

INTRODUCTION BY DANIEL C. JUSTER

New Covenant *Torah*: What is the meaning of this phrase? New Covenant *Torah* is a concept that recognizes the continuing place of *Torah* (Law-instruction) of God as given in the Mosaic writings and expanded in the Prophets and the writings of the New Covenant Scriptures. It is a concept that also recognizes that we are in the New Covenant Era of fulfillment. Though not under the Mosaic Covenant *per se*, we are still to be instructed by the Mosaic writings and apply them, as fitting, to the New Covenant order. This meaning will become clearer as I continue.

As Thomas McComiskey argued in his excellent book “Covenants of Promise,” the Abrahamic Covenant is permanent. The Mosaic Covenant is a temporary administration of the Abrahamic Covenant, and the New Covenant is its permanent administration. However, the New Covenant teaches (explicitly in some passages and implicitly throughout) that the Mosaic teaching is of continuing validity; it is Scripture, and is “*profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work*” (2Timothy 3:16-17 RSV). This leads us to the unavoidable question of how it trains us; what does its teaching require us to do if anything? This is the question of *halakhah*, the Jewish concept of the way, or the application of the *Torah* to new situations.

It has been common to teach that Judaism is a religion of law and Christianity a religion of grace. This is a distortion of both Judaism (especially Biblical Judaism) and of Christianity. Judaism knows grace and mercy; its prayers constantly appeal to God for forgiveness, not on the basis of our merit, but solely on the basis of God’s mercy and grace. Classical Christianity also knows the place of the *Torah* (Law-instruction) and has sought to apply the Law of God according to its understanding of what is fitting to the New Covenant order. This has been so, even where it is not clearly acknowledged that this is what is happening. For example, Christianity has universally endorsed the teaching of Moses from Leviticus concerning forbidden marriages which define incest. These standards are not repeated in the New Testament. Christianity has an ethical tradition of applying the Law which we could call its *halakhah*. The weakness of Christianity in the west today is partly due to the loss of this ethical tradition, and the gross abandonment of duty to train in it.

THE CONCEPT OF HALAKHAH IN JEWISH THOUGHT

The word *halakhah* comes from the word *halak*, which means “way.” The first followers of Yeshua were called “followers of the way,” i.e. *halakhah* from Yeshua! *Halakhah* derives from two motives. One is to apply the *Torah* (Law-instruction) of God to new situations where the application is not obvious. The second is to protect the *Torah* by adding regulations so that one will not get close to breaking the law. The second motive is found in the ancient rabbinic text *Pirke Avot*, the “Ethics of the Fathers.” This is called “building a fence around the *Torah*.” At times, this endeavor led to an expanding legalism that was far removed and even opposed to the original instruction of the *Torah*. Sometimes it also gave grounds for violating the intent of the commandment through ingenious ways of getting around it. We can see the controversy of Yeshua and the Pharisees in this light. Pharisaic Judaism evolved into Rabbinical Judaism with all of its pros and cons; perhaps much evolved in opposition to Messianic Judaism and an attempt to gain total government over the Jewish people (see Daniel Gruber’s “Rabbi Akiba’s Messiah.”) Yet the basic need for *halakhah* is unavoidable. Just as the United States

Constitution has to be applied to new situations by the courts of our land, so the Mosaic Constitution needs to be applied to new situations as well (e.g.: What do we do with all of the laws related to the Temple, now that there is no Temple?).

Halakhah (binding law upon the Jewish community) that was not explicitly written in the *Torah*, was built through consensus that arose out of intense debate in the early rabbinic *yeshivot* or academies. If the academy was important enough and other academies were swayed to its viewpoint, it became the universal practice among the Jewish people. The decision for each academy was either made by the ruling rabbi who was especially revered (and hence the others would concur), or it was made by the majority opinion of all the rabbis of a particular school. The *halakhah* was orally preserved and passed down (in the *Mishnah* first of all) and in the application of the *Mishnah* called the *Gemara*. The *Mishnah* contains the earlier of these decisions and the tradition of law passed on from these. The *Mishnah* and the *Gemara* together make up the *Talmud*. The rules of logic for reaching decisions are sometimes in accord with the normal rules of logic studied today. However, other rules are recipes for subjective conclusions and provide ways to ingeniously defend any position desired by the proponent. Rabbi Ishmael's early 13 rules of logic are simpler and more objective than Akiba's expansive list of rules of interpretation. The amazing thing is the claim that the Oral Law (which was later written down contrary to the Oral Law itself) is from Moses, was handed down from generation to generation, and has equal authority to the written *Torah*. Lawrence H. Shiffman of New York University, an eminent authority on Rabbinic Judaism, argues in his book "From Text to Tradition,"¹ that the Oral *Torah*, in traditional Judaism, in fact supersedes and really replaces the written *Torah*.

The claim that the Oral Law is from Moses is really quite indefensible and is certainly an attempt by the rabbinic community in the early centuries after the first century to establish the authority of their traditions and their conclusions. Indeed, two aspects of this claim are within the *Talmud*. One is that the earlier tradition of the elders, perhaps a very small body of material introduced by the phrase "we have a tradition" is seen as accurately passed down. Indeed, the rest is sometimes seen as lost and rediscovered by the application of rabbinic logic to the questions at hand; this is not reasonably believable. That is not to say that rabbinic reflection is not important in our own work in applying the *Torah*. The rabbis' conclusions are sometimes very insightful and helpful to our own application today. God's common grace is at work here.

The rabbis were correct concerning the need for applying the *Torah* to new situations and having sufficient authority vested in some body to unify the Jewish community in its basic practice. The process is akin to legislation and constitutional law in the United States and other constitutional nations. However, the Protestant Reformation position teaches us that every generation must re-think and re-apply what is handed down in every generation. Traditional application must be tested by the bar of the Written Word and adjusted to be true to it. Reformed Churches were fond of saying that they were reformed and always reforming, seeking to be truer to the written word for all new situations. Hence, it is wrong to create a fixed tradition of authoritative *halakhah* which so overlays the Written Word that we can never get back to the Written Word to test the Oral *Torah*. As Lawrence Shiffman shows, the appeal to the Written Word to defend the Oral *Halakhah* is often strained and far-fetched, but done to give some reverence to the Written Word.

¹Shiffman, Lawrence H., *From Text to Tradition*, (New York: KTAV, 1991).

Messianic Jews seek to apply the *Torah* (Law-instruction) of God to the New Covenant situation and to the particular situation of life in which we find ourselves. We use the words “Law-instruction” as a hyphenated expression because the concept of *Torah* is more than law; it is God’s whole instruction or teaching. However, it is a mistake to not recognize that a large part of this instruction consists of laws and commandments. Some in response to Christian criticism of the idea of a cold impersonal law have sought to strip *Torah* of its association with law. However, I want to argue that the idea of law should be a happy and attractive concept. Suffice it to say that all must grapple with the meaning as it applies to the whole Bible and its application to our present lives. This includes the Mosaic writings.

THE NEW TESTAMENT AND THE TORAH

The New Testament, which Messianic Jews often prefer to call the New Covenant Scriptures, is *Torah*-positive. Unfortunately, there has been a gross misunderstanding of the place of the Law of God in recent Christianity which was not true in most of classical Christianity. This misunderstanding derives from a theology called "dispensationalism" (in its classical form). The problem is, in my opinion grave, however solely from the promise of God, I do believe the Church will get it right before the return of the Lord ([John 17:21](#)). Present theological trends are, however, are not too encouraging, though there are some glimmers of hope. Despite some significant differences between classical Christianity and dispensationalism (which we will outline later), classical Christianity came to a reasonably correct conclusion concerning the place of the Law and the application of Moses to the New Covenant order. This consensus basically yields a specific theology of the relationship of spirit and law, gospel and law, and law and grace. Perhaps John Calvin’s summary in Book II Chapter 7 of his “[Institutes of the Christian Religion](#)” is representative.

The Church Consensus

Generally, this consensus taught that the Church was the new Israel and had replaced the old ethnic Israel (There were significant dissenters from this viewpoint, especially among the Puritans, English Anglicans, and Baptists). The Protestant Church divided the Law into two parts – the Moral Law and the Ceremonial Law. The Moral Law continued in the New Covenant order, but the Ceremonial Law was merely for the purpose of pointing forward to the Messiah, and was therefore temporary. Now that fulfillment had come, the Ceremonial Law was been made obsolete, and to continue to engage in the Ceremonial Law was understood to be acting as though the Messiah has not come; hence, practice of the Ceremonial Law was forbidden by the Catholic and Orthodox churches.

The Classical Protestant View

Basically, it is understood that we are under condemnation due to our violation of the universal dimensions of the Law of God as taught in Scripture. However, Yeshua died to pay the penalty due us according to the Law, and the record of our transgressions was cancelled. Not only so, but when we repent and believe, submitting to Yeshua as Lord, we are transformed within. The old man is crucified, and the body of sin is rendered powerless ([Romans 6:6](#)). It is not only that He dies in our place, but we die in Him and are raised to new life. This transformation of the inner man takes place by identification with Messiah crucified and risen. Yeshua does not die

for us as separate from us, but He is part of the human race and our corporate representative. In corporate reality, we are in Him, and He in us by faith, just as we were in Adam. Furthermore, we can be filled with the Spirit by faith in Him. Thereby do we enter the Kingdom of God. The Gospel is the Gospel of the Kingdom, the invitation to come under the rule of the King by submitting to His transforming grace rooted in His sacrificial death. Having undergone this transformation, we are now capable of submitting to the Law-instruction of God. Hence the biblical statements that by faith we establish the Law (Romans 3:31) and the righteous requirement of the Law is fulfilled in us who walk by the Spirit and not by the flesh (Romans 8:3-4). The Law is summarized in the commandments to love God with all our hearts and to love our neighbors as ourselves (Deuteronomy 6:4ff; Leviticus 19:18; Mark 12:28-31). Therefore “biblical ethics” is part of the training of ministers and catechumens in Classical Christianity.

Many understood that the Gospel of the Kingdom required that we have come under the rule of God. We seek to live out God’s righteous order in every realm of life. The righteous order is discerned by the teaching of the whole Bible. It includes the order of God in marriage, in family, in business and government, and in science and art! It, of course, includes His order for the Church. Except for a post millennial minority which saw the Christians taking over the whole world progressively and completely before the return of Yeshua, Classical Christianity taught that we are to live out the Kingdom in every sphere of life. Though we will not come into the fullness of the Kingdom until the return of the Messiah, we are called to do all we can, through the power of His Spirit, to establish the Law of God in every sphere of human life and to thereby show as much of the Kingdom as possible. This was seen as part of the believer’s witness and as part of manifesting the Glory of God in human life.

Many saw that the Ten Commandments were, for example, really two-fold. Some of them summarized the requirement to love God exclusively, e.g., all of the commandments against idolatry. All of the other commandments are expressions of love for our fellow human beings created in His image. We love God in rightly loving others. This was seen in the summary of both Yeshua and in the Judaism of the first century (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 10:25-28). The love of our fellows is expressed in seeking justice and in establishing God’s righteous order. To pursue justice is therefore equivalent to loving our neighbors, for human beings only find fulfillment in God’s order (Micah 6:6-8). Without the Law, love deteriorates into mere humanistic sentiment. However, love motivates us to seek to establish the order of God’s righteousness, to maximize the fulfillment of human beings, and more importantly, to show the wisdom and Glory of God in human communities that live according to His ways. Justice is rectifying that which is out of order by applying the blood of Yeshua for forgiveness and establishing community on the basis of God’s principles.

The Call for Justice

The degree of lack of understanding God’s call for justice (His righteous order as defined in Scripture – not some false humanistic idea of equality) is appalling. God’s justice is hardly a topic in the contemporary Church, whereas it ought to be seen as number one. The Gospel is commonly understood as cheap grace (Bonhoeffer) that requires nothing of us. Rather, Scripture puts forth two primary motives for man. The first is to love, glorify and serve God. This is to capture our hearts totally. The second is to pursue justice. We preach the Gospel because unless

people are transformed and receive eternal life, they cannot pursue justice motivated by love for others. The Gospel is God's means of establishing justice. Micah summarized it well in his great verse that answers the question, "...what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8 RSV)? God has not changed. All of the instruction of God is to be understood as the details of how to live out love for God and our fellows. In the Bible, love and justice are not opposed, but could be seen as a hyphenated word, "love-justice." When the law is broken, justice is satisfied by blood sacrifice or by paying the penalty. Love requires restitution to the one wronged; if the offender is truly repentant, this is his desire. God's love-justice provides the sacrifice of Yeshua so He can be both just and the justifier of those who are in Yeshua.

I believe that the Messianic Jewish perspective is in basic accord with this classical Christian understanding of the relationship of Law and Grace. It is by grace that we are saved, but the saved individual is a Kingdom person who glorifies God in obedience to the Law of God. The point at issue with Messianic Jews is rather the easy distinction between the moral and Ceremonial Law, which eliminates the place of ethnical Israel in the plan of God, and eliminates the distinct practices of the Jewish people which define their "irrevocable" call (Romans 11:29). Having looked at the general consensus of Classical Protestantism, we no need to more closely look at the New Testament.

Yeshua and the *Torah*

The Gospel material implies a context for understanding the coming of the New Covenant order. It is the order of the in-breaking Kingdom which is at hand here. He that is least in the Kingdom of God has a better place than John the Immerser (Mark 1:14-15; Matthew 11:12). The order of the New Covenant Kingdom is seen in the acts and teaching of Yeshua and the disciples. He heals the sick, casts out demons, and raises the dead. These are manifestations of the Age to Come. Yet it is still a transitional time, for the Kingdom will not come in fullness until His return. This is the growing stage of the Kingdom where the Word of the Good News is preached as a farmer scatters seed, and the Kingdom grows from a small beginning until it is a large tree as in the parable of the mustard seed (Matthew 13). Though partial, though "already but not yet" (George Ladd in The Gospel of the Kingdom), the Kingdom (God's New Covenant order) has come and manifests itself in many spheres when the people of the New Covenant are submitted to the rule of God. We pray and work to extend this Kingdom and disciple those from the nations to live by its precepts.

In this context, Yeshua teaches that the written *Torah* has not been abolished. Heaven and earth will pass away before "one jot or one tittle" passes from the *Torah* (Matthew 5:18 NKJ). Yeshua has come to fulfill the *Torah*. What does this mean? It is clear from His teaching in Matthew 5-7, but is also reflected in all of the Gospel material. Where the Law of Moses implied a right heart given to obedience to the Law of God, Yeshua made the right heart orientation the key to His whole exposition. From the heart comes evil. Not only must one not commit adultery, but one must not sin by entertaining adultery in one's thought life. Not only are we to not murder, but we must not entertain thoughts of hatred and vengeance. The New Covenant elevates our ability with greater grace, and therefore requires an application of Mosaic teaching that is more exacting. While disagreeing with the Pharisees in some of their applications, Yeshua removes certain accommodations of Moses that was due to the "hardness of their hearts" and the

weakness of the people (e.g. divorce). The teaching of Yeshua (and the Apostles) constitutes New Covenant *Halakhah*. Yeshua shows the meaning of the Sabbath, the legitimacy of healing on the Sabbath, eating grain as one walks through the fields, and the non-binding nature of the tradition of the elders (e.g. hand washing, Mark 7; Matthew 15). Yeshua makes authoritative *halakhah*, not by appealing to past tradition (as did the scribes), but by pronouncement according to his own authority (Matthew 7:28).

This role of making authoritative *halakhah* is given to the disciples who will supersede the Jewish Supreme Court, the Sanhedrin. In Matthew 16, Yeshua gives to Peter and the Apostles the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven, which is the authority to bind and loose. This authority is the right to forbid behavior (bind) and permit behavior (loose), and was exercised at the Jerusalem Council concerning the requirements for Gentiles to join the New Covenant Communities of faith. In addition, Matthew 16 and 18 provide the foundation for enjoining congregational discipling for the New Covenant community, a community of righteous order.

In those passages where Yeshua is accused of violating the *Torah*, closer observation shows that He was only violating Pharisaic traditions – not any commandment of *Torah*. Where the teaching of Moses set a standard, sometimes Yeshua would require more. Instead of being truthful in oath taking, we are to fulfill every word we speak. Instead of allowing unlimited revenge, the *Torah* prescribed “an eye for an eye” as the court standard; this is not, however, a standard for personal ethics and retaliation. Yeshua corrects this misapplication, and calls for loving our enemies. All of this is New Covenant *Torah* instruction. Yeshua did not violate the Sabbath, but only Pharisaic interpretation. As Lord of the Sabbath, He established *halakhah* under the principle that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath.

We can see, in all of this, that Yeshua taught, enhanced, and applied the *Torah*. While the New Testament and the *Shlichim* (Apostles) are given binding *halakhic* authority, there is no warrant that the authority of later leaders in the New Covenant Community can make *halakhah* of this absolute binding nature. There is, however, authority to interpret and apply, and to govern as is necessary. That notwithstanding, everything can be questioned by the Written Word, and is to be reformed by it. Post New Testament, we seek consensus in practical applications, and the humility to follow this consensus; this never has the status of the *Torah*, or the *halakhic* authority of the New Testament.

The Letters of Sha’ul (Paul)

The letters of Sha’ul (Paul) are the primary source of controversy concerning the place of the *Torah* in the New Covenant. Some have interpreted him as teaching the very thing his accusers claimed, that the Jewish People are to forsake circumcision and Moses. This was denied by Paul in his testimony in Acts 21 where he brought an offering to profess that he lived according to the *Torah* [which *Ya’akov* (James) called orderly]. Paul’s continued profession before Felix, Agrippa, and the community of Jews in Rome, was unwavering loyalty to the *Torah* (Acts 28:17). Indeed, the Book of Acts was written in part to show the nature of Jewish and Gentile life together in one Body, where Jewish distinctions of life and calling are maintained.

Gentiles are not generally required to live according to everything that God requires of Jews, but they are called to live out the universal dimensions of the *Torah*. If individual Gentiles and Gentile families have covenanted to draw near to Jews in a special way and live within a Jewish community, they will naturally participate in most of the community's Jewish expressions of *Torah* life and practice. As for Gentiles who are not so called and do not live within a Jewish Community, there is much latitude. However, they become citizens of the Commonwealth of Israel by virtue of their faith in Yeshua ([Ephesians 2:11-22](#)), so it would be well for them to seek understanding, and appreciation of Jewish aspects of the *Torah* for their connection to the Jewish people. This includes an understanding and application of the "appointed times" ([Leviticus 23](#)).

These times give us a sense of the agricultural pattern of life in Israel, foreshadow the work of Yeshua, and show the meaning of his work. They also point to the last days and the Age to Come. As a biblical expression and recognition of their grafted-in Jewish connection ([Romans 11](#)) it is wise that Gentiles and all kinds of church communities teach on these matters during the seasons of Jewish celebration, and in cases where it is feasible, to have celebrations of their own connected to these meanings. That notwithstanding, Gentiles are not required to keep specific calendar days as Sabbaths (i.e. no work), whether connected to the Rabbinical Calendar, or to what some scholars now think was the Temple calendar.

The relationship of grace and law, or spirit and law is apparently paradoxical. Too quick an oversimplification, and we are bound for error. The paradox is not really a contradiction, but requires deeper unpacking. This was seen in a correct way by many writers. Calvin largely got it right. So did Wesley, Finney, Abraham Kuyper, and other classical representatives. Today, W. D. Davies in [Paul and Rabbinic Judaism](#), Mark Nanos, Michael Wyschogrod, Professor Averbeck of Trinity in Illinois, C. E. B. Cranfield, J. Murray, Rhyne, W. P. Kaiser, and many others have gotten it right. What is Sha'ul saying?

First, he notes that by the law and standard of God, all human beings stand condemned. Those who are not of Israel do have a reflection of the Law of God in their ethical tradition. They know deep down that they are responsible to a Law-giver above themselves. Though Gentile traditions are greatly corrupted, they yet have sufficient knowledge of the standard of God to stand condemned before God. Secondly, the Jewish people who have a clear written revelation of the Law of God stand condemned by its standards. What is the solution? We cannot save ourselves. Our righteousness is as filthy rags before the perfection of God's standard. Otherwise, why all of the blood sacrifices which show the mercy and forgiveness of God, based on substitution? The answer to this is a free gift which is received by faith, a trusting response to God's provision and a wholehearted turning to Him in submission. It is through identification with the crucified and risen Messiah that we are transformed. We accept that the penalty has been paid by our representative and that we are by faith said to have been crucified with Him ([Galatians 3:20](#); [Romans 6](#)). Therefore, we are accepted in Him as righteous.

Before we see this, the Law (this would be true of the Gentile knowledge of the Law of God as well) is our schoolmaster. It teaches us right from wrong and shows us that we need a savior. Therefore, we receive righteousness as a gift apart from the Law, and are justified by faith. However, this does not mean that the Law (God's Law) has been done away with, but it now reappears as a tool of discipleship by the power of the Spirit. Thus Paul can say, "... *there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. Do we then*

make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law” (Romans 3:30-31 NKJ). The Gospel is God’s means of establishing His *Torah* which is the goal of salvation history. *“The ‘Torah’ will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem”* (Isaiah 2:3 NIV). Grace in the Pauline writings is not simply unmerited favor as taught by many, but includes the idea of empowerment by the Spirit to do righteousness. Sin is still defined as the transgression of the Law and righteousness is still defined by the Law. So Paul can say that the Hebrew Scriptures train us in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 1 John 3:4). However, the focus of the truly righteous man is not prideful self-striving, but rather relational loving passion for the Father, the Messiah, and their glory. In this orientation, we are empowered by Grace via the Spirit, and we fulfill the righteousness of the Law (*“... that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit”* (Romans 8:4 NKJ)).

As if this is not enough, Paul rebukes those who say that he teaches antinomianism (anti-*Torah*). Such a claim is slanderous (Romans 3:8, 6:1-2). In addition, Paul makes it clear that the standards of the Law are upheld by the Gospel message and states, concerning the standards of the *Torah*, that their violation is against the Gospel he preaches.

“Now we know that the law is good, if any one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, immoral persons, sodomites, kidnapers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance with the glorious gospel of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.” (1Timothy 1:8-11 RSV)

In 1 Timothy 1 we find that the Law restrains the godless and, in chapter 3, that it instructs and trains in righteousness.

(a) The Book of Galatians

Actually, but for the Book of Galatians, error in interpreting Paul would have been much less. The principles of interpretation should have led us to interpret Galatians through Romans since it is the fuller and more detailed presentation of the law-grace issues. The Book of Acts as well provides both the historical context and interpretation for understanding Galatians. The issue in Galatians was requiring the circumcision of Gentiles for their acceptance into the New Covenant community of faith. It was an issue of understanding that righteousness comes by faith, not by works and the issue of the broadness of fellowship (which John Yoder and Mark Nanos see as more central than the issue of justification by faith). However, Galatians is not against the instruction of the *Torah*. Indeed, its list of the works of the flesh can only be understood in the light of the *Torah*. Those who walk by the Spirit are not under the Law (subject to striving by our own efforts and under the condemnation of its penalty which was paid for us).

“Now the works of the flesh are plain: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” (Galatians 5:19-21 RSV)

What defines these sins? What is immorality? Paul says that, apart from the Law, we would not know what these sins are! Indeed, today we defend as right open marriage, homosexual marriage, abortion, and much more. How shall we argue that these things are wrong? Shall we say that the Spirit told me? Or shall we say that God has revealed His standard in His *Torah* and in the extension of that teaching in the whole Bible? Paul's catalogue of sinful behavior is known to him by the *Torah*, not by the teaching of Hollywood! Faith establishes the *Torah*, but if we by-pass the way of faith, we do not establish it. The whole Bible looks forward to the age of the establishing of God's rule, the *Torah*. The way of faith in the New Covenant is God's way to it, for He writes the *Torah* on our hearts.

(b) The Book of Hebrews

If Paul wrote Hebrews, we see nothing but confirmation. The Mosaic Covenant Order is fading and becoming obsolete. However, in the New Covenant Order, the *Torah* is written on our hearts and every individual may appropriate the power of his co-death with the Messiah, put to death the old man and be filled with the Spirit. In this the *Torah* is not done away with, but is written on our hearts as is applicable to the New Covenant Order. What passes away are not the standards of God, but the pre-New Covenant Temple system which looked forward to His coming and an order in which only a special few could be filled with the Spirit. Now that He has died, He gives the Holy Spirit to all who are born again. Hebrews is speaking about the coming of the greater order of the New Covenant. It is not about abandoning the instruction found within Moses, the Prophet, and the writings and applying it as is fitting to the New Covenant Order. The issue is a better covenant where this transforming work is done in us (Hebrews 8:7-13). Ezekiel notes that the New Covenant offers the Spirit who will move us to obey God's statutes, ordinances, and judgments (Ezekiel 36:24 ff).

Furthermore, Paul teaches that the *Torah* is still part of Jewish calling as it is applicable in the New Covenant. This is by his example in completing a Nazirite vow in Acts 18:18, in his profession in Acts 21 and 28, and in his explicit statements in Romans 9:4 ff where he indicates the gifts given to Israel are still of significance. In Romans 11:29 he states that the gifts and call to Israel are irrevocable. More will be stated about this continuing call. However, suffice it to say that the Bible shows us that God is committed to establishing an order of righteous call to *Torah*, justice, etc. This order includes proper relationships between husbands and wives, parents and children, employers and employees, merchants and shoppers, governments and peoples, elders and the flock, and Israel and the nations. The last is an issue of God's right order as well, which He will establish according to His promise to Abraham.

(c) The General Epistles

We will find no evidence against our orientation in the General Epistles. It is our call to pursue justice, even the establishment of God's righteous order through the power of the cross and Spirit. John is clear on this and lets us know that sin is transgression against the Law of God and that the true disciple does not intentionally sin (or violate the *Torah* of God) (1 John 3:4)! He is one who practices righteousness. Peter warns us that some have misunderstood Paul as an antinomian (against the *Torah* and its applicability to the New Covenant). He states that the untaught and unstable have distorted his writings and twisted them to their own destruction. That twisting would most probably be connected allowing sin because of an anti-law interpretation of Paul. The writings of James could be well seen as a corrective to those who

were misunderstanding Paul. Therefore he calls for *mitzvoth* (good works) to prove faith and notes that the *Torah* is a *torah* of liberty (James 1:25). His exposition of the *Torah* and warning against being found a transgressor of the *Torah* are clear (James 2:9). In the history of interpretation, those who have tended to antinomianism (anti-law) have had a great struggle with James even to the point of claiming that it was not Scripture.

Enough has been said, I believe, to convince the fair minded that the understanding and application of the teaching of the whole Bible on right and wrong, justice and righteousness, is crucial. It is a key to fighting the ethical laxity in the Body of believers and is crucial to the legitimacy of the Messianic Jewish Movement. When teaching the whole Bible, we begin with Moses and reapply it to the New Covenant Order as did Yeshua and the *Shlichim*,

THE DISCOVERY OF HITTITE TREATIES

One of the great archaeological discoveries was the treaties of the Hittites, a large nation at the time of Exodus. The tablets were discovered at the sites of Nuzi and Mari. They prove the existence of the significant nation mentioned in the Bible. Before that time, liberal scholars thought that the Biblical information on this nation was mythological. In the 1950s Professor George Mendenhall of the University of Michigan noted strong parallels between these treaties and the form of Covenant material in the Mosaic writings, especially the Book of Deuteronomy. Meredith Kline expanded this work and showed that not only were the treaties parallel to covenant material in the Mosaic writings, but the order and form of the Hittite treaties were an exact match. His first articles on this were published in the Westminster Theological Journal in the mid-1960s and later found in such books as Treaty of the Great King and The Structure of Biblical Authority. Two great conclusions were asserted by Kline. First, the Mosaic writings were from Moses, from the time period traditionally as understood (15th-13th centuries B.C.). Indeed, only the Hittite treaty forms from that era exactly parallels Deuteronomy. Secondly, Kline asserted that the treaty form proves that the Mosaic material and especially Deuteronomy is fully a covenant of grace. Covenant – not law – is the basic category for understanding this material. Law is a subsidiary concept. Other leading scholars picked up on this work and now assert the same view as Kline. Samuel Schultz, the esteemed Old Testament professor from Wheaton, in his books The Gospel of Moses and Deuteronomy: The Gospel of God's Love show his stand by the very titles. Thomas McComiskey in Covenants of Promise argues similarly with added insights. Other scholars such as Walter Kaiser, Kenneth Kitchen, Professor Averbech at Trinity in Illinois, and many more have affirmed these views as have Messianic Jewish writers, including myself, John Fischer, Michael Shiffman, and David Stern. I will not repeat in detail what was written in my book Jewish Roots. Walter Kaiser has his own attempt at what he might call Christian *halakhah* in Toward an Old Testament Ethic. Many of those who argue are Christian scholars with no Messianic Jewish axe to grind. Because I have given an extensive outline of this scholarship in Jewish Roots, I will only give a very brief summary.

Deuteronomy is in the form of a covenant of grace whereby God first recounts to Israel that He saved them through no merits of their own. This is asserted explicitly and repeatedly in Deuteronomy 8 through 10, where God says it is not because of her righteousness, largeness, strength, or attractiveness that she has been saved. Hittite kings liked to assert that their rule over a subject people was a grace act which the subjects did not deserve. The historical material is to demonstrate that Israel's history is characterized by being given mercy, grace, and love that

is undeserved. In gratitude for this love, Israel is called to be a society in obedience to God's *Torah* in every realm of life, from absolute loyalty to God Himself, to business integrity, to integrity and truth in the court system, to caring for the poor. Obedience is a response to grace and salvation offered as a gift. Therefore, Israel's corporate salvation fits the same pattern as the invitation for individual salvation in the New Covenant. Furthermore, the sacrificial system shows that repentance, forgiveness, and blood substitution is at the heart of the Covenant, forestalling any proud view that salvation is gained by our autonomous attainment of good works. The Sabbath is in the center of the Ten Commandments because it is a covenant sign between God and Israel. It shows forth the meaning of God's creation pattern, and is a perfect symbol for a people delivered from the bondage of slavery, for freedom from work one day in seven is a manifestation of a people set free. This day is given for God, worship, and fellowship.

Once this is understood, we can see that there is greater continuity between the Mosaic Covenant and the New Covenant than even perceived by our *Torah*-positive Puritan brothers of yesteryear. Even the Ten Commandments is really a covenant of grace beginning with the declaration of unearned salvation, 'I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.' The New Testament looks at us all as in a house of slavery spiritually until we are born again and enter the Kingdom of God.

CONTINUITY AND DISCONTINUITY IN HALAKHAH

As we stated, the application of the teaching of Moses (and of the whole Bible) to new challenges and situations requires prayer and thinking akin to what Jewish people call *halakhic* thinking. Even the New Testament material requires such thinking. Do women wear head coverings today as specified in 1 Corinthians 11? If so, how much must they cover of the woman's head? Are the coverings only to be worn in the worship service in public? If not, why not? However, our concern will primarily be the application of Mosaic material to the New Covenant order. Much has been written in debate concerning women and head coverings. Different conclusions have been reached by different denominations. This is their *halakhah!*

Consistency is a virtue, but not all followers of Yeshua or theologians are consistent. Consistency is based on the virtue of integrity, honesty, and the trustworthiness of our words; however, sometimes it is better that there are some inconsistencies rather than people following the full logical conclusions of their positions. For example, the most anti-*Torah* theologians usually follow the *Torah* when it comes to its list of forbidden sexual unions that would constitute incest. Christian theologians that are more consistent have put forth theses for what parts of the *Torah* should be followed in the New Covenant era, and what should be rejected. With regard to their varying theses, Protestant streams have differed with regard to the question of the extent to which the Mosaic writings are in continuity with the New Covenant. This continuity-discontinuity question is one of the most foundational issues in theology. Generally, Protestant theology in its classical form distinguished between the ceremonial and moral parts of the Mosaic *Torah*. The former is valuable for study that we might more fully understand the work of Yeshua, but is no longer to be practiced. However, the Moral Law is binding in the New Covenant. Where the lines are drawn between moral and ceremonial varies. I will now briefly outline the continuity-discontinuity pattern in various streams.

Roman Catholic Thought

Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox thought did not make a clear distinction between ceremonial and moral law. Instead, the early Church that gave rise to both the Eastern and Western Churches developed patterns that were parallel to Tabernacle-Temple ceremonies. In addition, moral theologians did seek to apply the Mosaic teaching to for part of the ethical and social basis of Christian civilization. Let us take the Roman Catholic Church as an example. There is, first of all, a class of priests provided by the population. These priests are analogous to the Levites and *Kohanim* of ancient Israel. The Levites continued by tribal descent. Roman Catholic Priests serve by entering into training, taking vows of celibacy, and by being ordained by a bishop who is seen in apostolic succession to the original Apostles. Lineage is important in priesthoods – physical lineage in the former, and a spiritual lineage of continuity by the laying on of hands in the latter. The Church parallels the Tabernacle-Temple in offering daily and special sacrifices upon an altar. However, the sacrifice offered is the sacrifice of “Christ” in the Mass. Until recently, the priest turned from the congregation for the elements to be transformed in the liturgy. This was analogous to the High Priest entering the Most Holy Place on Yom Kippur. In the Eastern Church, the priest actually goes behind the door and leaves the presence of the congregation to enter the “Most Holy Place.” The people eat of the sacrifice (the bread); traditionally there was a portion only for the priest (the wine – blood). This was before today’s change whereby the people are also offered the wine. There are many symbols reminiscent of the Hebrew Scriptures. There are seven-branched lamps, priestly garments, priestly hats, and an eternal light and incense. Stained glass windows include heroes from ancient Israel as well as New Testament figures. The Roman Catholic Church has created a “New Covenant Temple worship.” The Sabbath day is also special, but has been transferred to Sunday when the resurrection is also celebrated. Whatever one might think of the totality of the Roman Catholic orientation, it is clear that there is a large degree of continuity from ancient times. Yet, continued Jewish life among Jewish believers was seen as not entering into the reality of the New Covenant priesthood and Temple realities. Catholic moral theology also developed a Canon Law tradition that is parallel to Rabbinic thought. New rules are added and ways are developed to get around the law in various cases (casuistry). It should also be noted that the Christian calendar is in continuity in some ways, and in discontinuity in other ways, with the biblical calendar. Passover and Easter sometimes coincide, but solar dating makes this happen only periodically; nevertheless, the fact that Easter occurs in the Spring is clearly rooted in Passover. In the Eastern Church, which defended the Bible’s lunar calendar, the concordance of its feasts with the Jewish calendar is more obvious. Good Friday before Easter and Passover season is the closest thing on the Christian calendar to Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Protestant tradition largely maintained the same calendar as the Catholic tradition, so we can see that the distinction between moral and Ceremonial Law is not followed through with.

Lutheranism

Martin Luther rejected much of Catholic doctrine. The priesthood of all believers and the identification of the gathered community of saints (as a temple) was asserted. However, the bread and wine of the Messiah’s Supper was seen as truly conveying the body and blood of Yeshua spiritually. The liturgy that sets these elements apart, the role of the clergy, and the symbolism of the Church itself still show marks of continuity to ancient Israel. The seven-branch lamp, the eternal light, the priestly robes, and the designation of the table of the Lord’s Supper as the altar still show continuity with the Ceremonial Law even if Lutheran theology too-

easily adopted the “ceremonial” and “moral” as distinctions. Luther was not consistent in his approach to the Law. At one point he would assert that we should love God and do as we please. He railed against those who held that the Sunday Sabbath should be enforced and wrote that the English that were enjoining sedate quiet and reflection, should be required to have sports and recreation on Sunday. On the other hand, Luther’s Shorter and Larger Catechism put forth the Ten Commandments, with explanation and application such that they should be obeyed. Luther’s associate Philip Melancthon and the great Lutheran systematician Quinstadt, both moved toward a more consistent position similar to Reform thought. Luther’s thought was, therefore, ambivalent to the Mosaic writings and was inconsistent in approach. The relationship of the Law-Gospel dialectic was never resolved; the ambivalence is still present in Lutheran thought today.

Calvinism

Those of the Calvinist tradition projected a very high regard for *Torah*. They accepted the distinction of the Ceremonial and Moral Law. Calvin put forth a clear theology of the Law whereby it brings conviction of sin and leads us to the Messiah; it restrains sin in society by becoming the basis of civil law with its penalties, and it is a tool of discipleship for the believer through the work of the Holy Spirit. This discipling tool dimension for believers was called the “third use of the Law.” Calvin found this in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 where all Scripture was said to be valid for training in righteousness. When the grace of God has been received, the Spirit enables us to be obedient to the Law of God. The Sabbath (now switched to Sunday according to their understanding of the New Testament) was considered to be part of the Moral Law since it was in the Ten Commandments, while (for example) *Yom Kippur* was seen as part of the Ceremonial Law. Circumcision, the biblical calendar, and the Temple service have not passed away. Dutch Reform Churches and Presbyterians followed in this tradition.

Puritans in the Calvinist tradition maintained the same basic stance whether they became British Presbyterians or Congregationalist or Calvinist Baptists. We see the same reflected in the writings of Increase Mather in the American Colonies, and of Jonathan Edwards one hundred years later. The Colonial Puritans, especially, wrestled with how to apply the Law of God and, more than any other group, thought to build a society upon the basis of the Law. The Moral Law was seen as including personal, civil, and business law. Puritans exacted civil penalties, including capital punishment, based on the Mosaic Law. They were a prosperous society, seeing themselves as a New Israel, parallel to ancient Israel; they yet had special regard for ancient Israel. Many saw a future purpose for ethnic Israel. Christmas celebration in Puritan New England was forbidden as too pagan in its roots! On the continuity-discontinuity issue, Puritans weighed in heavily on the side of continuity. Applying the Law was not only abstract, but ordered Puritan life for over a century.

Anglicanism

The Anglican Church developed an amazing eclecticism of Catholic, Lutheran, and Reform thought. Puritans were in and out of the Church of England preceding, during, and after the period of Oliver Cromwell in the 17th Century. One can see the Ceremonial Law applied as in the Catholic Church in the ceremony of the High Anglican. The theology of the Eucharist which is given in both kinds (bread and wine) is closer to Luther. The understanding of the general relationship of law to grace is like unto Calvin, and justification by faith is accepted doctrine. A

married priesthood by apostolic succession is parallel to but different than the Roman Catholic view. When it came to applying the Mosaic Law, the Anglican orientation was set by Richard Hooker in his Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity. Hooker argues against the Puritan position of literally applying the Mosaic Law to order social and civil life (There was no debate between Puritans and Anglicans). Hooker argues that the Mosaic Law, as given, was for ancient Israel. We had to discern more universal principles in the Law and apply them to new circumstances in our society. Reason could as well discover principles for Church, civil and social life as well as helping us apply the Scriptures to new situations. The Puritans responded that the human mind is not given to second-guess the Law of God by looking for principles in the manner of Hooker. One can see from this debate that the question of continuity-discontinuity and the application of the Law is no new issue. My view is that the Anglicans were too quick to dismiss direct application because it offended their human sentiment. However, many laws are based on obvious principle and are not required of us literally. Shall we build a fence on our roof (Deuteronomy 22:8) when it is not used for living space as in ancient flat-roof houses? The principle of taking reasonable steps to protect human life from accident is clear.

The Methodists

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement was an Anglican. He did not emphasize the application of specific Mosaic commandments, but exhibited a high regard for law. After his death, the Methodists were forced to leave the Anglican Church to practice their convictions. A high regard for moral standards and holiness based on the Law and its exposition in the Sermon on the Mount was a noteworthy part of Methodism.

The Anabaptists

In the 16th Century, several leaders believed that the reformation did not go far enough. These were the Anabaptist, committed to simple life, pacifism, adult baptism, and material sharing. While having a high regard for the Law and seeing obedience as the outworking of grace, they saw the teaching of the New Testament as a sufficient exposition and application of the Law for Christians. The Sermon on the Mount was the center of this understanding. Anabaptists saw continuity and discontinuity, but thought that the New Covenant required a much higher standard than the Mosaic. The Mosaic writings would be studied for ethical guidance, mostly to supplement the New Testament. There was high regard for the principle of law and holiness, but the New Covenant community in its pacifism, communal sharing, openness to all peoples, and love for the enemy, was seen in discontinuity with the “Old Testament.” Mennonites, Amish, Church of the Brethren, Brethren in Christ and others come from the Anabaptist traditions. In all of these traditions, we see that the Church has had to wrestle with the issue of continuity and discontinuity. In doing so, the Church produced varieties of Christian *halachah*. Some saw great continuity and others more discontinuity.

The Dispensationalists

The end of the 19th Century spawned a movement that dramatically affected western Evangelical Protestantism. It broke from Classical Christianity and presented a view of radical discontinuity between the Mosaic Covenant and the New Covenant. Others had anticipated these views, but were labeled antinomian heretics. Their movement came to little. An Irish Anglican priest by the name of John Nelson Darby was troubled by the “deadness” in the Anglican Church. In

reflecting on the problem, Darby concluded that the basic problem was confusion between law and grace. This problem was rooted in the 39 Articles, the basic doctrinal statement of the Anglican Communion. Darby asserted that the “Old Testament” was a dispensation of law which was in total contrast to the New Testament period which was a dispensation of grace. Though having a place for ethnic Israel in the future, all who become Christians are no longer “Jew” or “Gentile,” but part of the bride. Continued Jewish life in the New Covenant would confuse law and grace. In Darby, the Mosaic Covenant offered salvation on the basis of keeping the Law, and this was bound to lead to failure and death. However, the sacrifices anticipated the coming of the Messiah so the “Old Testament” saints were not without a grace element, and by believing in the substitute sacrifices, they were preserved for the salvation that would come in Yeshua. Darby radically redefined grace as only unmerited favor. Darby taught that New Testament offers salvation by grace through faith with a specific “Darby-ite” slant. It was that believing or faith in the death and resurrection of Yeshua as one’s personal Savior from sin is the only necessary thing required for salvation. Repentance is not necessary. Submitting to His holy lordship is not necessary. One may continue to live in sin without showing life change or gratitude and still be saved. One should not do so, however, but if salvation is by grace, it is a logical possibility in his scheme. In Classical Christianity, however, the grace concept included the content of empowerment and motivation to obedience. This radical redefinition of grace produced a radical discontinuity between the Mosaic Covenant and the New Covenant. Even the Sermon on the Mount was seen as part of the dispensation of law. We are not duty-bound to anything of this dispensation according to Darby and his followers. Even the Ten Commandments do not have claim on us. We are only duty-bound to the teaching of the epistles of the New Testament which do repeat the content of nine of the Ten Commandments.

In this radical discontinuity, Darby asserted the priesthood of all believers and eschewed clergy. Lay ministers working in other professions would be the elder-leaders. Ritual would be at a bare minimum (baptism and the Lord’s Supper). How did Darby see this as revitalizing the Church? In his view, many would be grateful for the unmerited salvation, and they would dedicate their entire lives. This is a second (but not required) step. The Church, however, would then be populated by dedicated volunteers, not by people who thought it was required of them for salvation. Carnal Christians would largely be outside. In addition, the Church would enforce spiritual discipline on the flock. Classical Dispensationalism made clear distinctions. Israel has to do with the Law, the Church with grace. The former has an earthly salvation, the latter a heavenly one. Today, neo-dispensationalism is moderating this radical stance. Some teach that repentance is needed and submission to His lordship (John McArthur). Others now see the Sermon on the Mount as instruction for the New Covenant. A few are even saying (from 2 Timothy 3:16-17) that one can discern principles in the Mosaic writings that have application to the dispensation of grace.

The orientation of Dispensational theology has become part of the popular sub-culture of American Evangelism. Many who could not even define the term “Dispensationalism” reflect a popular culture born out of its theology. Statements like “We are no longer under the Law,” in a slant that is contrary to Classical Christianity, are rooted in this movement. Those who say a person was saved in a meeting reflect this sub-culture. Classical Christians would only say a person made a profession and would not find confidence in their salvation until the fruit of a changed life was brought forth. Carnal Christianity has some rooting as well, since one may live

in sin and still hope for eternal security (contrary to both Calvinism and Arminianism). Looseness and disrespect for the Law of God is a plague that has affected Baptists, Charismatics, Pentecostals, Independent Churches, and many smaller denominations and streams. Because America has been the leading force for world missions, Dispensationalism is also found in many nations, including (to my great chagrin) Israel. Many Israelis link the concept of *Torah* with Rabbinical legalism. They unbiblically react in a negative way to the idea of *Torah*. When some Israelis become believers in Yeshua, they easily buy into the anti-Law dimensions of dispensational theology from the past influence of Christian missions in the Land of Israel. This is done without conscious realization. The Bible is read through glasses without awareness that a Christian sub-culture has placed these glasses upon them.

Messianic Judaism

Messianic Judaism finds itself in a unique position. We oppose the replacement theology of Classical Christianity where ethnic Israel has been fully replaced in the purposes of God by the Church. On the other hand, we oppose the antinomian heresy of Classical Dispensationalism. Messianic Judaism does see discontinuity between the Mosaic Covenant and the New Covenant. However, because Paul says that the gift and call of God to Israel is irrevocable (Romans 11:29), we are oriented to greater continuity than most Christian views. My little book The Irrevocable Calling puts forth the idea of why Jewish followers of Yeshua are to live a Jewish life and the essence of what Jewish life is. In summary, Jewish life is a priestly witness and an intercessory activity. Our preservation as a nation, our return to our land, and our celebration and unique Jewish practices are a witness to the reality of God and the truth of His Word. In addition, the Jewish celebrations of Sabbath and the Feasts are a picture of redemptive meanings that are fulfilled in Yeshua and yet have further fulfillment at the return of Yeshua and in the Age to Come. We can discern in Scripture what is required of the Jewish people and what is required of Gentiles in Yeshua. It is not the same in all regards. Jewish and Gentile believers form a complementary priesthood. The Sabbath proclaims the existence of God, recalls creation, and releases intercession that all people might enter their Sabbath rest through salvation in Yeshua. Passover recalls our deliverance from Egypt through the Passover blood of the lamb, the coming of Yeshua as God's lamb, and releases intercessory power by faith, that all people might "pass over" from sin and death into their promised land in God, and might sit down together and celebrate. As Israel will inherit the Land, the meek will inherit the earth. Jewish life in Yeshua is willed by God; it is the teaching and example of the Apostles.

More on Continuity and Discontinuity

In applying the *Torah*, we recognize a degree of discontinuity between the Mosaic and New Covenants. Just how does the New Covenant differ from the Mosaic? How is it a better covenant? It is not a contrast between one being of law and the other of grace, one where God is harsh and the other where God is forgiving and kind. These are sub-cultural myths. Nor is it that one is for Israel and the other is for the Nations. Both are made with Israel, but the New Covenant explicitly applies the promise of the Abrahamic Covenant to bless all nations by commanding us to bring the message of the Gospel to all. The following are the basic differences. We now have the power of identification with Yeshua's crucifixion to put to death the deeds of the flesh. In addition, all may now be indwelt and filled with the Holy Spirit. Each individual is a Temple of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, a Temple is formed wherever a New Covenant congregation gathers together in faith. Prophecy is given to all and the gifts of the

Holy Spirit are poured out upon us. Jew and Gentile are now one in the Messiah. The Law has been written upon our hearts, and we are moved by the Spirit to obey God. As for the Mosaic writings, its teachings and principles are to be applied to the New Covenant Order. This is the teaching of Yeshua and Paul (Matthew 5:17-18; 2 Timothy 3:16-17) and it is their example to quote from Moses to settle issues.

In addition, the New Covenant enjoins us to share the Gospel with all people to disciple the nations. Jew and Gentile in the Messiah are now one in fellowship, foreshadowing the day when Israel and the nations will be one under the rule of the Messiah. Thus there is a change in the application of Mosaic *Torah*. The restriction that physically uncircumcised men must not join our Passover *Seder* is changed. Gentiles who are in Yeshua may join us; they have circumcised hearts and are clean. In addition, because of the power of Yeshua's sacrifice and the Spirit, accommodations in the Mosaic Law (such as in Matthew 19:8) are seen as no longer acceptable. Divorce laws are more stringent and slavery and polygamy are forbidden, and so there is both continuity and discontinuity. We are now under the New Covenant, a covenant said to be not like the Covenant given through Moses (Jeremiah 31:31ff). There is now no physical Temple; therefore, we need to think through the meaning of clean and unclean laws whose violation usually required temporary preclusion (until evening or for seven days) from Temple involvement (Some of the clean-unclean laws, if intentionally violated, required severe penalties. Today, these are connected to higher moral meanings with contemporary application; an example is the holiness of blood). This gives some sense of where we see the New Covenant as differing from the Mosaic. We should note that the New Covenant replaces the administration of the Mosaic Covenant, but does not replace or alter the Abrahamic Covenant. Rather, as McComiskey taught, the New Covenant is the permanent administration of the Abrahamic Covenant. The New Covenant is based on the fulfillments of the Messiah's crucifixion and resurrection, and the outpouring of the Spirit.

THE MESSIANIC JEWISH TASK

One of the more universal dimensions of the Messianic Jewish task is to reassert the fact that God has not changed in His desire for justice and for establishing His righteous order in every realm of life. Some Classical Christian theology was clear on this (e.g. Calvin and Kuyper). By contrast, "Darby-ite" theology opted out of social responsibility. We pray "Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." We read in Isaiah 42:4 (RSV) of the Messiah, "He will not fail or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law." In the Age to Come the Messiah will have established justice. It is now through us that He seeks to establish it. It is part of our witness and calling to exhibit the righteous order of God in every sphere of life we touch to the fullest extent of our Spirit-led influence. This means that in our business life, congregational life (including the standards of congregational discipline), our family order (Ephesians 5), our artistic life and our citizenship responsibility. Scientists also have a Kingdom calling rooted in Genesis 1:26ff. In the Bible, justice and love are not in opposition. Micah says we are to do justice and love mercy (Micah 6:8). Therefore, the pursuit of God's righteous order in every sphere of life is an expression of the second of the two greatest commandments – to love our neighbors as ourselves. To pursue justice from a motive of love for the sake of the Glory of God is to love our neighbors. Everywhere in the Bible exhorts us to this. However, anti-law theology of recent years has influenced many to not pursue the order of God's righteousness for the various spheres of life in

which we are involved. Charles Coleson has applied biblical *Torah* teaching to our penal system, and rightly so. We have little to say to the concerns of society without the *Torah*. We could say that love for God and man are expressed by worship and the pursuit of love-justice. Justice (or God's order of righteousness) is defined by His Word or *Torah* – not by the Marxist or socialist deception of absolute equality. It is equality before the Law of God, but includes a place for varieties of talents, gifts, callings and outcomes. In the international scene, justice occurs when Jerusalem is the capital of the world, and Israel and the nations are in proper relationship under the rule of the Messiah.

The goal of God is that the “*Torah* will go forth from Zion, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” The goal of the Gospel (the New Covenant) is the establishment of the *Torah*, the Rule of God, and the Kingdom of God. As we pursue God's righteous order, we move history to its climax which is the return of the Lord. We will only see partial manifestations of the Kingdom now but these manifestations are a crucial part of our witness. When God's Kingdom holds greater sway in a society, conditions for all improve markedly. Indeed, bringing the Gospel to the nations and discipling are the first order of business in pursuing justice because unless people are born again, they cannot submit to the Rule or *Torah* of God.

May I end this section with a heart cry for Israeli Messianic Jews to not give themselves to antinomian theology. Deliver the term *Torah* from the Rabbinical *Talmud* if you are so convicted, but do not abandon the biblical meaning of *Torah* in the New Covenant and the hope of the prophets to establish *Torah* over all the earth. May the word *Torah* be a delight to you.

THE PLAN OF THIS BOOK

This book suggests a Messianic Jewish *halakhic* approach to the various commandments and laws (explicit and implied) that are found in the Bible. It does not claim to be *halakhah* because it is not a body of rules that any community has adopted as binding on its members. It nevertheless presents a way of thinking that seeks to apply the Mosaic *Torah* (and also other parts of the Bible) to the New Covenant order and to contemporary life. As such, we have categorized the Law into basic subject divisions for a more coherent presentation. One will see by this that the easy distinction of Ceremonial and Moral Law does not fly, nor was it ever consistently applied in any tradition of Christianity. Categorizing by subject does have the disadvantage of not following the classical listing of 613 laws. In a study of the laws and commandments, one will find that 613 is somewhat arbitrary since some are repeated and not categorized well by subject. However, because this is the classical Jewish way of putting forth the biblical commandments, we will put traditional citations next to each commandment or law being discussed, so that one can find it in Jewish lists and commentaries.

In applying the Law we will discuss the traditional Jewish consensus, applications made in the New Testament, Classical Christian applications, and our concluding position. One will see that most of the *Torah* is not so difficult to understand and apply. Two men are working on this project, so if we do not agree on the final interpretation and application, we will make our differences known. This is a very Jewish way to deal with the issues. We trust that this book will aid in training in personal and social ethics for all believers and will point out specific applications for Jewish calling.