
FAQ

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Leviticus 18:5

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Does the Torah actually teach that by keeping its commandments, a person can earn eternal life?

Is it possible for a person to keep the commandments of the Torah, and as a result incur eternal life and everlasting communion with the Father? There are those throughout Jewish and Christian religious history, and even to our present time, who have thought that Leviticus 18:5—“**So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them**” (NASU)—implies precisely this. There are certainly Christian interpreters, who would dispute this conclusion based on a variety of contextual factors, and would consider it in stark contradiction with Ephesians 2:8, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God” (NASU). Only by carefully evaluating the original setting of Leviticus 18:5, and then some key places in the Apostolic Scriptures or New Testament, where it is quoted or alluded to (Luke 10:28; Galatians 3:12; Romans 10:5), can a Bible reader have a good idea about what is being communicated.

Leviticus 18:5

“So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the LORD” (NASU).

On its own, Leviticus 18:5 says, “You shall observe My decrees and My laws, which man shall carry out and by which he shall live—I am HASHEM” (ATS). The two verbs of interest first include *shamar* (שָׁמַר), generally meaning to “keep, watch, preserve” (BDB),¹ “The basic idea of the root is ‘to exercise great care over’” (TWOT).² 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*).³ 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.⁴

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:

¹ BDB, 1036.

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

³ Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 88.

⁴ Cf. Elmer B. Smick, “חָיָה,” in TWOT, 1:279-281.

“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, NASU).

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, NASU).

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* (בָּהֶם)—“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, NASU).

“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, NASU).

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.⁵ The following chart is a summary of relatively current Jewish and Christian approaches:

⁵ For a useful approach to the various views, consult R. Laird Harris, “Leviticus,” in Frank E. Gaebelein, ed. et. al., *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 2:597-599.

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.⁶ Martin Noth, <i>liberal Christian</i></p>	<p>The simple sense of the clause <i>va-ḥai 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.⁷ 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.⁸ 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 Paul, like later Jewish writers (cf. the Onkelos and Pseudo-Jon. Targums) understood Leviticus 18:5 to be promising eternal life for the doer.⁹ Douglas J. Moo, <i>evangelical Christian</i></p>
<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.¹⁰ R. Laird Harris, <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</p>	

⁶ Martin Noth, *Leviticus: A Commentary*, revised edition (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), 134.

⁷ 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.

⁸ R.K. Harrison, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: Leviticus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1980), 185.

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ Harris, in *EXP*, 2:598.

<p>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.¹¹ 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.¹² ArtScroll Chumash, <i>Orthodox Jewish</i></p>	
<p>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.¹³ Derek Tidball, <i>evangelical Christian</i></p>	

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).”¹⁴ 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).”¹⁵ Wenham further takes this to the point of saying, “In John’s Gospel man must keep the new law—the word of Christ.”¹⁶

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, NASU), as relating to the obedience of Yeshua the Messiah to the Torah—and

¹¹ Walter C. Kaiser, “The Book of Leviticus,” in Leander E. Keck, ed., et. al., *New Interpreter’s Bible*, Vol. 1 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 1125.

¹² Nosson Scherman, ed., *ArtScroll Chumash, Stone Edition* (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, Ltd., 2000), 650.

¹³ Derek Tidball, *The Message of Leviticus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 219.

¹⁴ Gordon J. Wenham, *New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Leviticus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 253.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *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.

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.).¹⁷ 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).¹⁸

"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).¹⁹

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).²⁰

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 (discussed further).

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."²¹ 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."²² 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."²³ 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

¹⁷ 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).

¹⁸ *BibleWorks 7.0: Targum Onkelos on the Pentateuch*. MS Windows XP. Norfolk: BibleWorks, LLC, 2006. CD-ROM.

¹⁹ *BibleWorks 7.0: Targum Pseudo Jonathan on the Pentateuch*.

²⁰ *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*.

²¹ Richard Elliot Friedman, *Commentary on the Torah* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 375.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

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."²⁴

Luke 10:28

"And He said to him, 'You have answered correctly; DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE'" (NASU).

Luke 10:28 is a verse that all Bible readers have probably struggled with, as on the surface Yeshua seemingly endorses a concept of salvation by Torah-keeping. The cotext of Luke 10:25-29 might point readers in the direction of eternal life being inheritable via keeping the Torah. But, can salvation really come by works? In the dialogue between a certain lawyer or Torah teacher, and the Lord, Yeshua is questioned about how he can obtain eternal life:

"And a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, 'Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' And He said to him, 'What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?' And he answered, 'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF' [Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18]. **And He said to him, 'You have answered correctly; DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE'** [Leviticus 18:5]" (Luke 10:15-28, NASU).²⁵

Appearing in Luke 10:25, the verb *klēronomeō* (κληρονομέω) in a broad sense means "to receive a share of an inheritance, to inherit a portion of property" (LS).²⁶ I. Howard Marshall is correct to indicate how the verb "here has the idea of being qualified now to receive a future blessing from God."²⁷ In some other versions *klēronomeō* is rendered as "gain" (Common English Bible, TLV), and the Phillips New Testament offers the useful paraphrase, "Master, what must I do to be sure of eternal life?"

One of the immediate features that must be noted in Luke 10:25-28, is how the two principal commandments of loving God and loving neighbor are referenced by the lawyer, as needing to be kept. The lawyer's intention, though, was to "trap him" (Luke 10:25, CJB) or "entrap Yeshua" (TLV). Marshall observes how "Jesus improves the occasion by calling the lawyer to be sure to practise the commandments,"²⁸ as the Messiah is surely no antinomian. Anyone reading Luke 10:25-28, whether they think that the Torah has relevance and validity in the post-resurrection era or not, still thinks that those who truly believe in God are to love Him and neighbor—especially given the placement of Yeshua's teaching of the Good Samaritan following (Luke 10:30-37). In Luke 10:26, Yeshua asks the lawyer the pertinent question, "What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?" (NASU). He puts the Torah teacher on the spot, asking him what he thinks is necessary to be followed in order for him to receive eternal life. After quoting Deuteronomy 6:4 and Leviticus 19:18, Yeshua confirms the lawyer's conclusion (Luke 10:27-28a).

There are examiners of Luke 10:28b, seeing the quotation of Leviticus 18:5, who think that Yeshua is focusing the attention of the Torah teacher on his heart attitude, and the impossibility of keeping the Torah's commandments in order to inherit eternal life. In the view of Leon Morris,

"Some see in this a formal commendation of the way of works. If you want a way of salvation by doing, this is it (with the implication that you won't be able to do it.) It is perhaps more likely that it is a repudiation of works. It is not what we do, considered as a meritorious work, that matters, but our attitude...Jesus is not commending a new system of legalism somewhat different from the old one, but pointing to the end of all legalism. The lawyer wanted a rule or a set of rules that he could keep and so merit eternal life. Jesus is telling him that eternal life is not a matter of keeping rules at all. To live in love is to live the life of the kingdom of God."²⁹

²⁴ Tidball, 219.

²⁵ Leviticus 18:5 is likely referred to by Yeshua in Matthew 19:17, in the wider scene of the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16-26). The issue in view is Yeshua's questioning of the rich young ruler to make sure that he has kept the Ten Commandments, and upon confirming this, it is demonstrated that the man has many possessions with which he is unwilling to depart, giving them to the poor. The point made is that keeping commandments is not enough, as one must be willing to give up all to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. The key statement issued is, "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26, NASU), as salvation only comes from God, and not deeds done by mortals (Matthew 19:16).

²⁶ LS, 436.

²⁷ I. Howard Marshall, *New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 442.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 444.

²⁹ Leon Morris, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: Luke*, revised edition (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1992), 206.

No one will argue against the fact that love for God and neighbor are required in order to have eternal life, because even though salvation is freely given, it is first manifested by a changed heart that loves God and others without prejudice, bigotry, pride, or pre-conditions.

How Luke 10:28 with its quotation of Leviticus 18:5 is approached—with some concluding that, at least hypothetically, observance of Torah commandments can merit eternal life—relates to how Luke 10:28 immediately leads Yeshua to teach on the Good Samaritan. Does the lawyer, who has just correctly answered by saying how eternal life involves loving God and neighbor, truly understand all of the ramifications of this? Luke 10:29 indicates, “But wishing to justify himself, he said to Yeshua, ‘And who is my neighbor?’” (NASU). The Moffat New Testament is probably right to paraphrase this with, “Anxious to make an excuse for himself.” While theologically the Torah teacher’s answer was correct, there was still some significant maturation to take place within him—and this teacher, who had wanted to test Yeshua (Luke 10:25), was being convicted of his limitations right in the sight of Him!

One’s neighbor includes *all members of the human race*, not just those within one’s immediate sphere of comfort. As Craig A. Evans observes,

“It is...easier to profess love for God and to observe religious rituals as proof of this love than it is to show love for one’s neighbor. The legal expert must have sensed this and so, wishing to **justify himself**, asked Jesus, ‘**And who is my neighbor?**’ Implicit in his question is an excuse for failing to keep the second commandment...The commandment to love one’s neighbor is to be applied universally, not selectively. As the Parable of the Good Samaritan will illustrate, it is the man who treats a stranger as a neighbor that really keeps the commandments of the law.”³⁰

One perspective of inheriting eternal life (Luke 10:25) via God’s commandments is offered by R. Alan Culpepper, “Eternal life is found not just in knowing the commandments but in doing them. The answer to the lawyer’s question is implicit in the question itself: ‘What must I *do* to inherit eternal life?’ Those who live rightly ordered lives now—living out of their love for God, others, and self—show that they have been touched by the kingdom of God. They will have the capacity to receive the promised inheritance: life in fellowship with God and others in the age to come.”³¹ Culpepper’s viewpoint, though, is more representative of an intended life to be experienced by those who keep God’s commandments resulting from a supernatural experience with Him, not by those who can somehow earn eternal life by their human works.

The presence of the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37) should make us think that keeping Torah commandments themselves cannot earn a person eternal life. Yeshua’s teaching is concerned with how those who have been oriented toward loving God and loving neighbor, will bear no malice, disdain, or negativity toward all other people. The lawyer/Torah teacher had a correct theology in recognizing that love for God and neighbor was required to inherit eternal life. Correct theology, however, must be joined with a correct orthopraxy or the right actions. Living properly in honoring one’s neighbor is to be a reflection of future eternal life and communion with God, as manifested in day-to-day activities. When Yeshua quoted Leviticus 18:5, “DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE” (Luke 10:28), it should point readers forward in the direction of the lifestyle and attitudes required of His followers, best seen by what is delivered in the parable of the Good

³⁰ Craig A. Evans, *New International Biblical Commentary: Luke* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1990), pp 175-176.

In *Ibid.*, 178 Evans takes the presence of Leviticus 18:5 to mean, “The one who obeys God’s law will have eternal life. For the Christian this is realized through Christ who fulfilled the law.”

³¹ R. Alan Culpepper, “The Gospel of Luke,” in Leander E. Keck, ed., et. al., *New Interpreter’s Bible*, Vol. 9 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 228.

Samaritan. This would also concur with how Leviticus 18:5 was originally given in the Torah to provide proper guidelines for life for those within the community of Israel:

“Yeshua replied and said, ‘A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead. And by chance a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on *them*; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, “Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you.” Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers’ *hands*?’ And he said, ‘The one who showed mercy toward him.’ Then Yeshua said to him, ‘Go and do the same’” (Luke 10:30-37, NASU).

The Samaritans were greatly despised and rejected by most of the First Century Jewish community. In Yeshua’s view, though, in order to demonstrate oneself worthy of eternal life, a Torah obedience that frequently conflicts with the established norms of one’s religious leaders and prevailing culture must be practiced. The lawyer, being told by Yeshua that his neighbors included Samaritans, could have been shown to not only be unworthy of eternal life—but concurrent with the original context of Leviticus 18:5, be unworthy of even the material blessings and prosperity offered by Moses.

When Yeshua says in Luke 10:28, “DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE,” it is then substantiated in the example that follows via how the Samaritan showed mercy. Many have taken “Do this...” as looking backward to the answer the lawyer gives (Luke 10:25-27). This would then imply that keeping the Torah’s commandments will result in one inheriting eternal life—as impossible as it may be—requiring all to look to Yeshua. It is better for us to conclude that Luke 10:28, “DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE,” *touto poiei kai zēsē* (τοῦτο ποίει καὶ ζήσῃ), looks forward to the message of the parable Yeshua delivers to the rather nervous Torah teacher. What Luke 10:36-37 says is what Yeshua really expects in terms of how His followers are to live:

“Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers’ *hands*?’ And he said, ‘The one who showed mercy toward him.’ Then Yeshua said to him, ‘Go and do the same [*poreuou kais su poiei homoiōs, πορεύου καὶ σὺ ποίει ὁμοίως*]’” (NASU).

Grammatically speaking, the source text of both Luke 10:28 and 37 uses the same word, the present active imperative *poiei*. The verb *poieō* (ποιέω) here would mean something along the lines of, “**to carry out an obligation of a moral or social nature, do, keep, carry out, practice, commit**” (BDAG).³² Seeing the imperative mood *poiei* is important, as “The imperative mood is the mood of *intention*” and “The imperative is most commonly used for commands” of some kind (*Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*).³³ As such, Yeshua’s statement about “Do this...” regards loving neighbor as oneself—whoever that neighbor may be—as Earthly life is regulated by God’s commandments. Luke 10:28, 37 instruct readers, “**DO** [*poiei*] THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE...Go and **do** [*poiei*] the same {in showing mercy}.”

God’s commandments on their own cannot provide a person with eternal life, but keeping God’s commandments do surely keep people within the sphere of God’s Kingdom. God’s commandments represent behavior appropriate to those who have eternal life, in their activities on Planet Earth.

Galatians 3:12

“However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, ‘HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE BY THEM’” (NASU).

All readers of Paul’s letter to the Galatians can discern how Galatians ch. 3 is absolutely “loaded,” as it were, as the Apostle wants his Galatian audience to be brought into a proper understanding regarding the place of the Torah. There is a probable contrast between what the Judaizers/Influencers have reported to the Galatians, and what Paul informs them here. The main point in the cotext of Galatians 3:11-13 is that the Torah has not been given to justify people, as faith in God is what has always justified people, now involving belief in His Messiah. Yeshua the Messiah has come to redeem all people from the curse and condemnation of the Torah pronounced upon all Law-breakers:

“Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, ‘THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH’ [Habakkuk 2:4]. **However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, ‘HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE BY THEM’** [Leviticus 18:5]. Messiah redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, ‘CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE’ [Deuteronomy 21:23]” (Galatians 3:11-13, NASU).

³² BDAG, 840.

³³ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 485.

All readers of Galatians 3:12 can acknowledge how Paul says that the Torah is not of faith, and how he then quotes Leviticus 18:5 to state some kind of purpose that the Torah serves. Various commentators on the Epistle to the Galatians have taken this as a statement that eternal life can be gained by Torah observance—and that since this is a human impossibility—faith in the perfect Messiah, who was sacrificed for human sins, is required instead.³⁴

Many readers of Galatians 3:12a take Paul's remark, "the Law is not of faith," and use it as an excuse to avoid having to heed Moses' Teaching—even sometimes to just read and study the Pentateuch as a matter of Biblical history. Does this statement actually mean that the Torah is of no relevance for Believers today who have faith in Messiah Yeshua? This statement must be counterbalanced with what the author of Hebrews communicates, as he says "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1, NASU). Likewise, it must also be counterbalanced with the fact that Paul himself further asserts, "we know that the Law is spiritual" (Romans 7:14, NASU).

The Torah is not something that is inspired by mere mortals; its Author is God Himself. It is not to be dispensed with on a whim. *We are to listen to its instruction.* The Torah as something to be followed cannot generate "faith" or "trust,"³⁵ as this must come from a steadfast internal confidence that a person places between himself or herself, and the Creator God. The Torah might not be "of faith" (*ek pisteōs*, ἐκ πίστεως), but it is surely an important part of "the faith" and the canon of authority that God's people are to turn to.

The quotation of Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12b is intended to be a contrast between the Torah not being of faith, and its statutes to be followed. But, is this intended to be something that is adversative? The view of James Montgomery Boice is precisely this: "For faith excludes law, and law by its very nature excludes faith. [Paul] quotes the law itself (Lev. 18:5) to support this conclusion."³⁶ G. Walter Hansen is a bit more targeted in his commentary on Galatians 3:12, fairly noting how "The whole of the Pentateuch (law in the broad sense) is primarily concerned with faith in God," but he then goes on to describe, "In Galatians 3:12 *law* must be taken in the narrow sense...In the Galatian dispute *the law* refers to a set of requirements...imposed on Gentile believers."³⁷

Messianics have significantly struggled with Galatians 3:12, but not so much with the assertion that "the Law is not of faith" (Galatians 3:12a, NASU). It can be pretty easily deduced that the Torah's instruction has been given not to provide faith, but rather provide a means of holiness and proper living. Messianics have specifically struggled over the quotation of Leviticus 18:5 in Galatians 3:12b, so much so that the Complete Jewish Bible rendering of Galatians 3:12 implies an errant view of Leviticus 18:5 being present in the Jewish world of the First Century: "Furthermore, legalism is not based on trusting and being faithful, **but on [a misuse of] the text that says, 'Anyone who does these things will attain life through them.'**" While it should definitely be disputed why *nomos* (νόμος) is rendered in the CJB here as "legalism" and not "Torah" as it is elsewhere, it should even more be questioned why David H. Stern chose to add "a misuse of" in brackets []. He believes that the problem present in Galatians is legalism,³⁸ which may be true to some extent—but does Stern stand on strong exegetical ground to paraphrase Galatians 3:12 the way that he has with "a misuse of"? Probably not.

Much of our perspective of Galatians 3:12 is going to come down to how we choose to view the clause, *all' ho poiēsas auta zēsetai en autois* (ἀλλ' ὁ ποιήσας αὐτὰ ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς). The dative (case indicating indirect object) clause *en autois* (ἐν αὐτοῖς) or "by/in them," with the preposition *en* (ἐν), is either locational: "**marker of a position defined as being in a location, in, among**" (BDAG).³⁹ Or, *en* could be instrumental: "**marker introducing means or instrument, with**" (BDAG).⁴⁰ Those who keep the Torah live within the sphere of, or by, its instruction.

Leviticus 18:5, as already noted, is a section of the Torah where appropriate sexual conduct is commanded of the Ancient Israelites as they prepare to enter into the Promised Land. **These were surely things that the non-Jewish Believers**

³⁴ Cf. John R.W. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1978), pp 77-78, 80; F.F. Bruce, *New International Greek Testament Commentary: Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), pp 162-163; Richard N. Longenecker, *Word Biblical Commentary: Galatians*, Vol. 41 (Nashville: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 1990), pp 120-121.

³⁵ "Torah is not based on trust and faithfulness" (Galatians 3:12a, TLV).

³⁶ James Montgomery Boice, "Galatians," in Frank E. Gaebelin, ed. et. al, *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 11:459; cf. Longenecker, 120; Scot McKnight, *NIV Application Commentary: Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 155.

³⁷ G. Walter Hansen, *IVP New Testament Commentary Series: Galatians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994), pp 94, 95.

Hansen thinks these are "specifically circumcision, food laws and Sabbath laws." This conclusion is likely based on his view of the Antioch dispute (Galatians 2:12), and the issue of the "days and months and seasons and years" (Galatians 4:10, NASU).

For a detailed discussion about these aspects of Paul's letter, consult the editor's article "The Message of Galatians," and his commentary *Galatians for the Practical Messianic*.

³⁸ David H. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary* (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1995), pp 546-547.

³⁹ BDAG, 326.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 328.

in Galatia similarly had to follow, as would be confirmed in the later Apostolic decree (Acts 15:19-21), being non-negotiable for inclusion within the *ekklēsia*. It would seem best for us to view the clause *all' ho poiēsas auta zēsetai en autois*, with the conjunctive *all' ho...* as marking “a transition to someth. new...[or] other matter for additional consideration” (BDAG),⁴¹ being better translated with “yet, ‘HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE IN THEM.’” So, while Paul may recognize that the Torah is incapable of generating faith, if the presence of Leviticus 18:5 is not viewed as adversative—he by all means upholds the relevance of the Torah as a means of proper human conduct, most especially its sexual code. No word in Galatians, or anywhere in the Pauline corpus, can be seen speaking against the sexual ethics of the Torah!

When the conjunction *alla* (ἀλλά) is taken not as adversative, but rather as “forming a transition to someth. new,” such as another “matter for additional consideration” (BDAG),⁴² then the rendering “And, the Torah is not of faith; yet, ‘HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE IN THEM’” (Galatians 3:12b, editor’s translation) can be better understood. God’s Torah not providing faith, and practicing the commandments of God’s Torah, are not at total odds with one another. The purpose of God’s Torah is not to provide faith, but its purpose is to provide a sanctified way of living on Planet Earth.

James D.G. Dunn fairly observes on Galatians 3:12, concurrent with this, how “The law...was the means of regulating life within the covenant, not the basis of the covenant itself...It needs to be stressed that this is essentially a *positive* view of the role of the law.” He further states, “the thought of the unfulfillability of the law [is not] anywhere in sight here...[I]t is highly pertinent to note that in context Lev. xviii.2-5 emphasizes the distinctiveness of Israel’s way of life from that of the surrounding nations.”⁴³ Galatians 3:12 should be read as communicating that while the Torah is not of faith, it is *yet* intended to bring the right way of living to those who keep its commandments.

The proper role of the Torah as a matter of spiritual sanctification can actually be seen within Paul’s writing to the Galatians. Paul asks them, “This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?” (Galatians 3:2, NASU), and “So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?” (Galatians 3:5, NASU). In both verses, the Influencers’ human-derived “works of law”⁴⁴ are contrasted with *akoēs pisteōs* (ἀκοῆς πίστεως), a genitive (case indicating possession) clause better rendered as “the hearing of faith” (KJV/NKJV). This “hearing of faith” should immediately connect us to the *Shema*’s imperative to hear and obey the Lord (Deuteronomy 6:4-7), something which begins with love for Him and a discipleship within His covenant community.

Among Messianic interpreters, Tim Hegg has some useful thoughts on Galatians 3:12 for us to all consider:

“Apart from faith, the Torah functions only to condemn—it can never bring life (covenant membership). In fact, genuine obedience to Torah (obedience which includes right motives as well as right actions) flows from faith. Thus, the Influencers had the sequence backward: Torah does not produce faith, rather, faith produces obedience to Torah....Paul’s emphasis, therefore, in quoting Leviticus 18:5 is to show that obedience flows out of covenant membership, and not *vice versa*. One does not obey in order to gain covenant membership, but rather, one’s obedience is proof of covenant membership already possessed.”⁴⁵

The need to read Leviticus 18:5, appearing within Galatians 3:11-13, from its original context of blessing for those who live within the community of God—which one enters via faith in Him and now His Messiah—is imperative. The Torah is not intended to justify, nor is it intended to provide faith (Galatians 3:11; Habakkuk 2:4). Yeshua the Messiah was sacrificed to provide atonement for human beings’ Torah violation (Galatians 3:13; Deuteronomy 21:23). The Torah is, however, intended to provide a means of sanctification and holy living (Galatians 3:12; Leviticus 18:5).

Romans 10:5

“For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness” (NASU).

⁴¹ Ibid., 45.

This same entry also states, concerning the conjunction *alla*, that “when whole clauses are compared, *ἄλλα*, can indicate a transition to someth. different or contrasted: **the other side of a matter or issue, but, yet**” (Ibid.).

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ James D.G. Dunn, *Black’s New Testament Commentary: The Epistle to the Galatians* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), pp 175, 17; Against: Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 235.

⁴⁴ Consult the editor’s article “What Are ‘Works of the Law’?” for a discussion on “works of law” or *ergōn nomou* (ἐργῶν νόμου), and its likely connection to 4QMMT in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

⁴⁵ Tim Hegg, *A Study of Galatians* (Tacoma, WA: TorahResource, 2002), 107.

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 poiēsās auta anthrōpos zēsētai en autois.***⁴⁶

Some kind of observation is being made in Romans 10:5, about a righteousness originating from the Torah or the Law (ἐκ [τοῦ] νόμου, *ek [tou] nomou*). Within Romans 10:5, the concluding clause *zēsētai 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 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)” (NASU).

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.”⁴⁷ 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 God are put in opposition to the pagan ways of the nations, ways which are labeled ‘abominations.’”⁴⁸

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” (Romans 10:2, 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” (Romans 10:3, 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*” (Romans 10:5, 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.⁴⁹ 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.”⁵⁰

A righteousness rooted within the Torah, pursued not by faith but by human works (Romans 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 Law⁵¹, [I was] found blameless” (NASU). He would conclude, though, that “whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake

⁴⁶ Kurt Aland, et. al., *The Greek New Testament, Fourth Revised Edition* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/United Bible Societies, 1998), 546; cf. Erwin Nestle and Kurt Aland, eds., *Novum Testamentum Graece, Nestle-Aland 27th Edition* (New York: American Bible Society, 1993), 427.

⁴⁷ Tim Hegg, *Paul’s Epistle to the Romans: Chapters 9-16* (Tacoma, WA: TorahResource, 2007), 231.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ For a further analysis of *telos*, consult the FAQ, “Romans 10:4.”

⁵⁰ Hegg, *Romans, Chapters 9-16*, 322.

⁵¹ Grk. *en nomō* (ἐν νόμῳ); incorrectly rendered as “under the law” in RSV/NRSV/ESV.

Consult the editor’s article “What Does ‘Under the Law’ Really Mean?—A Further Study” for some exegetical analysis of this.

of Messiah” (Philippians 3:7, NASU), 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” (Romans 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, which is definitively required for salvation (Romans 10:6-13). 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 explains 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 “riches for all who call on Him” (Romans 10:12, NASU). The Torah’s instruction is surely not nullified or abolished in the Messiah (Romans 3:31), but its condemnation upon sinners is lifted (Romans 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 (Romans 8:4).

To review, the purpose of **Leviticus 18:5** is to define how people are to live blessed and happy lives by conducting themselves in obedience to God’s Torah. The specific instructions in view in Leviticus ch. 18 are being aware of various sexual regulations that would surely set Ancient Israel apart from the Ancient Egyptians and Ancient Canaanites. These are instructions, most notably, that no part of the Holy Scriptures can ever be said to be found speaking against. The Leviticus 18 instructions, unlike something such as the rite of circumcision, were never something abused or which took on a hyper-nationalistic significance for the First Century Jewish community.⁵² These are instructions from Moses’ Teaching that were non-negotiable to be followed, as laid forth by the Apostolic decree (Acts 15:19-21).⁵³

The New Covenant, of course, promises the redeemed in Yeshua a supernatural transcription of God’s commandments onto the hearts and minds of all the redeemed (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27)—and with it the supernatural compulsion to obey Moses’ Teaching.⁵⁴ For those found in the Messiah, while keeping the Torah’s commandments will not merit or earn eternal life, keeping commandments will surely bring great blessings as people live holy lives and accomplish the Lord’s tasks, diligently serving Him as He says, “you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:6, NASU; cf. 1 Peter 2:5, 9). Obeying or not obeying the Lord, will of course, result in His people being granted *or* withheld various rewards when His Kingdom comes (cf. Matthew 5:16-19).

⁵² Consult the editor’s article “Is Circumcision for Everyone?”, appearing in *Torah in the Balance, Volume II*.

⁵³ Consult the editor’s commentary *Acts 15 for the Practical Messianic*.

⁵⁴ Consult the editor’s article “What is the New Covenant?”, appearing in *The New Testament Validates Torah*.