

OIM UPDATE

February 2011

Within the past month, and I think a bit coincidentally, the word “transition” was declared as the theme for the year 2011 at a Messianic Jewish congregation I attended in Dallas. When I heard the word *transition*, it resonated in my spirit, as it appropriately defines *exactly* what our family is involved with in our 2011 move and ministry relocation to Texas. This is definitely a year of transition for us, as many critical changes and exciting things are in store! *Other things that only the Father can orchestrate will occur.* We appreciate your continued prayers for the sale of our house in Florida, and as the logistics of moving finally come together.

One of the blessings I have found of us having a largely Internet-based educational ministry, is that as long as I have access to the Internet, I can accomplish my ministry duties and tasks. Our teachings can still reach those across the globe, who are being drawn to the Hebraic Roots of our faith, and are looking for a sound, steady voice for weekly instruction. They need to know about the blessings of studying the Torah and participating in the feasts of the Lord! They also need to be aware of the many ups-and-downs of our still-emerging *and* maturing Messianic faith community, and have a place they can turn to for answers to the critical questions being asked—especially if they are criticized for their unique convictions of faith.

Over the past several months I have been compiling a series of articles about how to be more conformed to the image of the Messiah, *living life according to the rules.* This month I have written “**Salt, Light, and Torah Obedience,**” as I continue to explore the themes seen in Yeshua’s teaching of the Sermon on the Mount. The responsibility of not only demonstrating good works, but also adhering to the Torah or Law of Moses, is something that goes together. It is my own prayer that you will be encouraged to not only be the salt and light that Messiah followers are bidden to be, but that you will understand the critical need to be regularly instructed by Moses’ Teaching, in order to live forth the mission of the Messiah Yeshua in your own individual, familial, and corporate walks of faith.

Finally, in these tumultuous times with many things going on—especially with all of the unrest in the Middle East—it is a blessing to know that we can lean upon the Rock of our Salvation, as we steadily become more and more like Him in all we do. May the Lord continue to bless you and guide you, as you cling to Him with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength!

Advancing His Kingdom, until the restoration of all things...

William Mark Huey

SALT, LIGHT, and Torah Obedience

by Mark Huey

The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chs. 5-7) is generally recognized as the main summary of instruction that Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) expects all of His followers to adhere to. Each of us, who has placed his or her faith and trust in His completed work upon the tree, is being conformed to His image (Romans 8:29). By the work of the Holy Spirit upon our hearts and minds we are to be found incorporating the attributes, attitudes, and character traits as demonstrated by the Messiah in His ministry within our own selves. This includes adherence to the various prescriptions witnessed in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:2-12) like being poor in spirit, hungering for righteousness, or actively serving as a peacemaker. Yeshua continues in His teaching, by detailing how His followers are both the salt of the Earth and the light of the world:

“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty *again*? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does *anyone* light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:13-16).

While many personalize the Beatitudes as though the Messiah were speaking directly to them as individuals, Matthew 5:13-16 focuses more on the corporate aspect of how God’s people should conduct themselves, which surely *begins* with the character of the individual. Messiah followers are compared to being **salt and light**, descriptions which are to convey a profound sense of the mission they are to achieve as the representatives of the Heavenly Father in a fallen and decrepit world.

Throughout much of ancient history, and much of today, salt has always been employed as a valuable and useful commodity. Salt has been used as a preservative for various meats and fish, as a spice or additive to flavor food, or salt has been used as a cleansing agent.

When Yeshua’s original First Century audience heard that they must be the “salt of the earth,” they would have understood many more aspects of the importance of salt than we do today. When we think of salt, we primarily think of how it is used in cooking or providing a measure of taste to the meals we eat. We might also think of salt preserving certain foodstuffs, but again given the availability of modern refrigeration, this would be more for the benefit of taste. Because of the availability of modern cleaners, we do not readily think of using salt to sanitize our kitchens or bathrooms. Yet, in recent years, as people have turned to more ancient approaches to human health, we do realize the significant positive effect that salt can have in being used to rejuvenate the skin, as well as in

helping us have a balanced body chemistry.

When Yeshua says that we are to be “the salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13), what might this involve? That we are to help others be preserved in the Lord, that we are to see others enhanced, or that we are to see people cleansed from spiritual impurities? Could it also be that the question, “if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned?” (Luke 13:34) probes the loyalty and allegiance that we are to have to the Messiah, and that if salt uses its salinity—so might those who lose their ability to make a difference in the lives of others be similarly “cast out, and to be trodden under foot” (Matthew 5:13, KJV)? **How do we, as God’s people, not lose our usefulness?** None of us desires to be cast out as mere gravel on the ground, having the world walk all over us because we have failed to live up to Yeshua’s instruction.

The second description that Yeshua employs is that His followers are to be “the light of the world.” This is something which is far easier for Bible readers to relate to, for the precise reason that Yeshua Himself declares that He is the Light of the World (i.e., John 8:12; 9:5). Surely, those who are to be found *in Him* are also to be light, as there are definite responsibilities and actions that Believers are to demonstrate to the world at large, which are reflective of their salvation in the Messiah of Israel. The whole purpose of light is to illuminate surroundings, be such surroundings on a hill or in a house. Yet, how many of today’s Bible readers are unaware that the call to be a light to the world, is a theme witnessed in the Tanach or Old Testament? Israel and the Servant Messiah *are both* to spread the light of the Creator’s goodness and salvation to the whole Earth:

“I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness, I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you, and I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, as a **light to the nations** [*l’or goyim*, לְאוֹר גּוֹיִם], to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the dungeon and those who dwell in darkness from the prison” (Isaiah 42:6-7).²

“He says, ‘It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a **light of the nations** [*l’or goyim*] so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth’” (Isaiah 49:6).

When Yeshua’s audience would have heard His call for them to be “the light of the world,” they would have understood that He was referring to Israel’s unique role as God’s elect nation to bring the revelation of Himself to the rest of humanity—and with it His blessing, grace, mercy, *and* deliverance for all those who desired it. *God’s choice of Israel was one of profound mission and purpose.* Even today, if many from the nations who have been grafted into Israel are found to be fulfilling this mission more than how the Jewish people might be accomplishing it, a great deal of respect and honor toward the Jewish people still needs to be exhibited (cf. Romans 11:17-19, 25-29). What is a bit more controversial to be considered, though, is *how* Believers in the Messiah of Israel are to be the light of the world. Yeshua clearly instructs,

¹ Cf. L.G. Herr, “Salt,” in Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 4:286-287.

² Cf. Luke 2:32; Acts 13:47; 26:23.

“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works³, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

Throughout the Apostolic Scriptures or New Testament, we witness many admonitions which require born again Believers to have good works (Ephesians 2:10; 1 Timothy 2:10; 5:25; 6:18; Titus 2:7, 14; 3:8, 14; Hebrews 10:24; James 3:13; 1 Peter 2:12). But what are these good works? Most certainly, they involve acts of kindness and mercy that can help a world which is hurting and in need. James the Just, the half-brother of Yeshua, says, “Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of *our* God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, *and* to keep oneself unstained by the world” (James 1:27). There are many people throughout Christian history, who have taken Yeshua’s word most seriously about demonstrating good works to the world⁴—and have made a concentrated difference in their generations. They have been able to understand the foundational requirement of loving God and neighbor,⁵ and have left us a positive legacy for which we should all be thankful.

While it is easy to think of the good works that the Lord expects of us in terms of those Spirit-generated responses to various human needs—a responsible Bible reader cannot avoid what the demonstration of good works is *directly related to*. Within His Sermon on the Mount, Yeshua the Messiah answers the potential charge that His teaching—which will discuss various areas of ethics and conduct for a First Century Galilean Jewish audience—is intended to negate or abolish the authority of Moses’ Teaching. One of the most important passages for today’s broad Messianic movement, to be certain, is Matthew 5:17-19:

“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others *to do* the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:17-19).

It is frequently believed in much of evangelical Christianity today, that the work of Jesus on the cross has nullified the Torah or Law of Moses—when the Messiah Himself says no such thing. He is clear that the purpose regarding the Torah is one of fulfillment, the verb *plēroō* (πληρόω) in this passage correctly relating to “*to perfect, consummate,*” or “*to make complete in every particular; to render perfect*” (Thayer).⁶ Not only did the Messiah come to deepen the significance of the Torah and the Prophets for His followers in His ministry, teachings, and

³ Grk. *idōsin humōn ta kala erga* (ἰδῶσιν ὑμῶν τὰ καλὰ ἔργα); “that they may see your good deeds” (NIV).

⁴ Of course, it is equally true that there have been many Jewish people throughout history who, while not necessarily recognizing Yeshua, have nonetheless made an important difference in the world.

⁵ Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18; cf. Matthew 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8.

⁶ Thayer, 518.

sacrificial work (cf. Luke 24:44), but if anybody thinks that His mission was to abolish or “destroy” (KJV) or overthrow⁷ the validity of the Torah—then the penalty of “least” is to be assigned to such a person in the Kingdom of Heaven.⁸

What happens when the good works that Yeshua expects of the redeemed are removed from a Torah foundation? What happens to the effectiveness of the people of God, when they fail to read the instruction manual (Bible)—but most especially the opening sections of the instruction manual (Torah)?

In all fairness, while Matthew 5:17-19 has kept many people within the Body of Messiah divided for thousands of years, not all of Christianity has opposed the validity of the Torah of Moses. At the very least since the Protestant Reformation, there have been many God-fearing and sincerely born again Believers who have concluded that “the law” which is spoken of here—which is eternal and irrevocable—is the “moral law” of God, principally contained in statutes like the Ten Commandments. While the Torah itself knows no such distinctions between a so-called “moral” or “ceremonial” law, it has to be acknowledged that a considerable bulk of the Torah’s instruction does relate to human morality, and Christians following what they consider to be the “moral law” is **better than following no Law at all!**⁹

Those, who afford high value to the Torah and the Prophets, will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven. This is because they allowed God’s commandments to inform them of His character, and consequently of the good works He expects *the redeemed in Him* to accomplish. This should be something rather easy for those who have experienced salvation in Yeshua to understand—especially since the promise of the New Covenant is that the commandments of God are to be supernaturally inscribed onto redeemed hearts of flesh (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27; cf. Hebrews 8:8-12; 10:16-17). With Yeshua’s categorical statements regarding either a high or low status in the Kingdom, I find it remarkable why not more of today’s Christians have considered the value of the Torah in their study of the Bible and faith practice. *Surely they do not want to be “least”!*

On a much more tangible level, though, a widescale dismissal of the Torah in much of contemporary teaching and preaching has led to some significant crises in the modern Christian Church. Walter C. Kaiser, a conservative Old Testament theologian and one who at least believes that the “moral law” of the Torah is still to be followed, responds to a fellow teacher in *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, but who believes that the Torah has been fully abolished:

“Ultimately, [this teacher] is bound only by what is clearly repeated in New Testament teaching. What advice will he give on marriage to close relatives (cf. Lev. 18), involvement with forms of witchcraft and various forms of the occult (cf. Lev. 19), the case for capital punishment (cf. Gen. 9), or the proscription against abortion (cf. Ex. 21)? Did Americans not learn in 1973 that a New Testament exclusivistic ethic landed us squarely in one of the largest legalized murder-

⁷ Grk. *kataluō* (καταλύω); “to end, bring to an end” (H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994], 410).

⁸ For a more technical evaluation of Matthew 5:17-19, consult the exegesis paper “Has the Law Been Fulfilled?” by J.K. McKee.

⁹ For a further review, consult the FAQ on the TNN website “Torah, moral and ceremonial law.”

ing ventures in recent times—now exceeding Hitler's six million Jews sent up a chimney by four times over with some twenty-four million babies going in a bucket? What will it take to wake us up to the narrowness of our views?"¹⁰

Indeed, abortion is just one of the most significant issues that causes many of today's evangelical Christians to turn to the Old Testament and recapture a Torah ethic. The homosexual agenda, and the debate over whether or not this lifestyle is acceptable in the eyes of God, also drives many to turn to the Torah. And with the propagation of both of these things, many people are unfortunately being driven *away from God's Law* and toward lives where there are no boundaries. We need only look at all of the sexual scandals in today's Church, a direct result of what happens when we deride the Bible's instruction and fail to discuss critical issues.

Clearly, there is something dreadfully amiss when people interpret Matthew 5:17-19 from the errant perspective that Yeshua came to "fulfill and thus abolish" the Law. Is it not true that the five books of the Torah or Pentateuch contain the foundation for the remainder of the Holy Writ? Is this instruction not "spiritual" (cf. Romans 7:12)? Are the books of the Tanach or Old Testament not designed to show people the need for a Divine Savior, who can provide a permanent solution to the guilt and condemnation incurred by sin (Galatians 3:24; 2 Timothy 3:15-17)?

The Torah articulates what our Heavenly Father considers acceptable and unacceptable, and it is upon the Biblical Books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy that all of Scripture rests (cf. Luke 16:17). Yet, when many of today's Christians arrive at the Apostolic Scriptures or New Testament—and they witness many references made to *the Law*, be they in the words of Jesus, Peter, James, John, or Paul—there can be considerable confusion because too many have never really read *the Law* (much less be informed about some of the complexities of Second Temple Judaism and the wider Mediterranean). There is some considerable confusion in much of modern Christianity, because people do not read or study the Torah on a consistent basis, like they might read or study the Gospels or the Pauline letters. *This is a problem that needs to be fixed!*

The writings of the Apostles are replete with references to the Torah, specifically in terms of how previous events that have occurred in the lives of God's people are to either edify *or* warn Messiah followers in their conduct. One of the most complicated of all of the Pauline letters is undoubtedly 1 Corinthians, written to a highly factionalized audience that was probably unwilling to hear much of what the Torah had to say given the errant slogan "Everything is permissible for me..." (1 Corinthians 6:12, NIV).¹¹ Yet, Paul was able to appeal to the wilderness experiences of Ancient Israel, and in particular the scene of the golden calf and Balaam's temptation (Numbers 25), to get the Corinthians in sin to reconsider

¹⁰ Walter C. Kaiser, "Response to Douglas Moo," in Wayne G. Strickland, ed., *Five Views on Law and Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 400.

¹¹ While frequently rendered as "All things are lawful for me" (NASU), the clause *panta moi exestin* (πάντα μοι ἔξεστιν) does not include a term like *nomimōs* (νομίμως) or "lawfully" (1 Timothy 1:8), but instead *exesti* (ἔξεστιν), appropriately meaning, "it is allowed, it is in one's power, is possible" (LS, 273).

their behavior.¹² These were, after all, two of the most devastating scenes in the entire Torah:

“For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Messiah. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness. Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, ‘THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO PLAY’ [Exodus 32:6]. Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. **Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.** Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall” (1 Corinthians 10:1-12).

A key part of considering Moses’ Teaching on a regular basis is to remember that “things happened to them as a warning, but they were written down for our instruction” (1 Corinthians 10:11, RSV). Avoiding the mistakes of the Ancient Israelites who fell in the wilderness, is certainly something that today’s sexually immoral generation could hear (among other things)! But of course, the Torah’s instruction is intended to also be quite encouraging and uplifting to people of faith, as we read about and encounter some of the most important salvation acts of the Creator God, like the miraculous Exodus from Egypt. Paul says in Romans 15:4, after all, “For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” Even though there are many aspects to the Torah’s instruction concerning penalties for disobedience to its commandments, there are also many admonitions regarding the blessings that come from a Gracious God who truly wants to see His people succeed!

“Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, *and* to keep the LORD’s commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good?” (Deuteronomy 10:12-13; cf. Leviticus 26:6-13).

What is one of the **most important** aspects of the Torah that Yeshua wants His followers to cling to? The original call upon Ancient Israel was to be a Kingdom of priests and a holy nation—God’s servants in a world that desperately would need to hear of Him and know Him. This missional requirement was first given to Moses when the Israelites were encamped at Mount Sinai:

“In the third month after the sons of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that very day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. When they set out from Rephidim, they came to the wilderness of Sinai and camped in the wilderness; and there Israel camped in front of the mountain. Moses went up to God, and

¹² For a further review, consult the article “The Message of 1 Corinthians” by J.K. McKee.

the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, 'Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel: "You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and *how* I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. **Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.**" These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel'" (Exodus 19:1-6).

The same calling to be a holy Kingdom of priests upon God's people has not changed with the Messiah's arrival:

"[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" (Titus 2:14).

"But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR *God's* OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).¹³

In order for us today to truly accomplish the call of being a holy Kingdom of priests, we must be "zealous for good works" (Titus 2:14, ESV). **We must obey God's Torah.** If we do not seek obedience and compliance to the Torah, then the important intermediary work of interceding for the lost and demonstrating the character of God to the world at large will be (severely) restrained and hampered. Lamentably, because of the general disregard for the Torah and Tanach present in much of today's Christianity—the contemporary Body of Messiah has been losing much of its saltiness and illumination. **But**, many people are beginning to take note of this, as evangelical interest in the Old Testament—and the Hebraic Roots of the faith—is increasing in steady numbers. In our time, a generation of Messianic Believers of Jewish people who have found Messiah Yeshua *and* Christians who have embraced their Hebraic Roots and a lifestyle of Torah obedience, is being raised up. **This is quite prophetic, as it signals that the final chapter before the Messiah's return is preparing to be written.**

Do you wish to be salt and light to the world? To be likened to salt means that God's people are to see that others are not only preserved in Him and edified in Him (Colossians 4:6), *but also* cleansed and sanitized by Him. To be likened unto light means living forth that steadfast imperative "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105), and such a Word of God **includes much more** than just the New Testament and/or Psalms and Proverbs! When we can all learn how to hear *and* obey the Heavenly Father (Deuteronomy 6:4-9), taking the time to study the precepts, statutes, and commands of Moses' Teaching that Yeshua faithfully obeyed—then we can be fully empowered to achieve His objectives for the Earth. Ancient Israel was told that when they would follow God's Torah, then the nations would see them blessed and inquire as to the wisdom they possessed:

"See, I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do thus in the land where you are entering to

¹³ Cf. Isaiah 43:20; Deuteronomy 7:6; 10:15; Exodus 19:6; Isaiah 61:6; Exodus 19:6; Isaiah 43:21; Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 4:20; 7:6; 14:2; Isaiah 43:21.

Kurt Aland, et. al., *The Greek New Testament, Fourth Revised Edition* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/United Bible Societies, 1998), pp 788-789.

possess it. So keep and do *them*, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the LORD our God whenever we call on Him? Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today? Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons” (Deuteronomy 4:5-9).

Let our obedience to the Lord similarly manifest in people asking us not only *why* we live blessed lives—but *why* we also possess the great peace that only salvation in Yeshua can provide. Torah obedience is not to be something construed as legalistic and rigid rule-keeping; it composes what it means to live in holiness to our Heavenly Father and being set-apart from the world. Salvation is surely provided by God’s grace in the Messiah (Ephesians 2:8-9), but we are each created to accomplish good works (Ephesians 2:10). *May we each be salt and light by such Spirit-generated works!*



Am Echad Israel Tour Shavuot-Pentecost

May/June 2012

Join Outreach Israel Ministries Directors Mark and Margaret Huey, and TNN Online editor John McKee, for our Am Echad Israel Tour 2012 (May 22-June 4, 2012) featuring an Am

Echad Shavuot in Jerusalem, as well as a traditional tour of the Land of Israel. Our tour guide will be native Israeli Rami Danielli (a Messianic Jewish Believer who lives in the Galilee area), who has years of guide experience coupled with a deep love for the Messiah Yeshua.

Provisionally, the celebration of Shavuot/Pentecost 2012 occurs on Sunday, May 27 (Sivan 6), which just happens to be the day that every major Jewish, Messianic, and Christian group commemorates this annual feast of the Lord. Our intention is to join with others on this day in Jerusalem and pray that the unity the Father and Son desire for their children (John 17:9-26) comes together. (Sign up for the Facebook group labeled “Shavuot-Pentecost Am Echad Israel Tour 2012” for announcements and pertinent details as they materialize over the next year and a half.)

Based on current projections, the estimated cost is approximately \$3300 per person for twelve hotel nights (which includes breakfast and dinner but not lunches, tips, etc.) **More information available at www.outreachisrael.net**