



ONE TORAH FOR ALL

One Torah shall be to him that is home-born, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you.
Exodus 12:49

Zerubbabel ben Emunah
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Walking between Legalism and Licentiousness

Getting out of the sin business the right way

Romans 6:1-2

1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

2 Elohim forbid. We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein?

There is a lot of finger pointing among those who claim to follow Mashiach Yeshua. Way too much in fact! There are those who point the finger at some with the accusation that they are trying to earn their salvation by keeping the Law (Torah). Those trying to live a Torah observant life in turn point the finger at those not trying to live a Torah observant life and accuse them of living a life of licentiousness or lawlessness, that is, without the Torah. So who is right? Neither and both are correct!

Technically speaking, there may be some truth to the accusations of each group. That is, if, and only if, those they are pointing the finger at are not walking by faith. However, if the person being accused is doing his best to walk by faith, then such an accusation is ludicrous!

They are most likely both wrong because of this harsh judgment one towards another. They should be trying to understand each other's position and walk; rather than trying to tear down the other, they should be building each other up. In both cases, both parties have failed to give to others the grace which they have received from Mashiach Yeshua.

Galatians 5:14-16

14 For the whole Torah is fulfilled in one word, even in this:

You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

15 But if you bite and devour one another, take heed that you be not consumed one of another.

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

It seems that not a lot has changed in two thousand years. Here is a passage which speaks directly to this infighting amongst followers of Mashiach in the first century, particularly between the two factions of those who desire to keep and do the Torah and those who only want to walk by faith, that is, they do not want to observe the Torah.

Please note that if one desires to keep and do the Torah, he must love his neighbor as himself. This is what the entirety of the Torah is all about, how to get along within His kingdom. This means not just getting along with others; it is way more than that; it is about watching over and taking care of each other.

Also, please note that if one desires to walk in the Spirit, that is, to walk by faith, he will not walk in the lust of the flesh! Truthfully, one cannot do either one well without doing the other. Both are necessary in order to live a life pleasing to YHWH.

Scripture has much to say both about legalism and licentiousness. In order to enhance our understanding of these two ditches, let us examine a few passages concerning each in order to be able to better to walk in the middle of the road.

Legalism

Legalism in the context of following Mashiach Yeshua is following a strict set of rules, dos and don'ts, in order to be in a right relationship with Him. This is not only true for oneself, but it is also viewed as being true for everyone. When a person caught up in legalism views a person who is not living according to the proper standard, then the legalist views the other as not being saved; he is lost and dying and on his way to a devil's hell.

Romans 7:7-14

7 What shall we say then? Is the Torah sin? Elohim forbid! Howbeit, I had not known sin, except through the Torah; for I had not known coveting, except the Torah had said, "You shall not covet;"

8 but sin, finding occasion, wrought in me through the commandment all manner of coveting; for apart from the Torah sin is dead.

9 And I was alive apart from the Torah once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died;

10 and the commandment, which was unto life, this I found to be unto death;

11 for sin, finding occasion, through the commandment beguiled me, and through it slew me.

12 So that the Torah is holy, and the commandment holy, and righteous, and good.

13 Did then that which is good become death unto me? Elohim forbid! But sin, that it might be shown to be sin, by working death to me through that which is good; - that through the commandment sin might become exceeding sinful.

14 For we know that the Torah is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.

First, let it be pointed out that the Torah is holy. The commandments of the Torah are holy, righteous, and good. It is not the Torah which caused one to sin. It is not the Torah which brought death into a person's life. What the Torah did was to reveal the sin in a person's life. It was sin which brought death into a person's life.

Many today are returning to our heavenly Father's Torah. This is right, good, and holy. However, there are many who seem to become harsh and bitter after embracing His Torah. What may be happening in such a person's life, which they may not fully realize, is one of the things Torah does – it reveals sin. Whatever sin is in a person's life, Torah will shine its light upon it, revealing its ugliness. If this sin is not properly dealt with, that is, brought under the Blood of Mashiach, then such a person will inevitably lash out at others, pointing out the sin in the other person's life, leaving his own sin unresolved.

There is a lot of emphasis upon following the process Yeshua taught in Matthew 18 when dealing with another believer. However, before such a process can even begin, that which Yeshua taught in Matthew 7 must come first. That is, before one can confront another about the speck of sin in his life, he first must confront himself about the log of sin in his own life. This does not necessarily mean that his own sin is completely eradicated, but it does mean that his own sin has been placed under the Blood of Mashiach and he is walking in all the light he has been given. This in turn gives him the proper perspective in being able to deal with his brother in love and compassion, thus in a spirit of restoration, not in a spirit of condemnation.

It is human nature to have a list of dos and don'ts and to follow that list religiously. However, that deceives one as Shaul pointed out in verse eleven above and death comes. One cannot focus upon a list of dos and don'ts and attain, retain, or maintain true life. The only way true life comes to any person is through faith in Mashiach Yeshua. One must focus upon Him and Him alone and then obey His Voice.

Ivrim (Hebrews) 12:2a
looking unto Yeshua the Author and Perfecter of our faith

Keeping the commandments, ordinances, statutes, and judgments of the Torah will not and cannot bring a person into a right relationship with his Creator. Hence, keeping said decrees also cannot gain a person a place in the olam haba (world to come). This is exactly where those who stray off into a legalistic approach get off of the path to righteousness and life; their focus is wrong. One must look to the Giver of the Torah rather than to that which He gave, the Torah.

The Torah is not bad, but rather, it is good, righteous, and holy. However, it will absolutely reveal the death within. Do not focus upon that which brings death. Focus upon that which brings life, that is, the Giver of all life, our Creator and Redeemer. Focus upon Yeshua our Mashiach!

Licentiousness

Licentiousness in the context of following Mashiach Yeshua is throwing out all the rules and living as one pleases and doing that which is right in his own eyes; he is a law unto himself. When a person who has discarded all the rules views anyone who attempts to keep any commandment in Scripture, particularly if it is found in the Old Testament, especially in the books of Moses, he is often seen and accused of legalism and not walking in the Spirit.

Licentious has its root in the word “license,” meaning one has a license to do that which is unlawful without the license.

Romans 6:15

What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under Torah, but under grace? Elohim forbid.

The Torah is not sinful. The way which some people use it is unlawful. Even a person who understands that he is to live his life according to Torah is a person who is under grace by the Blood of Mashiach Yeshua. When one has come to Mashiach Yeshua and accepted His free gift of salvation, he is to stop sinning. But how does one define sin if the definition of sin is thrown out, that is, the Torah is discarded? He cannot! In order to live a righteous life, one must understand the definition of sin as defined in Torah and by Torah.

Yochanan Aleph (1st John) 3:4

Every one that does sin also does lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.

What is sin, except that one is in violation of the Law? And what is the Law? Torah. Therefore, lawlessness is being without the Torah, which is sin according to this passage.

1st Timothy 1:8-9

***8 But we know that the Torah is good, if a man uses it lawfully,
9 as knowing this, that law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and unruly, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,***

The righteous person does that which is right. But those who are lawless do that which is wrong and this was the reason the Torah was given. The Law, any law, is not made for those who do right, but rather the Law is given for those who would not live right for the sake of being right.

The law applies to each and every person equally. This means that just because one person keeps and obeys the law does not mean that the person coming after him does not have to keep and obey the law as well. Yet, this is exactly what some suggest when they say that since Yeshua “fulfilled” the law, that is, kept and obeyed it, we don’t have to keep and obey the Torah. How silly is that!

This is the point where many go off into licentiousness, that is, living their lives with no restrictions and no rules to govern their actions. Such action is not a lawful use of Torah. Nor is it a lawful use of His Spirit. To obey His Spirit is to stay within the boundaries of the Torah.

Galatians 2:17-18

17 But if, while we sought to be justified in Mashiach, we ourselves also were found sinners, is Mashiach a minister of sin? Elohim forbid.

18 For if I build up again those things which I destroyed, I prove myself a transgressor.

When a person comes to Yeshua and accepts Him as Mashiach and receives salvation, he should not go back into the life of sin out of which he was just pulled, otherwise, he is building up that which he has already discarded. Where is the wisdom in that?

One might well say, "But teacher, what about the next verse, verse 19? Does this not say that we have died to the Law?"

Galatians 2:19

For I through the law died unto the law, that I might live unto Elohim.

The point of this in context is this: it was through the Torah that I came to know my sin. It is not that which revealed my sin which gives me life, but death came through that revelation and I died in my sin. However, it is through Mashiach Yeshua that one can have life that we might live unto our Creator. However, if one returns to the wallow, then he is not living unto Elohim! He is living unto himself.

When Shaul says that one has "died unto the law," he is simply saying that such a person has stopped sinning. He has gotten out of the sin business. For the law was given for the sinner, the lawbreaker. It was not given for the righteous!

Galatians 5:18-21

18 But if you are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness,

20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties,

21 envyings, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of which I forewarn you, even as I did forewarn you, that they who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of Elohim.

Just because one lives according to His Spirit does not give him a license to live however he chooses to live! Living according to the passing pleasures of sin is a sure ticket to the wrong place, that is, one shall not have a place in the world to come. Shaul (Paul) states quite clearly that those who live according to their own degraded passions, some of which he lists in the above passage, shall not inherit His kingdom.

Kepha Aleph (1st Peter) 4:1-5

1 Forasmuch then as Mashiach suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind; for he that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin;

2 that you no longer should live the rest of your time in flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of Elohim.

3 For the time past may suffice to have wrought the desire of the Gentiles, and to have walked in licentiousness, lusts, drunkenness, revellings, carousings, and abominable idolatries:

4 wherein they think it strange that you do not run with them into the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you,

5 who shall give account to Him that is ready to judge the living and the dead.

Kepha teaches that one is to have the same mindset as Yeshua had, that is, Yeshua observed Torah. He did not sin. We are not supposed to sin. We are to walk in His Spirit and thus not sin. If one is not sinning, then he is keeping Torah. The Spirit frees a person from the grasp of sin and enables him to live a life free from sin. To be free from sin by definition means one is living according to the standards of Torah, not necessarily the way man sees or understands those standards, but rather according to their true meaning, the way YHWH meant for them to be understood and lived.

Marqos (Mark) 7:20-23

20 And He said, "That which proceeds out of the man, that defiles the man.

21 For from within, out of the heart of men, evil thoughts proceed, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries,

22 covetings, wickednesses, deceit, licentiousness, an evil eye, railing, pride, foolishness;

23 all these evil things proceed from within, and defile the man."

Yeshua was quite clear: it is what proceeds to come out of the heart of a man through his actions which defiles him. If one is focused upon a strict code of rights and wrongs and upon all who violate his understanding of that code, then he has defiled himself. If one is focused upon living in the freedom of His Spirit and he goes off into wanton pleasures of any sort, because he is "free" in His Spirit, then he too has defiled himself.

In order to stay out of either ditch, one must stay on the road, the Highway of Holiness. In order to do that one must stay focused upon his Master. If one is his own master, then he will most assuredly fall into the ditch on one side of the road or the other. Only by focusing upon the Master Yeshua our Mashiach can one walk in a right relationship with Him as well as his fellow man.

Matithyah (Matthew) 22:37-40

37 And He said unto him, "You shall love YHWH you Elohim with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.

38 This is the great and first commandment.

39 And a second like unto it is this, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

40 On these two commandments the whole Torah hangs, and the prophets."

Okay, so you have a zeal for the One who has given you life; you love Him! Great! But how does that love for Him translate into loving your neighbor? Are you kind and considerate towards him at all times? Or, are you harsh and angry towards him because he does not see and understand Scripture in exactly the same way as you do?

If you are going to live by His Spirit, then you must live according to these two commandments, which is a summation of the whole Torah as well as the prophets; so said Yeshua.

Likewise, if you are going to live according to Torah, then you must live according to these two commandments, which is a summation of the whole Torah as well as the prophets; so said Yeshua.

The truth is this, either way, to live in a right relationship with our heavenly Father through Mashiah Yeshua, one must live according to these two commandments, which can only be done through the indwelling, empowering presence of His Spirit!

Be filled with His Spirit and hear and obey His Voice! Then, you will not be legalistic nor walk in the sin of licentiousness.

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