly. Ancient Jews who had knowledge of God’s Torah could be found to be Torah-breakers, and Ancient Greeks and Romans who had no knowledge of Israel’s God could be found at times to be actually keeping some of its statutes via their conscience. Hence, even without specific knowledge of the Torah, **all people** will eventually be found in some way to be accountable to the Torah (cf. James 2:10).

Paul does not want any of the Roman Jews to think that mere Jewish knowledge and possession of Moses’ Teaching will merit them any favors from the Almighty. On the contrary, these are to be people who instruct those from the nations in God’s commandments, as he acknowledges a Jewish responsibility to be “a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth” (v. 20). At the very least, this would involve an exposition of those instructions which are frequently found to be impressed upon the conscience of every human being, and kept by those of the nations via some instinct imbued upon them by the Creator.

The thrust of Romans 2:12, as properly recognized by Cranfield, is how “While those who have sinned in ignorance of the law will perish (that is, will be condemned in the final judgment) even though they did not have the law, those who have sinned knowing the law (ἐν νόμῳ [*en nomō*] indicates the circumstances under which they sinned, namely, the direct opposite to those denoted by ἀνόμως [*anomos*] at the beginning of the verse) will be judged by God according to the standard provided by the law.”²⁷ *This can only highlight the greater responsibility those who know of the Torah’s high standard have in their interaction to God.* And what would be the kind of specific failures to obey that are in mind here? Not keeping various sacred days? Not offering prescribed sacrifices? Not adhering to fair business or agricultural practices? These could certainly be included, yet the Torah issues that Paul is more concerned about regard basic morality (vs. 21-24; cf. Isaiah 52:5; Ezekiel 36:20).

Too frequently, the violations, that those who claim to be Torah keepers today commit, are not over outward practices like Sabbath observance, diet, or presenting a tithe (cf. Matthew 23)—but regard basic human interaction and familial relationships. These are the issues where all people will surely be found wanting, **but most especially those within the sphere of knowing God’s Torah.** This is why the Apostle Paul is not at all enthusiastic about those who boast because of their possession or knowledge of the Torah (v. 17), as all will eventually be found as sinners to be Torah-breakers in some form or fashion (3:23; 5:12). On the contrary, any boasting is to be found in what our Heavenly

²⁶ Stott, 86.

Stott’s comments can only serve to highlight the importance of classical studies to supplement one’s examination of the Apostolic Scriptures, even though Jewish studies in the Second Temple period are ultimately more important. For some further thoughts, consult the author’s article “The Role of History in Messianic Biblical Interpretation” (appearing in *Confronting Critical Issues*).

²⁷ Cranfield, *Romans 1-8*, pp 153-154.

Father has done via the work of His Son: “just as it is written, ‘LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD’ [Jeremiah 9:24]” (1 Corinthians 1:31; cf. 2 Corinthians 10:17).²⁸

In Romans 2:12, the Apostle Paul describes the state of two different groups of people relating to the judgment of God upon sinners. Those who are *anomos* (ἄνομος) or “without law” largely describes a behavioral pattern of those who live without God’s Divine Law, and will thus die in this manner. Whether one knows the specifics of God’s Torah or not in this case is irrelevant (even though enough of the Torah’s instructions are imprinted onto the minds of all people made in God’s image). The person turned over to sinful behavior, knowing whether something is sin or not, is still going to be judged by the consequences of such sin, given “over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity” (1:24). By rejecting the Creator, they accept sin, and are delivered up to it and will be judged.

The second status is those who are *en nomō* (ἐν νόμῳ), correctly rendered as “in law” (YLT) or “in the Torah.” This is referencing those who know the Torah of God, and from it know what is considered acceptable and unacceptable via its commandments. In the First Century, this would have largely concerned Paul’s own Jewish people—but today it would involve Jews and Christians equally, who as Bible readers have a widescale knowledge of Moses’ Teaching (even if under-developed in some areas). Those who sin with a degree of understanding of God’s Law will be held accountable by it. Such judgment is going to necessarily be much higher, because what is right and wrong is clearly laid out by the Lord and His commandments—whereas the person who just sins lawlessly, not knowing what God considers acceptable and unacceptable, may not be judged as severely (cf. Revelation 20:12-13).

Excursus: Isaiah 24:5 – Are the Nations Only Responsible for Violating the Noahdic Covenant?

“Behold, the LORD lays the earth waste, devastates it, distorts its surface and scatters its inhabitants. And the people will be like the priest, the servant like his master, the maid like her mistress, the buyer like the seller, the lender like the borrower, the creditor like the debtor. The earth will be completely laid waste and completely despoiled, for the LORD has spoken this word. The earth mourns *and* withers, the world fades *and* withers, the exalted of the people of the earth fade away. The earth is also polluted by its inhabitants, for they transgressed laws, violated statutes, broke the everlasting covenant. Therefore, a curse devours the earth, and those who live in it are held guilty. Therefore, the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left” (Isaiah 24:1-6).

The content of Isaiah ch. 24, describing God’s inevitable judgment on the world, is something that has probably been too widely overlooked in regard to understanding salvation, and what only the work of the Messiah can redeem people from. That God will issue severe desolation and calamity upon unrighteous sinners can be easily detected by a survey of Isaiah 24. That this chapter depicts the world at large in a condition of rebellion and corruption against the Creator, is also easily detected.

There should be no disagreement from an historical reading of Scripture, that Israel proper has been found in violation of the Mosaic covenant, and this is the precise reason why the New Covenant providing permanent atonement for sin and forgiveness would have to be inaugurated

²⁸ 1 Samuel 2:1-2 may also be considered here:

“Then Hannah prayed and said, ‘My heart exults in the LORD; my horn is exalted in the LORD, my mouth speaks boldly against my enemies, because I rejoice in Your salvation. There is no one holy like the LORD, indeed, there is no one besides You, nor is there any rock like our God.’”

(Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27).²⁹ *But what about the nations at large?* Are we to assume that those of the world at large, perhaps total pagans, are to be regarded as breakers of the Mosaic covenant as well? Are they to all be viewed as though they were *gerim* (גֵּרִים) or sojourners who would enter into the community of Ancient Israel, and whose overall adherence to the Torah was widely indistinguishable from the native?³⁰ Or, are the nations of the world at large, just held accountable for a small series of moral and ethical principles, per the so-called Noahide laws of Judaism?³¹

The assertion of Isaiah 24:5 is, *ki-avru torot chalfu choq hei'peiru b'rit olam* (הִפְרוּ בְרִית עוֹלָם), “because they have transgressed the Torot, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant” (Jerusalem Bible-Koren). Much understandably comes down to how a reader approaches the presence of *torot* (תּוֹרָה) or “laws,”³² and *b'rit olam* (בְּרִית עוֹלָם) or “eternal/everlasting covenant.” The violation of these Divine institutions is something that *ha'ereztz* (הָאָרֶץ) or “the earth” is responsible for, making it a problem for all of humanity.³³

There are interpreters of Isaiah 24:5 who view *b'rit olam* (בְּרִית עוֹלָם), as only being in regard to the covenant God made with Noah in Genesis 9:16,³⁴ and this problem would not constitute the nations at large being held liable for breaking any successive covenants that followed. A Jewish commentator like I.W. Slotki notes some of the options that sit before the reader on how to approach *b'rit olam*:

“The Torah of Moses was given at Sinai between God and Israel (Rashi). Others refer the phrase to the Noachide covenant made between God and the human race after the flood (Gen. ix. 16). [According to] this covenant every member of the human race is subject to certain moral laws, one of which is the prohibition of murder (Gen. ix. 5f) (Abarbanel).”³⁵

The presence of *torot* or laws being mentioned, does certainly give the interpreter of Isaiah 24:5 some options, which would make limiting this verse's content to the Noahdic covenant more than a bit confining. At the very least, a Christian commentator like John N. Oswalt directs how the laws in view include principles which are included in the Torah of Moses, but does draw the conclusion how the general covenant in view is likely the Noahdic covenant:

“Isaiah is thus using law here just as Paul uses it in Rom. 1-3. It is not so much the revealed law of the Jews, although the principles are the same. Rather, it is the fundamental principles of human behavior that are as accessible, and as incumbent, as the elementary principles of physics. Whether or not persons recognize the principles, living in any other way than in accord with them must ultimately destroy us, as the history of numberless fallen civilizations ought to teach us. Thus while the *eternal covenant* may have specific reference to the Noachic covenant in Gen. 9:1-17 with its prohibition of bloodshed, its broader reference is to the implicit covenant between Creator and creature, in which the Creator promises abundant life in return for the creature's living according to the norms laid down at Creation.”³⁶

²⁹ For a further discussion, consult the article “What is the New Covenant?”, appearing in the author's book *The New Testament Validates Torah*.

³⁰ For a further evaluation, consult the FAQ, “Torah Keeping for the *Gerim*/Sojourners in Ancient Israel.”

³¹ Consult the FAQ, “Noahide Laws.”

³² The Septuagint rendering of Isaiah 24:5 has the singular *ton nomon* (τὸν νόμον) or “the law.”

³³ Among some Jewish interpreters, it is noted that “*The earth* could also be translated as ‘the land’ (i.e., the land of Israel), in which case this section would refer to the Israelites and Judeans, not all humanity. In that case, *the ancient covenant*...refers to the laws given to Israel through Moses” (Benjamin D. Sommer, in Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Study Bible* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004], 829).

³⁴ Barry G. Webb, *The Message of Isaiah* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 106; Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 179.

³⁵ I.W. Slotki, *Soncino Books of the Bible: Isaiah* (London: Soncino Press, 1983), 111.

³⁶ John N. Oswalt, *New International Commentary on the Old Testament: Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 446.

The point made by Oswalt, is that the *b'rit olam* or “eternal covenant” violated by the world at large, should not be thought in specific terms to just be the Noahdic covenant. **More is intended by Isaiah 24:5.** Gene M. Tucker has to, although somewhat reluctantly, observe,

“Which covenant does the author have in view? The obvious answer is the covenant with Noah (Gen 9:1-17), since it is called ‘an everlasting covenant’ and extends to all people and creatures of the earth. On the other hand, the reference to laws and statutes leaves open the possibility that this is the Sinai covenant (Exod 19-Num 9).”³⁷

J.C. Halton, even while choosing to view *torah* (תּוֹרָה) in the Book of Isaiah as largely pertaining to the Prophet’s own teaching and declarations, still has to detail the following in his entry for “Law” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Prophets*:

“While the book of Isaiah, along with most other OT texts, presents *tôrâ* as a divine gift to Israel, it does not picture *tôrâ* as Israel’s exclusive possession. Instead, one way in which Yahweh intended for the knowledge of God’s upright character (*sedeq* [שֶׁדֶק]) to spread was by expanding and making more prominent *tôrâ* among the nations.”³⁸

There are, to be sure, theologians and commentators, who see *b'rit olam* (בְּרִית עוֹלָם) or “eternal/everlasting covenant” in Isaiah 24:5 as being widely incorporative of much more than the Noahdic covenant. Geoffrey W. Grogan is one who points out that pagans even without God, should still be regarded as though they were at least violators of the moral statutes stated within Moses’ Teaching:

“Modern society is becoming more concerned about the physical pollution of our environment. Isaiah here dealt with the even more tragic and urgent matter of moral pollution, which is as widespread and serious today as it was in the eighth century B.C. The language of v.5 might seem, on the face of it, to be especially appropriate to Israel, because of her possession of the Mosaic Law; but the content here makes it plain that the whole world is in view. Many commentators...see a reference to the Noachian covenant, especially in the phrase ‘the everlasting covenant,’ which also occurs in Genesis 9:16. It is possible too that the prophet had Genesis 3 in mind, particularly in view of his reference to the curse in v.6. The world as a whole did not possess the moral commandments of God in written form as in the Mosaic Law; but those laws nevertheless represent the will of God for mankind, and mankind is under judgment for their violation. The word ‘disobeyed’ implies at least some awareness of these moral requirements in the human conscience (cf. Romans 1:18-32; 2:11-16), thus an element of deliberateness in sin.”³⁹

Among commentators of the Book of Isaiah, the most wide-sweeping view of *b'rit olam* is probably found within the conservatively-acclaimed work *The Prophecy of Isaiah* by J.A. Motyer. He summarizes,

“The expression *the everlasting covenant* is used of the Noachic covenant (Gn. 9:16), the Lord’s covenant dispensation reaching back to Abraham (Ps. 105:10), the Sabbath within the Mosaic covenant (Lv. 24:8) and the Davidic covenant (2 Sa. 23:5) and its future Messianic counterpart (Is. 55:3; 61:8). While this whole passage is resonant with flood motifs, it would be mistaken to tie this covenant reference in any way exclusively to Noah, even though its ambience starts with him. Every covenant dispensation has its regulatory aspect, however undeveloped it may have been in comparison with the normative Mosaic system. This may be why Isaiah used the plural *laws*, so as to cover every period and aspect of covenant law-giving. Even Abraham, who lived [by] the broadest of divine precepts (Gn. 17:2), is said to have kept the Lord’s ‘laws’ (Gn. 26:5). In essence, the annulling of the covenant was the refusal to live in the fellowship in which God opened.”⁴⁰

³⁷ Gene M. Tucker, “The Book of Isaiah 1-39,” in Leander E. Keck, ed., et. al., *New Interpreter’s Bible*, Vol. 6 (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 211.

³⁸ J.C. Halton, “Law,” in Mark J. Boda and J. Gordon McConville, eds., *Dictionary of the Old Testament Prophets* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012), 495.

³⁹ Geoffrey W. Grogan, “Isaiah,” in Frank E. Gaebelin, ed. et. al. *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 6:152.

⁴⁰ J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 199.

Walter C. Kaiser might have the most all-inclusive view of both *b'rit olam* or “the eternal covenant,” as well as *torot* or “laws,” as he describes the following for Isaiah 24:5 in his book *Preaching and Teaching the Last Things*:

“[T]he word for ‘laws’ is the Hebrew word *torot* (the plural for the word *torah*), meaning not just the law of God, but also all his authoritative instructions....Notice that this indictment affects all the peoples of the earth. Yet some are hesitant to refer the ‘everlasting covenant’ to the ‘Abrahamic-Davidic covenant,’ but attempt to instead refer it back to the Noahic covenant (Gen. 9:16). To be sure, God did call the covenant he made with Noah an ‘everlasting’ covenant. Moreover, it is also true that this passage in Isaiah 24 does contain allusions to the flood of Noah. However, it is best to understand this ‘everlasting covenant’ as the one that reached back to Abraham (Gen. 17:7, 13, 19; Ps. 105:9-10; cf. 1 Chron. 16:15-18), David (2 Sam. 23:5), and forward to a future Messiah (Isa. 55:3). The ‘law’ God had given to David was a ‘law/charter for all humanity’ (2 Sam. 7:19, translation mine), not one effective only for Israel. For just as the Abrahamic covenant was to be the means of blessing all the families of the earth (Gen. 12:3), so it is a universal offer here as well.”⁴¹

While there will continue to be disagreements among theologians, commentators, and interpreters on how to properly approach Isaiah 24:5—“The earth is also polluted by its inhabitants, for they transgressed laws, violated statutes, broke the everlasting covenant”—one is on safe ground to conclude that not only is Israel proper held responsible by God for violating the Torah or Law of Moses, but so are the nations at large, even if the exact Torah obedience of the *gerim* or sojourners in Ancient Israel was not exactly the same as a native (i.e., the native who had a tribal inheritance in the Land of Israel). One of the specific indictments, after all, that the Apostle Paul will issue against the nations, is that they are “covenant-breakers” (Romans 1:31, American Standard Version).⁴²

Some would claim, in contrast to Isaiah 24:5, that the nations at large should not be held responsible for violation of anything but the terms of the Noahic covenant. Psalm 147:19-20, for example, says, “He declares His words to Jacob, His statutes and His ordinances to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any nation; and as for His ordinances, they have not known them.” Is it not true that the Psalmist says of the nations, *mishpatim bal-yeda’um* (מִשְׁפָּטִים בַּל־יָדְעוּם), “they do not know his rules” (ESV) or “they do not know his laws” (NIV)?

The main point of Psalm 147:19-20 is to detail how the Torah or Instruction of God was specifically given to Israel, and how the nations of the world are largely ignorant of God’s commandments. It is true that the Scriptures bear forth the principle that specific knowledge of many commandments and ordinances is necessary, in order to be held specifically accountable for their violation (cf. Romans 5:13).⁴³ Yet at the same time, as God’s image bearers (Genesis 1:26-27; 9:6; James 3:9), each human being has moral and ethical principles impressed onto the conscience. Knowing this is important, because Paul used it as a frame of reference to criticize various Jewish Believers in Rome who may have boasted because of their circumcision, but who may also have been shown to be less-than-faithful Torah keepers, when pagans who lacked the Torah could actually keep its weighty principles via their conscience:

“[Y]ou, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one shall not steal, do you steal? You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God? For ‘THE NAME OF GOD IS BLASPHEMED AMONG THE GENTILES BECAUSE OF YOU’ [Isaiah 52:5; Ezekiel 36:20], just as it is written. For indeed circumcision is of value

⁴¹ Walter C. Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching the Last Things: Old Testament Eschatology for the Life of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 149.

⁴² Grk. *asunthetos* (ἄσυνθετος); “bound by no covenant, faithless” (LS, 127); “pert. to such as renege on their word, faithless. The noun συνθήκη [*sunthēkē*] refers to a formal agreement or compact; an ἄσυνθετος [*asunthetos*] pers. does not keep an agreement” (BDAG, 146); “break their promises” (NLT).

Asunthetos is more often rendered as something like “untrustworthy” (NASU).

⁴³ Consult some of the thoughts in Chapter 24 of the author’s book *Torah In the Balance, Volume I*.

if you practice the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. So if the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? And he who is physically uncircumcised, if he keeps the Law, will he not judge you who though having the letter of the Law and circumcision are a transgressor of the Law?" (Romans 2:21-27).

To a figure like James the Just, all it takes is violation of one single commandment of the Torah or the Law of Moses, to constitute a total violation of it. He says, "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). Here, the prohibitions against adultery and murder, from the Ten Commandments, are listed. These would surely constitute the sorts of principles imbued upon the human conscience by God as Creator. Violation of one of these commandments, either by a Jewish person who grew up in a Torah environment, or by a pagan from the nations, merits such a man or woman the status of: Law-breaker. Even without some specific knowledge of the Mosaic covenant, by violating its principles of conscience, one from the nations demonstrates the same base, fallenness and disregard for the Creator that a Jewish person who has specific knowledge of it likewise demonstrates when he or she breaks it.

There is a definite conflict of not only theology, but also spirituality, in the Messianic movement today, when various Messianic Jewish leaders and teachers might claim that the nations at large are not held responsible by God for breaking His Torah. A prophetic word like Isaiah 24:5 says something to the contrary: all of humanity is guilty before God's Instruction. Thankfully, we can take an important cue from Romans 5:20: "The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more." Even though the world at large stands condemned for violation of God's Torah and His covenant, His grace has always been greater than His anger. "[S]o that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Yeshua the Messiah our Lord" (Romans 5:21).

To claim that Yeshua the Messiah was sacrificed only for Israel proper's violation of the Torah, and not for that of the nations as well, is not the perspective presented in Titus 2:14: "[Yeshua] gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds." Yeshua redeeming people *apo pasēs anomias* (ἀπὸ πάσης ἀνομίας) or "from all lawlessness" (ESV), is something that involves both the Jewish people and those from the nations, as "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Likewise, all people who turn to Yeshua as Savior are beneficiaries of the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27; Hebrews 8:8-12), and with it the promise for God's Instruction to be supernaturally transcribed onto the heart and mind.

2:13 Having just noted the significant responsibility upon those who sit within the Torah's sphere of influence—and will thusly be judged more seriously than the pagans at large who do not have specific knowledge of the Torah—the Apostle Paul further says, "For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified" (RSV). The word translated "doers" is *poiētēs* (ποιητής, sing.), "a doer, performer," and "one who obeys or fulfils the law" (Thayer).⁴⁴ It is used in James 1:22, "But prove yourselves doers [*poiētēs*] of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves." Its verb form, *poieō* (ποιέω), appears when Yeshua says, "whoever keeps [*poieō*] and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:19b).

The Apostle Paul is trying to communicate to the Jews in Rome, that it is important for them to realize that it is insufficient to simply hear God's Torah proclaimed and give lip service to its direction;

⁴⁴ Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 527.