

FAQ VOL II

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Frequently Asked Questions

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<p><i>Frequently Asked Questions, Volume II is a multi-year work in progress. Please note how the text may be corrected, updated, or amended, before final publication. Page numbers are also likely to be altered.</i></p>
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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: <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>	IVPBBC: <i>IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old & New Testament)</i>
AMG: <i>Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament</i>	Jastrow: <i>Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature</i> (Marcus Jastrow)
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)	JBK: <i>New Jerusalem Bible-Koren</i> (2000)
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament	JETS: <i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
Ara: Aramaic	KJV: King James Version
ASV: American Standard Version (1901)	Lattimore: <i>The New Testament</i> by Richmond Lattimore (1996)
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)	LITV: <i>Literal Translation of the Holy Bible</i> by Jay P. Green (1986)
b. Babylonian Talmud (<i>Talmud Bavli</i>)	LES: <i>Lexham English Septuagint</i> (2019)
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.	LS: <i>An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon</i> (Liddell-Scott)
BDAG: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)	LSJM: <i>Greek-English Lexicon</i> (Liddell-Scott-Jones-McKenzie)
BDB: <i>Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon</i>	LXE: <i>Septuagint with Apocrypha</i> by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.	LXX: Septuagint
CGEDNT: <i>Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words</i> (Barclay M. Newman)	m. Mishnah
CGL: <i>Cambridge Greek Lexicon</i> (2021)	MT: Masoretic Text
CHALOT: <i>Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Holladay)	NASB: <i>New American Standard Bible</i> (1977)
CJB: <i>Complete Jewish Bible</i> (1998)	NASU: <i>New American Standard Update</i> (1995)
CJSB: <i>Complete Jewish Study Bible</i> (2016)	NBCR: <i>New Bible Commentary: Revised</i>
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition	NEB: <i>New English Bible</i> (1970)
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls	Nelson: <i>Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words</i>
EDB: <i>Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible</i>	NETS: <i>New English Translation of the Septuagint</i> (2007)
EJ: <i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i>	NIB: <i>New Interpreter's Bible</i>
ESV: <i>English Standard Version</i> (2001)	NIDB: <i>New International Dictionary of the Bible</i>
Ger: German	NIV: <i>New International Version</i> (1984)
GNT: <i>Greek New Testament</i>	NJB: <i>New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic</i> (1985)
Grk: Greek	NJPS: <i>Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures</i> (1999)
HALOT: <i>Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Koehler and Baumgartner)	NKJV: <i>New King James Version</i> (1982)
HCSB: <i>Holman Christian Standard Bible</i> (2004)	NRSV: <i>New Revised Standard Version</i> (1989)
Heb: Hebrew	NLT: <i>New Living Translation</i> (1996)
HNV: <i>Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible</i>	NT: <i>New Testament</i>
IDB: <i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>	
IDBSup: <i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement</i>	
ISBE: <i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i>	

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)

Galatians, Understanding

Blogcast, 22 May, 2019

How can today's Messianic movement widely advocate that the Torah is still valid, when Galatians is clear that the Law of Moses was a thing of the past?

Paul's letter to the Galatians is undeniably one of the most difficult texts of the Bible for Messianic Believers to understand. Yet, I often do wonder why this letter often seems so difficult to understand. From a Messianic, pro-Torah perspective, Paul's comments are actually not that difficult to comprehend when placed into their proper ancient context. Paul refuted the idea that circumcision is the entryway into a covenant relationship with God—instead faith is the entryway into a covenant relationship with Him, as it always has been since the Patriarch Abraham (Galatians 3:6-9). What is difficult to often understand about Paul is *not* Paul himself, but rather what can appear to be longwinded opinions surrounding him. Indeed, as I conducted a lengthy study on Galatians years ago, with the commentary *Galatians for the Practical Messianic*, much of the discussion I had to work through on Galatians, largely involved these opinions. Particularly, I had to address how we are to confront, analyze, answer, and in some cases even deconstruct them as Messianic Believers. Paul is not the one who is difficult to understand—Pauline commentators often are.

The Apostle Peter wrote in the First Century, Paul's "letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction" (2 Peter 3:16, NIV). Some people do not want to see that Paul, even in Galatians, actually valued the role of God's Torah in the lives of human beings, as he certainly had to appeal to people relying on the accounts of Abraham (Galatians 3:6ff, 14, 16, 18; 4:22), Hagar (Galatians 4:24f), and Isaac (Galatians 4:28) *all mentioned by name*, much less all of the other Tanach individuals Paul referred to by implication. Some people want there to be a contrast between the Law of Moses and the "Law of Christ" (cf. Galatians 6:2), as though the two are totally separate or even divorced. Some people want Believers today to only be concerned with love and faith, and not see love and faith demonstrated by God's people throughout the rest of His Word, via tangible, physical actions. As Peter said, their problem is not just with Paul, but it is with the entire Bible as well.

Are some commentators of Galatians guided by an hermeneutic of *not* wanting to obey God? Or do they have a great sense of holiness and reverence for the Almighty, and what

today's fallen world has become because of disobedience to His commandments? I am certainly guided by an hermeneutic where I desire to obey my Heavenly Father to the fullest extent, and believe that today's Messianic people have a great opportunity to right some of the misconceptions of Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. I do not want to see God's people punished by Him because of disobedience, but live out the Torah ethos of being a blessing to all (Genesis 12:2-3; Deuteronomy 4:5-8)! As Paul put it, "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, declared the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'All the Gentiles shall be blessed in you'" (Galatians 3:8, NRSV).

Being Messianic people, who also obey God's Torah, *and* who actually heed Paul's message to the Galatians—is by no means going to be easy. In the present season of Messianic development, there is a great deal of theological and spiritual tension, particularly as it relates to where we will be in the future. The enemy does not want us to be a mature people, and wants us to be considered "fringe." The enemy wants us to be secluded and ineffective. The enemy wants us to be "proven wrong" from Galatians, and that faith in Yeshua cannot be properly balanced with an obedience to God's Instruction. The enemy wants us to remain sidelined so we cannot be effective in showing people true righteous living via the power of the Holy Spirit.

When I view Galatians, I am guided by an emerging and progressing Messianic theology, a message which places Messiah Yeshua at the center, and desires all of God's people to live in obedience to His Word. I know that there is a need to tackle the difficult questions which Galatians poses in relation to the continued validity of the Torah, while at the same time we need not hesitate to be self-critical of a Messianic movement which is experiencing growing pains. We need to know the mission we must perform in encountering either antinomianism or neonomianism: Has today's evangelicalism truly benefited from its widescale abandonment of the Torah and its principles?

Paul's letter to the Galatians is often completely removed from its ancient setting by the Christian layperson, and frequently Messianic teachers do no better. It is actually not that difficult to understand Paul's message, provided we look at his letter as a whole, and place ourselves back into the actual situation he addressed. When we do this, we actually find that Paul's letter to the Galatians has **unbelievable relevance** for the Messianic community and what we are presently facing. Rather than simply "responding" to supposed Pauline claims against the Torah, we can actually find unbelievably valuable instruction on how to confront issues of inclusion and equality in a Messianic movement which can have difficulty balancing its mission of Jewish evangelism, while welcoming in non-Jewish Believers who are genuinely called by God to be a part of it.

Do we suffer from those truly trying to "Judaize," i.e., force proselyte conversion onto non-Jewish Believers (cf. Galatians 2:11-14)? Is inclusion in the family of God truly contingent on one's ethnicity, or one's faith in God? Does the gospel message of liberation truly allow all people of all ethnicities—and even men and women (Galatians 3:27-28)—to be equal

members of the *ekklēsia*? What is the mission we are to achieve? These, and other questions, are raised from a detailed reading of Galatians.

Galatians is not a difficult text to understand, provided you know what the **three “silver bullets”** are for viewing it in a pro-Torah, Messianic light:

- **“Righteousness” in Galatians can include a corporate status as a member of God’s people, every bit as it regards personal justification and remission of sin.** As a direct result of expressing faith in Yeshua the Messiah, individual Believers are made a part of God’s corporate people. One’s righteousness is to come via *faith and trust* in the good news.
- **“Circumcision” in Galatians is not so much an emphasis on a physical operation, but instead is more of an emphasis on the ritual of becoming a proselyte to Judaism.** In undergoing “circumcision,” the non-Jewish Galatians would have discounted the power of the good news and faith in Yeshua as being the entryway to God’s people, but instead an act of the flesh.
- **“Works of the Law” do not concern obedience to God’s Torah, as much as they concern a specific way of following the Torah as determined by a sectarian Jewish community.** By Paul asserting that righteousness did not come via “works of law” (cf. 4QMMT in the Dead Sea Scrolls), while right to conclude that one’s personal forgiveness does not come by human action, he was more specifically stating that inclusion among God’s people does not come by following the Torah according to a specific group’s set of values.

If you can understand these three things, then your own study of Galatians should go very well. Not only will you be able to have a fuller grasp on the ancient context of Galatians, but also its great importance for the growth and maturation of the Messianic community in the years ahead!