

ARE WE UNDER THE SINAI LAW? WHAT IS OUR STANCE REGARDING THE TORAH?

- ONE FOR ISRAEL

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ONE FOR ISRAEL is the largest Israeli Messianic Jewish ministry in the world. As such we are often asked this question.

In response, we published a short e-book (75 pages) entitled “The Torah’s Goal.” However, if you are limited for time, here are the bullet points for where we stand as an organization:

1. There are about 350,000 **Jewish** believers in Yeshua (Jesus) in the world today. Probably no more than 2-3% consider themselves “Torah Observant.”
2. We are aware of the growing number of **gentile**-Christians who call themselves “Hebrew Roots Movement” and consider themselves to be “Torah Observant.” Most in the Torah-observant circles are not Jewish. Thought should be given as to why non-Jews are so eager to observe a law never intended for them. One is given the impression that, far more than they emphasize faithfulness to the Messiah, the Torah observant/Hebraic roots groups emphasize Torah-observance as their distinctive, and in fact imply that they are being more obedient to God, or have a deeper spirituality, than other believers in Jesus. Perhaps they would argue their obedience to the Torah is faithfulness to Christ, but there is a distinct imbalance in their approach. Inadvertently, perhaps, they have created a two-tier system of believers: the more spiritual ones who observe the Law and the less spiritual ones who do not. This is not only unbiblical, but it also separates these groups from the rest of the Body of Christ in an unhealthy way, causing many of them to be prideful, judgmental, patronizing and arrogant of other believers. That is, in our opinion, exactly opposite to the essence of the Gospel of grace and love.

3. Perhaps without their realizing it, Torah-observant groups must either depend on rabbinic tradition, which is distinctly post-biblical, or construct their own traditions. For instance, members of such groups do not send their men to appear before the Lord in Jerusalem, as required in the Law of Moses, nor do they offer sacrifices. So there can be no question of this being an authentic, first-century way of observance. The irony being that if a gentile wants to really celebrate the festivals according to the Law, they first need to circumcise their household: “A foreigner residing among you who wants to celebrate the Lord’s Passover must have all the males in his household circumcised; then he may take part like one born in the land. No uncircumcised male may eat it.” (Exodus 12:48).
4. We believe the Sinai covenant was for the nation of Israel, and was made 1) to show us our sinful nature; 2) to separate Israel from the nations; 3) as a temporary system until the Messiah comes: “Why, then, was the law given at all? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come...Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.” (Galatians 3:19-25)
5. We believe that the core system of the Sinai covenant included the sacrifices, the priesthood and the temple (which no longer exist) – the commandments were tied to it and were an outflow of it. For example:
 - 1) For the main biblical festivals one had to go up to the temple in Jerusalem in order to celebrate God’s feasts. (Deuteronomy 16:16)
 - 2) For celebrating the Shabbat a sacrifice had to be made. (Numbers 28:9)Therefore, attempting to observe the commandments without a temple is like eating mustard without a sandwich.
6. Kosher laws were connected to the temple and were temporary: “They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order” (Hebrews 9:10). Keeping the dietary laws of Leviticus 11 is an essential component of what people mean when they speak of “Torah observance” today. What people often fail to see, however, and what the writer of Hebrews has so perceptively observed, is the connection between the dietary laws and the tabernacle. Leviticus 11 is part of a larger section in Leviticus (Lev 11–15) called the Laws of Purity, all of which are tied to the purity of the tabernacle (Lev 16). For example, if one would catch sickness by eating an unclean animal, he might bring his sickness into the temple and defile it. This is no longer relevant for today. (See 1 Timothy 4:1-4).

7. We believe God promised a New Covenant (not a renewed covenant) that would replace the old one: "...I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant" (Jeremiah 31:31-32). And "By calling this covenant 'new,' he has made the first one obsolete" (Hebrews 8:13). We believe that even Prophet Ezekiel's temple prophecies the end of the Sinai covenant, as his description of a future temple contradicts the temple of the Torah.
8. Although our ministry members observe the Shabbat on Saturdays, and not on Sundays, we do not make a big deal out of it – as it's no longer one day a week that we dedicate to God, but our rest in Yeshua is every day: "Do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ" (Col 2:16–17).
Also, while we call the Messiah "ישוע" (Yeshua), we have prayed "in Jesus' name" before, and it seems to work just as well. 😊 He knows when we talk to Him, regardless of which name we use.
9. We believe that Rabbinical Judaism falsely teaches that the Messiah's role will be to point us to the Law in order to teach us how to better observe the commandments and has erroneously influenced Torah observant groups. While we hold to Paul's teaching that the Law points us to the Messiah and that the Torah's goal is the Messiah Himself.
10. We believe that lasting change comes only through Yeshua. Yeshua's commandments deal not only with the external: they go deep into our hearts and cause us to change from the inside, through the empowerment of the Spirit. With Yeshua, murder is not limited to a physical killing; adultery is not limited to a physical union. The standards are now much higher! Yeshua calls and empowers us through His Spirit to control our anger, shun lust, and love our enemies. You see, while following traditions or concentrating on what and how to do (or not to do) external things, we only become bitter with those around us and turn venomous toward those who do not agree with us. Yeshua's goal is to deal with the inside, deep in our hearts—teaching us to love God and therefore to love all of His creation, everywhere, all of the time. "Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law" (Rom 13:8).

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