

MESSIANIC

TORAH HELPER

edited by Margaret McKee Huey
with J.K. McKee

MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS
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Messianic Torah Helper

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Abbreviations and Special Terms

The following is a list of abbreviations for reference works and special terms which are used in publications by Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics. Please familiarize yourself with them as the text may reference a Bible version, i.e., RSV for the Revised Standard Version, or a source such as *TWOT* for the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, solely by its abbreviation. Detailed listings of these sources are provided in the Bibliography.

ABD: *Anchor Bible Dictionary*

AMG: *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament*

ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)

Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament

Ara: Aramaic

ASV: American Standard Version (1901)

ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)

b. Babylonian Talmud (*Talmud Bavli*)

B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.

BDAG: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)

BDB: *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*

C.E.: Common Era or A.D.

CGEDNT: *Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Barclay M. Newman)

CGL: *Cambridge Greek Lexicon* (2021)

CHALOT: *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Holladay)

CJB: Complete Jewish Bible (1998)

CJSB: Complete Jewish Study Bible (2016)

DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition

DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls

EDB: *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*

EJ: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*

ESV: English Standard Version (2001)

Ger: German

GNT: Greek New Testament

Grk: Greek

HALOT: *Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Koehler and Baumgartner)

HCSB: Holman Christian Standard Bible (2004)

Heb: Hebrew

HNV: Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible

IDB: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*

IDBSup: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement*

ISBE: *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*

IVPBBC: *IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old & New Testament)*

Jastrow: *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature* (Marcus Jastrow)

JBK: New Jerusalem Bible-Koren (2000)

JETS: *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*

KJV: King James Version

Lattimore: *The New Testament by Richmond Lattimore* (1996)

LITV: *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* by Jay P. Green (1986)

LES: *Lexham English Septuagint* (2019)

LS: *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott)

LSJM: *Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott-Jones-McKenzie)

LXE: *Septuagint with Apocrypha* by Sir
L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
LXX: Septuagint
m. Mishnah
MT: Masoretic Text
NASB: New American Standard Bible
(1977)
NASU: New American Standard Update
(1995)
NBCR: *New Bible Commentary: Revised*
NEB: New English Bible (1970)
Nelson: *Nelson's Expository Dictionary
of Old Testament Words*
NETS: New English Translation of the
Septuagint (2007)
NIB: *New Interpreter's Bible*
NIDB: *New International Dictionary of
the Bible*
NIV: New International Version (1984)
NJB: New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic
(1985)
NJPS: Tanakh, A New Translation of the
Holy Scriptures (1999)
NKJV: New King James Version (1982)
NRSV: New Revised Standard Version
(1989)
NLT: New Living Translation (1996)
NT: New Testament

OT: Old Testament
REB: Revised English Bible (1989)
RSV: Revised Standard Version (1952)
t. Tosefta
Tanach (Tanakh): the Old Testament
Thayer: *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon
of the New Testament*
TDNT: *Theological Dictionary of the
New Testament*
TLV: Messianic Jewish Family Bible—
Tree of Life Version (2014)
TNIV: Today's New International Version
(2005)
TWOT: *Theological Wordbook of the Old
Testament*
UBSHNT: United Bible Societies' 1991
Hebrew New Testament revised
edition
v(s). verse(s)
Vine: *Vine's Complete Expository
Dictionary of Old and New
Testament Words*
Vul: Latin Vulgate
YLT: Young's Literal Translation
(1862/1898)
WMB: World Messianic Bible (2020)

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The Significance of the Messiah Event

Margaret McKee Huey and J.K. McKee

"He has been revealed once and for all at the close of the ages—to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Hebrews 9:26, TLV).

If you were to ask a great number of contemporary Messianic people—but most especially those within the (rather legalistic) One Torah/One Law sub-movement—what the most important event in human history has been, you are probably going to be told that it was **the giving of the Torah to Ancient Israel on Mount Sinai**. There is no doubting, to be sure, that the Exodus of the Ancient Israelites from Egypt, the giving of the Ten Commandments, and the codification of the Torah or Pentateuch, is absolutely imperative to understand and appreciate Biblical history and God's plan of redemption for humanity. Up until the First Century C.E., the Exodus and the giving of the Torah was, without question, the most important event in human history. Yet as Paul would say in Romans 3:21, "But now God's righteousness apart from the *Torah* has been revealed, to which the *Torah* and the Prophets bear witness" (TLV). Previously, God's righteous vindication had been principally seen in the event of the deliverance of His people via the Exodus—but later His righteousness would be seen in an event quite distinct from the recorded history of the Torah, **but something most imperatively testified to come by the witness and typologies of the Torah and Prophets**.

Given the significance of the Exodus of Ancient Israel and the giving of the Torah, for much of the Biblical narrative of both the Tanach *and* Apostolic Scriptures—is there at all an event in human history which can exceed its importance? Yes! Romans 3:22 further speaks of "the righteousness of God through putting trust in Messiah *Yeshua*, to all who keep on trusting" (TLV). If the

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genitive clause (case indicating possession) *pisteōs Iēsou Christou* is taken as a subjective genitive, then the verse reads as “the righteousness of God through the faithfulness of Yeshua the Messiah for all those who believe; for there is no distinction” (author’s rendering), as **the faithfulness of Yeshua the Messiah** should be taken to represent His obedience to the Father unto death, to provide permanent atonement for the sin of all human beings.¹

Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics have always held to the truth that the most important event in human history is **the death, burial, and resurrection of Yeshua the Messiah**. The significance of the Messiah event is imperative for each of us to contemplate, because without it we would have no permanent atonement and forgiveness available for our sins. The Messiah event is to be what decisively defines us as men and women who have acknowledged Yeshua (Jesus) as our Redeemer and King. This reality is to be what we recognize as the climax of salvation history, to perhaps be *only* surpassed by the future arrival of the Eternal State itself.²

It is sorry to have to say this, but the importance of the Messiah event has, over the years, been most difficult to focus the attention of many contemporary Messianic individuals upon. In much of today’s Messianic community, many people have adopted an unbridled enthusiasm and zeal for the Torah. While on the one hand, it is to be *absolutely lauded* that both Jewish and non-Jewish Believers will find themselves every week, considering the foundational instructions of Moses’ Teaching—it is to be *widely lamented* when one’s daily and weekly spiritual regimen is focused almost exclusively on the Pentateuch. The problem we have to seriously confront, is not with people studying the weekly Torah portions and being concerned with a greater and more targeted obedience to God; the problem is when the Torah becomes more important than the One who saved us from our sins, and the unique work He has accomplished for us. Make no mistake about it: for many Messianic people, the Torah or Law of Moses is more important than the Messiah. The significance of the Messiah event, for evaluating salvation history and the plan of God, can be a distant afterthought or an overlooked footnote.

For many people, especially non-Jewish Messianics from evangelical Protestant backgrounds, experiencing a spiritual season where there can be an over-emphasis upon the Torah, or Pentateuch, can be a bit understandable. After all, many Christians who enter into the Messianic movement have had a spirituality often devoid of anything “Old Testament.” But, if in their acclimation to their faith

¹ The technical Greek issues regarding Galatians 2:16; 3:21-22; Romans 3:21-22; Philippians 3:8-9; Ephesians 3:11-12 have been examined in the article “The Faithfulness of Yeshua the Messiah” (appearing in *The New Testament Validates Torah* by J.K. McKee).

² Be sure to have read the article “The Last Seder and Yeshua’s Passover Chronology” by J.K. McKee (appearing in the *Messianic Spring Holiday Helper*), for a review of the events surrounding Yeshua’s death, burial, and resurrection.

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heritage in Israel's Scriptures, and in getting acquainted with God's Torah—there is no delicate balance with, or appreciation of, the rest of the Bible—the spirituality of such people can still remain lopsided. Unfortunately, much blame can be placed at the feet of those who facilitate many "Torah studies," and who have not aided new Messianic people sufficiently enough in maintaining Yeshua the Messiah at the center of their faith. At the same time, more admonition can be placed upon various leaders and Torah teachers, who have not adequately taken the time—or even thought it necessary—to consider the theological and spiritual gravity of the Messiah event.

It is absolutely true that Yeshua Himself explicitly stated that He did not come to abolish the Torah or Prophets, but to fulfill them (Matthew 5:17-19). *Every Messianic person we know believes that Yeshua did not abolish the Law of Moses, and that it remains valid instruction for Believers today.* Such fulfillment does not only involve the completion of various Tanach prophecies regarding the Messiah's arrival on the stage of human history, but also involves Yeshua's own teachings and example which bring greater dimension, depth, and application to the Torah.

To their credit, there are various Protestant traditions which have always adhered to the (presumed) moral and ethical commandments of the Law as having validity for all people of all generations, and they have a widespread legacy of good works of kindness and mercy associated with them (cf. James 1:27). They have only considered things like the seventh-day Sabbath, appointed times of Leviticus 23, or kosher eating, to be required of Ancient Israel or the Jewish people for the pre-resurrection era, and that they do not carry on into the post-resurrection era. An Old Testament theologian like Walter C. Kaiser, from the Reformed tradition, expresses the view, "Only those laws from which Christ releases his church may be jettisoned,"³ meaning those things directly impacted by the Messiah's sacrificial work. Kaiser and Messianic Believers, like the authors of this article, actually have no disagreement on the general validity of the Torah; we just differ on the matter of *how much* actually has changed with Yeshua's arrival, and we would interpret various passages in the Apostolic Scriptures regarding some specific Torah practices a bit differently.

Yeshua's fulfillment of the Torah should not at all be thought to exclude changes *naturally resultant* from His sacrificial work—if indeed His sacrificial work is recognized to be the most important event in human history. However, it can be quite safe to conclude that while there are various changes which have been enacted to the role of the Torah, via the Messiah's sacrifice—as they involve things like capital punishment or the Levitical priesthood—that a considerable bulk of daily and weekly instructions, including keeping *Shabbat* or eating kosher, remain intact. There are others in the Messianic community, though, who think that

³ Walter C. Kaiser, *Toward Old Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 312.

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nothing substantial has changed between the eras prior to and following Yeshua's death, burial, and resurrection—and that things remain relatively the same. This is a definite problem, for which some resolution needs to be decisively offered. **The most important event to manifest itself in salvation history, at present, has to be given its proper place within the spirituality and theology of contemporary Messianic Believers.**

No changes of any kind in the post-resurrection era?

Many of today's Christian people think that on this side of Yeshua's sacrifice, on this side of the cross/execution-stake within the post-resurrection era, that the Law of Moses has been completely abolished, and that things have completely changed. This is obviously a position which today's Messianic Believers do not agree with. Yet at the same time, many of today's Messianic people will argue in reverse—even vehemently perhaps—that there have been *no changes* at all since the death and resurrection of the Messiah. It is not at all uncommon, for example, when suggesting to a Messianic, "Torah observant" person, that there have been some alterations enacted to the role of various parts of the Torah, such as capital punishment or the Levitical priesthood, within the post-resurrection era, to be haphazardly quoted Malachi 3:6a: "For I am *ADONAI*. I do not change..." (TLV), *ki ani YHWH lo shani'ti*.

It should be stressed that when we talk about alterations being enacted by the sacrificial work of the Messiah, which affect various aspects of the Torah, that the authors are not saying that Yeshua abolished the seventh-day Sabbath, appointed times, kosher, or even male circumcision. We are talking about adequately factoring in the once-for-all-sacrifice of the Eternal Son of God, **to permanently atone for human sin**, and how the most important event in human history has undeniably affected some of the dynamics. Malachi 3:6, in its entirety, reads "For I am *ADONAI*. I do not change, so you, children of Jacob, are not consumed" (TLV). The Hebrew verb *shanah*, appearing in the Qal stem (simple action, active voice), means "change," "be different," or "repeat, do s.thg again" (*CHALOT*).⁴ Malachi 3:6 speaks of the immutable, unchanging character of our Eternal God, who is able to restrain Himself and be fair in judgment, unlike limited mortals who are unfair and who change at a whim. While God's character is surely expressed through the principles and virtues of Moses' Teaching, God's character has been manifestly expressed through His Son Yeshua being sacrificed for human sin.

Natural change, occurring through the progression of salvation history, does not at all necessitate, or even permit, the abrogation of the principles of God's Torah. But, the sacrifice of Yeshua will necessitate a reorientation of various

⁴ William L. Holladay, ed., *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden, the Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1988), 378.

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instructions previously given to regulate sin in the pre-resurrection era, and will have to take into serious consideration a trajectory of Scripture to return humanity to an idyllic condition, which was lost at the Fall with Adam and Eve.

The significance of the Messiah event, and the natural changes it has enacted, can be easily seen when one considers the words of Ephesians 3:4-5, which speak of “the mystery of Messiah—which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations, as it has now been revealed by the *Ruach* to His holy emissaries and prophets” (TLV). A major part of this mystery is that “the Gentiles are joint heirs and fellow members of the same body and co-sharers of the promise in Messiah *Yeshua* through the Good News” (Ephesians 3:6, TLV). Those from the nations, who put their trust in Israel’s Messiah, are to be regarded as citizens of the Commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:11-13, 19). While the Torah, for example, afforded a great deal of equal rights to the ancient sojourner in the community of Ancient Israel; the work of Israel’s Messiah offers a level of inclusion within an enlarged Kingdom realm of Israel (Acts 15:15-18; Amos 9:11-12), and a total equality, which can only be fully realized in His saving activity for all people.

You may get a concession from a few people within the (legalistic) One Torah/One Law sub-movement, that indeed, in the post-resurrection era non-Jewish people do get to be much more easily included into the polity of Israel, than the *gerim* or sojourners got included in the Pentateuch—as revolutionary as the inclusion of the sojourner in Israel surely was for the Torah as Ancient Near Eastern law. But, some people within the “Torah movement,” quite disturbingly, are often not too prone to consider a statement like that of Hebrews 10:10: “we have been made holy through the offering of the body of Messiah *Yeshua* once for all” (TLV). Hebrews 9:26b also states, “He has been revealed once and for all at the close of the ages—to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (TLV), with the main work remaining being His return and the resurrection of the righteous dead (cf. Hebrews 9:28). These are historical events, as testified by Holy Scriptures, which have altered spiritual realities to some degree.

While none of us should doubt future activities regarding the Levitical priesthood and sacrificial system, in association with the Abomination of Desolation (Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:4) and Millennial Kingdom (cf. Ezekiel chs. 40-44)—as Hebrews 7:18 only speaks of a “setting aside” (NASU) of the Levitical priesthood, presumably until future prophecies occur⁵—it would be impossible to argue from the Apostolic Scriptures that the Levitical priesthood and sacrificial system maintains the exact same significance on this side of *Yeshua*’s sacrifice, which it did prior to His arrival. Hebrews 9:12 specifies, after all, “He entered into the Holies once for all—not by the blood of goats and calves

⁵ Notably, the word of Hebrews 7:18 was given with the impending destruction of the Second Temple in mind.

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but by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption” (TLV). It is further stated, “The *Torah* has a shadow of the good things to come—not the form itself of the realities. For this reason it can never, by means of the same sacrifices year after year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers—cleansed once and for all—would no longer have consciousness of sins?” (Hebrews 10:1-2, TLV).

One of the most difficult verses of the Apostolic Scriptures, which contemporary Messianics have had to deal with, is where Hebrews 7:12 does speak of how “when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also” (NASU). Here, one encounters both *metatithemenēs tēs hierōsunēs* and *nomou metathesis*, “priesthood is altered” and “an alteration of law” (TLV), stated. What does a “change of law” represent or involve? It is easily discerned within the context of Hebrews ch. 7, how in light of the Messiah’s sacrificial and priestly work, that it involves a transition of service from the Levitical priesthood to the previous Melchizedekian priesthood. Yeshua the Messiah operates in Heaven as a Melchizedekian priest (Hebrews 5:10; 6:20; 7:15, 17).

In his Complete Jewish Bible, David H. Stern renders Hebrews 7:12 with, “For if the system of *cohanim* [priests] is transformed, there must of necessity occur a transformation of *Torah*.” He justifies this on the basis that “no change or transformation in *Torah* is envisioned other than in connection with the priesthood and sacrificial system. The term ‘*metathesis*’ implies retention of the basic structure of *Torah*, with some of its elements rearranged (‘transformed’); it does not imply abrogation of either the *Torah* as a whole or of *mitzvot* [commandments] not connected with the priesthood and the sacrificial system.”⁶ These conclusions are most useful. The *nomou metathesis* most certainly includes a recognition of Yeshua the Messiah as the central focus of the Father’s redemptive activity (cf. Hebrews 1:1-4; 13:8), because only the Messiah event can substantially “change” anything as it regards the approach God’s people have to key aspects of the Torah.

The Epistle to the Hebrews, as any cursory reading or survey will reveal, is concerned about how various First Century Jewish Believers (and probably many non-Jewish Believers as well) were going to handle the reality that Yeshua’s Melchizedekian priesthood was superior to the Levitical priesthood. The author of Hebrews’ issue was not with the Ten Commandments, or how Yeshua directed His followers to observe the Torah *most especially* in matters of relationship with other people (i.e., Matthew chs. 5-7). One cannot use Hebrews 7:12 and the “change in law” to cast aside the significance of the seventh-day Sabbath/*Shabbat*, the appointed times, or kosher dietary laws—*much less* any of the Torah’s commandments regulating human ethics and morality. One can use Hebrews 7:12

⁶ David H. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary* (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1995), 681.

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to argue that the “change in law,” required by Yeshua’s priesthood, involves the capital penalties of the Torah being remitted by His sacrifice at Golgotha (cf. Colossians 2:14), and various rearrangements and reprioritizations naturally enacted by what the Lord has accomplished.

There is some difficulty presented here, to various Messianic people today, who might believe or try to argue, that every single commandment of the Torah can be followed today. This precludes that with the coming of Yeshua *nothing has changed*, and humankind still needs ongoing animal sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins. But the coming of Yeshua to Planet Earth *did change things*, just as the development of economics and technology has rendered certain aspects of the Torah unapplicable to its followers, such as the laws concerning slavery.

Yeshua asserted in His Sermon on the Mount, “Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them. For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished” (Matthew 5:17-19, RSV). It is common, in many evangelical Protestant sectors, to conclude that this means that the Messiah came to only fulfill the Torah’s prophecies, but His fulfillment obviously involves much more (cf. Matthew 3:15). Alas, though, properly evaluating the significance of the Messiah event in human history, and how it has affected the role of the Torah, is one which has become far too polarized in recent days via the actions of many “Torah observant” people. **The Messiah event, and the natural changes resultant of Yeshua’s sacrifice, have been widely ignored.** The following observation of R.T. France is well taken:

“[T]he authority of the law and the prophets is not abolished. They remain the authoritative word of God. But their role will no longer be the same, now that what they pointed forward to has come, and it will be for Jesus’ followers to discern in the light of his teaching and practice what is now the right way to apply those texts in the new situation which his coming has created.”⁷

Various Christian traditions, which rightly think that the Law has not been abolished, can go a bit too far, in only thinking that the Torah’s ethical and moral instructions are what exclusively remain valid for the post-resurrection era. Many in the legalistic One Law/One Torah sub-movement, however, would be unwilling to concede the presence of some alterations in terms of the Levitical priesthood, animal sacrifices, and capital punishment for the post-resurrection era—all areas of the Torah, which it is safe to say, have been directly affected by Yeshua’s offering up of Himself.

⁷ R.T. France, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 183.

Where has change been affected by the Messiah event?

What are some of the most significant areas which have been affected by Yeshua's sacrifice for sinful humanity? These are areas where there is a growing amount of spiritual and theological tension developing within various parts of the broad Messianic community:

1. **The animal sacrifices and associated Levitical priesthood have been side aside until the prophecies of the Tribulation period and Millennium are to occur:** "For on the one hand, a former requirement is set aside because of its weakness and ineffectiveness...For the *Torah* appoints as *kohanim g'dolim* [high priests] men who have weakness; but the word of the oath [cf. Psalm 110:4], which came after the *Torah*, appoints a Son—made perfect forever" (Hebrews 7:18, 28, TLV).
2. **The Torah's code of capital punishment may be regarded as having been nailed to the cross/execution-stake, and absorbed by the sacrifice of Yeshua:** "He wiped out the handwritten record of debts with the decrees against us, which was hostile to us. He took it away by nailing it to the cross" (Colossians 2:14, TLV).
3. **The equality of all people, particularly males and females which was lost at the Fall (Genesis 3:16b), has been restored:** "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female—for you are all one in Messiah *Yeshua*" (Galatians 3:28, TLV; contra. t.*Berachot* 6:18). **Concurrent with this, there is to be a decisive restructuring of familial authority on the basis of mutual submission, and the service of husband and wife to one another as co-leaders of the home** (Ephesians 5:21ff, esp. 5:30, 33).
4. **The sign of male circumcision, as an identifying feature of ethnic male Israelites as God's people, is to be viewed as secondary to water immersion, which is not only to be associated with Yeshua's death, burial, and resurrection—but is something which can be practiced by both males and females:** "Or do you not know that all of us who were immersed into Messiah *Yeshua* were immersed into His death? Therefore we were buried together with Him through immersion into death—in order that just as Messiah was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3-4, TLV).

These four areas listed above, which we would assert have been directly impacted by the Messiah event, are places where Outreach Israel and Messianic

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Apologetics will find itself, at times, running into some level of clashes with various others across the broad Messianic spectrum:

1. There are some you will encounter, who have widely disregarded the Epistle to the Hebrews as inspired Scripture. They cannot handle its author's assertions about the superior sacrifice of Yeshua, the Messiah serving as a Melchizedekian priest, and the limitations of the First Century C.E. Levitical priesthood when compared and contrasted to Yeshua's priesthood. While there is no doubting the fact that there are some challenging passages within Hebrews—perhaps due to ancient First Century background issues, textual issues via the Greek Septuagint, or transmission issues from Hebrews' Greek source text into English—tossing a book out of the Bible by any Messianic person, sets a dangerous precedent, when instead some (significant) effort should be expended to understand a text.
2. Many Messianic people today, and even some Messianic teachers and leaders, are unsure of what to do with Colossians 2:14. Much of this is because of how many contemporary Christians will just quote Colossians 2:14 haphazardly, and assert that the Law of Moses was nailed to the cross of Christ. If we treat Paul's letter to the Colossians with any degree of respect, one has to acknowledge how *something* was nailed to the execution-stake of Yeshua. Many Christians since the Reformation have rightly asserted that the Torah was not nailed to the cross, but instead either the record of human sin and/or the capital penalties of the Torah which were absorbed by the Messiah. For Messianic people who acknowledge the Messiah event as the most important event in history, recognizing what was nailed to the cross as the capital penalties of the Torah—and that capital punishment should scarcely be used today—is not a problem. But, there are many other Messianic people who do not consider Yeshua's sacrifice as the most important event in history.
3. The issue of equality, for all people in Messiah, is one which the Messianic movement has always struggled with, on multiple levels. There are debates within parts of Messianic Judaism over what way to approach the facets of distinction between Jewish and non-Jewish Believers. A great number within the rather legalistic One Torah/One Law sub-movement adhere to a patriarchal model of leadership within both the family and congregation. Those who adhere to an egalitarian model within both the family and congregation, and how it is to affect Jewish and non-Jewish relations in the Body of Messiah, are a minority, but a growing one, within the Messianic movement. For, we

believe that a major part of the purpose of God, is to return humanity to the equal state in which Adam and Even existed in Eden. Various instructions in the Torah which appear to be upholding a male-exclusive leadership model, instead should be read from the Fifteenth/Thirteenth Century B.C.E. vantage point as widely subverting male-exclusive Ancient Near Eastern law codes contemporary to Ancient Israel, affording a much higher level of respect and rights to females.

4. The rite of male circumcision, for native-born Jews and Israelites, is not something which has been abolished by the Messiah. Still, the emphasis of the Apostolic Scriptures in the post-resurrection era, places a higher priority on circumcision of the heart brought about via the power of the good news (i.e., Colossians 2:11). More important to be sure, would be on how water immersion for both males and females enables them to identify with Yeshua's work on the tree and His resurrection (Galatians 3:27), and with this in place, male circumcision has admittedly lost a degree of luster. Contemporary Messianics have not always noted how the Apostolic Scriptures place a higher priority on water immersion.

On the tree of sacrifice, Yeshua uttered the ever-important words "It is finished!" and He died (John 19:30). The verb *teleō*, employed in the source text, can mean "to complete, fulfil, accomplish, and, generally, to execute, perform" (LS),⁸ being related to the noun *telos*, which itself often means "the goal toward which a movement is being directed, end, goal, outcome" (BDAG; cf. Romans 10:4, Grk.).⁹ Within the realm of lexical possibilities, John 19:30 can be rendered with "It is accomplished!" (CJSB) or "It has been brought to the goal!", speaking of the final atonement for human sin being offered, and full reconciliation between humankind and its Creator now provided for. To argue that "It is finished!" somehow pertains to a declaration made nullifying the Mosaic Torah, is quite out of place, as Yeshua's words concerned atonement of sins. What would be most appropriate would be to argue that "It is finished!" relates to the consummation, culmination, and goal of human history: that aim to which the Torah pointed.

However, when many of today's Messianic people encounter Yeshua's word in John 19:30, they do not know what to do. Why is this the case? **This is because the Messiah event is not the most important event to them in history.** Is this a result of "the message of the cross [being] foolishness to those who are

⁸ H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 798.

⁹ Frederick William Danker, ed., et. al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Third Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 998.

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perishing” (1 Corinthians 1:18, TLV), and that many do not possess the salvation they think they do? *We will have to leave the ultimate determination of the salvation of some “Torah observant” Messianic people to our Eternal God.* But what we do know is that, within the present season of theological and spiritual development, a sizeable enough group of people have lost sight of the Messiah event. They have overlooked, or just flat forgotten, how Yeshua “is the culmination of the law [the goal of the *Torah*, TLV] so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes” (Romans 10:4, TNIV).

To acknowledge Yeshua’s sacrifice as the most important event in history, hardly means that the Torah has been abolished! The role of some practices and decrees have been reoriented for sure. Most importantly, Yeshua’s sacrifice has inaugurated the era of the New Covenant, which not only provides a permanent atonement for human sin, but also provides people with **the Supernatural Compulsion** to obey the Torah’s instructions—hardly an abolishment of Moses’ Teaching—as God’s Spirit transcribes it on the hearts and minds of men and women who have acknowledged Israel’s Messiah via the good news and have been redeemed:

“For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, **‘This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My Torah {more lit. My laws} upon their heart, and upon their mind I will write it’**; *He then says, ‘And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more’* Jer 31:33-34. Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer *any* offering for sin. Having therefore, brothers and sisters, confidence to enter into the Holy Place by the blood of Yeshua, by the way which He inaugurated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and *having* a great Priest over the House of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled *clean* from an evil conscience and our body washed with pure water **Eze 36:25**. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful” (Hebrews 10:14-23, author’s rendering).

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An honest Bible reader cannot deny the fact that God’s people do live in a post-resurrection era, where the sacrifice of Yeshua the Messiah for human sins has changed a number of the dynamics. Yeshua’s work at Golgotha (Calvary) has enacted some alterations concerning the penalties of the Torah decreed upon Law-breakers being absorbed by the Messiah’s sacrifice (Colossians 2:14), and necessary reorientations regarding the animal sacrifices of the Torah and the Messiah’s Melchizedkian priesthood (Hebrews 7:12). Yet, God’s standard of sin still remains

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consistent, and His immutable character and requirement for His people to live holy remains constant. Yeshua's sacrifice, per His own words about fulfilling and not abolishing the Torah (Matthew 5:17-19), do not make the Law of God, and the Tanach or Old Testament, irrelevant instruction and direction as far as His people are concerned. God's standard, defining both sinful behavior and holy behavior, is first found in the Torah of Moses.

How we get many of today's Messianic people back onto a path where they recognize Yeshua the Messiah, and what He has accomplished—**as the center of their faith**—might not be as easy as it should be in the short term. While individuals are ultimately responsible for the choices they make, a huge responsibility is still, nevertheless, placed upon teachers and leaders (cf. James 3:1). Not enough people who have a voice within the Messianic movement, particularly within the (legalistic) One Torah/One Law sub-movement, have placed Yeshua's work, His salvation, and the supernatural power of the good news, at the center of their words and actions. The Torah or Pentateuch is, too frequently for some, more important than the Messiah Himself.¹⁰

If we cannot understand how important it is to contemplate the gravity of the Messiah event for our own, individual selves—how will we be able to contemplate it on a larger scale for His corporate people? The good news of salvation is certainly a message of individuals being redeemed from eternal punishment, and seeing them spiritually regenerated and set onto a path of sanctification and holiness. But, the good news is also a message of God's Kingdom being restored, which is to culminate at the Messiah's Second Coming. The Kingdom of God is composed of redeemed individuals—so any understanding of the corporate tasks and purposes the Lord would have our emerging Messianic movement accomplish, can only be preceded by individuals themselves placing the Messiah event at the center of their being! How much time and energy have been squandered by us, because we have failed to consider the imperatives of God's mission, realized in the Messiah event? *What do you have to take before the Lord, in your next time of prayer and meditation with Him?*

Make sure that you are a man or woman of faith, who recognizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Yeshua the Messiah as the most important event in human history! As you do this, expect to see the Messianic movement refined into a significant spiritual force for good, as we approach our Lord's return.

¹⁰ Consult the 19 December, 2023 McKee Moment Short, "Is There a Such Thing as Toraholatry?", accessible via <youtube.com/MessianicApologetics>.