



The infant church in Jerusalem faced a quandary: what to do with Gentiles who desired to be part of the new body of Messianic believers. Today, the concern is reversed. How should the church view Jewish believers who want to express their nationality and heritage? Are Messianic congregations necessary, or should Jewish believers be incorporated into the Gentile church? How Jewish should a Messianic congregation be?

In *How Jewish Is Christianity?* one non-Jewish contributor and four Jewish believers in Yeshua (Jesus) consider two different viewpoints on how Jewish disciples of Jesus can articulate and live out their faith. William Varner argues that we do not need the Messianic congregation because all the needs of Jewish believers can be met in the church. Arnold Fruchtenbaum, John Fischer, Gershon Nerel, and Louis Goldberg maintain that Messianic Jews and congregations each have a part within the body of the Messiah as distinct entities, and they discuss different nuances of this view.

This book furnishes each perspective with a forum for presentation, critique, and defense, allowing you to draw your own conclusions. It also offers a perceptive chapter on the future for Messianic Jews and a directory of Messianic movement organizations.

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2 VIEWS ON THE MESSIANIC MOVEMENT

- William Varner
- Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum
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TORAH AND HALAKHAH AMONG MODERN ASSEMBLIES OF JEWISH YESHUA-BELIEVERS

An Israeli Response to Arnold Fruchtenbaum

Gershon Nerel

Keeping the Torah is commonly understood as part and parcel of maintaining Jewish identity. However, it is frequently disregarded that *only* the scriptural Torah—the canonical Pentateuch (*Torah Shebichtav* or *Torat Mosheh*), namely, the five books of Moses, alongside the sections of *Neviim* (Prophets) and *Ketuvim* (Writings) embodied in the Old Testament (*Tanakh*)—is accepted as a revelation from God. Within mainstream Judaism, the Oral Torah (*Torah Shebealpe*), also known as the *Halakhah*, is the rabbinical teachings and ceremonies accumulated throughout the ages that form the foundation for Jewish religious life. In light of this reality, too many modern Jewish believers in Yeshua (JBY) unfortunately also overestimate the *Halakhah* and fail to observe the scriptural Torah according to the teaching of the New Testament.

The *Halakhah*, consisting of rabbinical literature and depending on human traditions, actually stands apart from the sacred collection of the Bible. Furthermore, the *Halakhah* assumes an authority that was not given to it, aspiring to overmaster the authority of the Holy Bible. For example, the *Halakhah* unilaterally shifts the biblical New Year (Rosh Hashanah) from the

month of Nisan, when Passover is kept at the springtime, to the fall. Consequently, an ongoing tension regarding authority exists between the scriptural Torah and the Oral Torah. This conflict over authority is further accelerated when discussing the New Testament, particularly the teachings of Yeshua.

Today, while bordering mainstream Judaism and functioning within a unique no-man's-land, JBY must provide clear answers to fundamental questions relating to Torah and the whole Bible on the one hand, and tradition and human authority on the other. In other words, which texts, in reality, are *the* exclusive basis for belief and practice? Which teachings and which customs are indeed obligatory and top priority, and which should be completely neglected? How does one outwardly express Jewish characteristics without compromising or even misleading the focus of Yeshua and the Bible? How does one establish a truthful but also practical system of priorities both for private and congregational life?

THE SUPREMACY OF THE WORDS OF YESHUA

As a matter of fact, only a handful of JBY do not accept the authority of the canonical Holy Scriptures comprising the Old and New Testaments as the Word of God. However, while JBY do not question the comprehensive validity of this canon, still too many among them, including Fruchtenbaum, do question the validity of the Mosaic covenant. Therefore, it should be underlined that in principle the writings of Moses are still valid for contemporary Jewish Yeshua-believers—yet they are fully subject to the teachings of Yeshua and the continuous guidance of the Holy Spirit.¹

In order to relate rightly to the issue of the validity of the Torah, one should *not* start, as does Fruchtenbaum, with utilizing quotations from the epistles of the apostle Paul and commenting on them. Rather, one must refer initially to the words of Yeshua, the Son of God, as they appear in the Gospels. Putting the teachings of King Messiah in first place as the sole cornerstone for belief and practice, combined with the directives of the

¹See, for example, my article, "Observing the Torah according to Yeshua," in *Chai*, the magazine of the British Messianic Jewish Alliance (Summer 2001), 1–5.

Spirit, enables one to discern which parts of the Torah are still relevant today and in what way they should relate to Jewish identity.

The very fact that Yeshua himself validated the Torah in a very authoritative way must be strongly emphasized. This is an elementary and cardinal matter. In his Sermon on the Mount Yeshua made this declaration:

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law [Torah] or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

MATTHEW 5:17-19

Any exegetical attempts to minimize the significance of these words should be rejected. At the same time, however, nobody should take these words out of the entire context of the scattered words of Yeshua in the New Testament: that the only way of salvation is by faith in the crucified and resurrected Son of God—not by literally observing ceremonial practices of the Torah. And, for example, the baptism in water of new disciples of Yeshua is *not* in the name of the Torah but “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20, emphasis added).

The Torah is still valid for JBY without the obsolete legalistic approaches of rabbis and sages who openly oppose the New Testament. Moreover, the specific rules and ordinances of the Torah relating to worship in the temple or to the Aaronic priesthood are no longer relevant today. It was Yeshua himself who foretold the destruction of the temple (Matthew 24:1-2), and he

also explained that true worshipers of God do not need to go to Jerusalem (John 4:21-23). Obviously atonement and forgiveness of sins are no longer received through animal sacrifices and animal blood but only through the blood shed at Golgotha (Matthew 26:28; Mark 10:45; Luke 5:24). In the body of Messiah age in which we live, salvation comes only through belief in Yeshua (John 11:25-26).

In fact, the Torah did come to an end as a means of salvation, “for Messiah is the end of the law [Torah] *for righteousness*” (Romans 10:4 NASB, emphasis added). In addition, the Torah also ended as a guideline for punishment, either by “eye for eye, and tooth for tooth” (Matthew 5:38) or by stoning (John 8:3-11). But definitely the Torah of the Messiah did not cancel each and every aspect of the Pentateuch. The basic ethical principles of Torah are still valid for all humans. For example, who cancelled the Ten Commandments and other laws like social responsibilities for the poor and the widow (Leviticus 19:9-15), or who did away with the forbidding of acts of tattoo and sorcery (Leviticus 19:28, 31)? Similarly, Messiah Yeshua did not nullify the principle of respecting rulers and forbidding the cursing of leaders (Exodus 22:28). This principle was ratified also in the New Testament, when Saul/Paul faced the Jerusalem Sanhedrin and testified about his faith in Yeshua (Acts 23:5).

The Written Torah still has many aspects that are valid particularly for the people of Israel—in regard to the biblical calendar and feasts, for example. The Torah provides the elementary framework for keeping the Jewish nation—God’s chosen people. As a distinct society, there must be a way for preserving the Jews uniquely in God’s plan for history and beyond history.

When one realizes it was Yeshua himself who gave the Torah to Moses and to Israel on Mount Sinai, one can also easily see that in the New Testament Yeshua provides a new key as to how to keep the Torah in the new dispensation that started with the Incarnation. As the originator of the commandments in *both* Testaments, Yeshua has the full authority to introduce fresh guidelines and priorities regarding how to observe the Torah. Practically, therefore, while teaching in the New Testament to keep the Torah, Yeshua also modified it, not in any legalistic way, but by introducing instead new and higher insights for the kingdom of God.

THE INSTRUMENTALITY OF "MOSES' SEAT"

When it is both spiritually reasonable and practically possible, JBY should not totally ignore the rabbinical establishment. Even today, in a sense, the rabbinical leaders, the inheritors of the scribes and the Pharisees of antiquity, are still sitting "in Moses' seat" (Matthew 23:2). On that account, nowadays JBY may receive some "general services," so to speak, from rabbinical institutions.

Such services include, for example, wedding and burial functions. It should be noted that, according to the laws of the state of Israel, the approval of any Jewish beliefs and practices are left exclusively in the hands of the Orthodox religious leaders. This applies, for example, to the recognition of only those Jewish marriages that are conducted and approved by the official rabbinate. The same is true of the authorized last rites and burials for the Jewish society, even to the procurement of land for cemeteries and the decision of who will be buried there.

Thus, JBY couples may marry at the rabbinate offices, and even receive a *ketubah*, a marriage certificate, from them. Usually after such a rabbinical ceremony, congregations of JBY perform an additional matrimonial ceremony of their own, blessing the young couple in the name of Yeshua. But there are occasions when the Orthodox rabbis will reject JBY and refuse to do the wedding ceremony, and so these couples need to go outside the country, spending time and money abroad to get married. Most fly to Cyprus, the closest non-Arab country, for this occasion.

Another example is the service provided by *hevrah kadisha*, the burial societies. Actually, there is no reason why JBY should not employ the authorized Jewish burial societies and bury their dead in the formal Jewish cemeteries. In Israel, for example, some of the pioneer JBY, like Moshe Ben-Meir and Solomon Zeev Kofman, were buried in the state cemeteries in Jerusalem. Yet, in other cases, the rabbis refused to supply a grave in the mainstream cemeteries. In such cases JBY had no choice but to bury their dead in alternate cemeteries—those belonging either to church organizations or to secular institutions.

In reality most of the rabbis and their delegates, either Orthodox, Conservative, or Reform, turn down these requests and deny any such services to JBY. Even though JBY are willing

to follow certain procedures as mentioned above, still rabbinical Judaism often misuses its monopoly and manipulates its institutions against JBY through its long-lasting policy of "killing by delegitimization."

CIRCUMCISION

According to the commandment given to Abraham and his seed through Isaac forever ("This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised" [Genesis 17:10]), God manifests his unique relationship with Israel. Yeshua, too, was circumcised on the eighth day (Luke 2:21). Nowadays circumcision on the eighth day remains both a religious and a national mark for the Jews, the eternal inheritors of the divine promises through Isaac and Jacob. The national and territorial promises to the Hebrews came hundreds of years prior to the presentation of the Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai. Presently these promises to Israel are still embodied symbolically in the act of circumcision.

At the same time, it must be absolutely clear that circumcision has nothing to do with gaining credit for salvation. Justification and salvation come only through faith in Yeshua and through his grace. This principle is equal for both Jew and non-Jew (Romans 4). Yet as a national symbol of the original covenant between God and Israel, circumcision remains a unique sign for the entire Jewish people, including JBY. Historically, the Judaizers of the first century wanted to impose circumcision also on the Gentiles, claiming that this operation was required for salvation (Acts 15:1). But that issue was long ago settled by the Jerusalem Council in the first century A.D. (Acts 15), namely, that circumcision in the flesh has nothing to do with salvation.

Another historical fact is that many churches continue, as in past generations, to request the abolition of circumcision by Jewish "converts," without really understanding the biblical background. Among us we still have elderly brethren who recall and testify that Gentile churches openly discredited them for circumcising their sons. Before the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, it was not uncommon for JBY to face excommunication after circumcising their sons.²

As for the performance of the circumcision act, JBY in Israel find no difficulty at all in employing the services of professional and authorized circumcisers (*mohalim*) at the *Brit Mila* (circumcision) of their sons. Sometimes, however, when the parents of the baby tell the circumciser that they believe in Yeshua, the *mohel* will refuse to grant the full traditional blessing but will still perform the act for the sake of doing a good deed and getting a payment.

Nowadays the *Brit Mila* among JBY, both in Israel and the Diaspora, is actually a nonissue, since it is almost unanimously accepted as a national symbolic act, nowhere annulled *as such* in the New Testament.

THE SEVENTH-DAY SABBATH

The lunar calendar with its days of rest and feasts, as condensed in Leviticus 23, was nowhere in Scripture taken away and is therefore valid for JBY to observe. However, while keeping the biblical calendar with its special days, JBY should carefully discern between what *the* Rabbi says in the New Testament and what the establishment rabbis say. Only the guidelines of Yeshua should be considered by JBY for the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath, since "the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath" (Matthew 12:8).

In the state of Israel, for instance, the seventh-day Sabbath, rather than Sunday, is naturally observed by JBY as the day of rest and of worship. In some congregations the weekly service is held on Friday evening.³ As a matter of fact, Yeshua also kept the Sabbath. But Yeshua always challenged the scribes and the Pharisees of his time and instructed them on how to observe the Sabbath. This correction should likewise apply to the current rabbinical establishment with its restrictions concerning the *Shabbat* observance. For example, because "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27), it is fully

³See Gershon Nerel, "The Formation and Dissolution of a 'Messianic Jewish' (Hebrew Christian) Community in Jerusalem in the 1920s," in *Proceedings of the Twelfth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, Division E (Jerusalem 2001), 19–29 (Hebrew).

³See Kai Kjaer-Hansen and Bodil F. Skjott, *Facts and Myths about the Messianic Congregations in Israel*, Mishkan 30–31 (Jerusalem: Caspari Center, 1999), 221.

right for JBY to use a car and travel on the Sabbath to a Bible study or worship. Similarly, because "it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath" (Matthew 12:12), it is right for JBY to use fire and electricity for elementary activities. The same would apply for using money discreetly when circumstances require it.

At the same time, however, contemporary JBY should not stick to imposed *Shabbat* traditions, such as having candles on Friday evening and performing the ceremony of *Havdalah* (separation), applied to a special prayer declaring the end of the Sabbath. Benedictions over the *Shabbat* candles or over the *besamim*, the spices of the *Havdalah*, have no biblical foundation whatever, although rabbinical traditions introduced "divine" prayers and blessings as though they were ordained by God. Contrary to the *Halakhah* blessings during the lighting of candles, God did not command any JBY to perform these acts. Needless to say, traditional East-European food, like *gefilte* (stuffed) fish, has nothing to do with the observance of the Sabbath.

Likewise, JBY should *not* limit their *Shabbat* Bible study to the traditional weekly *parashah*, the Torah portions specified for public services in the synagogue. These divisions of the Torah, arranged in a one-year cycle, provide a preset and fixed text that anchors the study of the Bible within one bound framework. Any pattern of this kind sooner or later results in stagnancy and limits the guidance of the Spirit. Therefore such a restriction on the congregational teacher is not desirable. Moreover, while the study of Scripture in congregations of JBY does combine closely both covenants, and rightly so, still it should *not* start with the Old Testament. The starting point for each biblical study must rather begin with the New Testament perspective and focus on the "keys" provided by Yeshua.

The major issue of the seventh-day Sabbath is to rest from weekly obligations and to worship God. This holy day is to be used for the Lord and not for exhausting oneself through shopping, sports, or sightseeing at the expense of taking quality time for spiritual growth and edification.

PASSOVER

Since biblical *Pesach* (Passover) is not linked to the Gregorian church calendar, JBY do not need to correlate this feast to

the church's Easter, but they should celebrate it together with the rest of the Jewish people. This is *the* major Messianic feast, emphatically pointing from the Old Testament to the characteristics pertaining to the Messiah: the sacrificial lamb and the atoning blood. This is the feast whereby Jewish people especially can understand the meaning of "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

The center of the *Pesach* celebration should not be the reading of the traditional *Haggadah*, the narrative of the exodus from Egypt. Indeed, the remembrance of Israel's redemption from Egypt is significant, but it is even more important to remember the redemption through Yeshua from the bondage of sin. The *Pesach* should primarily be a reminder of the Last Supper of Yeshua and his command to commemorate his death and resurrection. Because the Passover meal is especially meant for the younger generation—to educate the children—time management is of utmost importance so as to not waste time on insignificant matters. Thus the *Pesach* ceremony must not relate to marginal issues considered important by tradition, such as reading lengthy portions from the Talmud or singing Aramaic songs like *Had Gadya* (meaning "An Only Kid"), hardly understood by children.

In other words, as JBY celebrate *Pesach*, it is sufficient to use only the relevant texts from Scripture. For example, such texts are clearly found in Exodus 12, where the connection is quite clear between the blood of each Passover lamb on each Jewish home and the death of the Messiah. Here, with the blood of the lamb on the lintel and the two doorposts of each house, one can also observe the symbol of the cross. Another text may relate to the fulfillment of Isaiah 53. Eventually the whole celebration should be connected with the Lord's Supper, reminding the people of Yeshua's victory over sin.⁴

In addition, during *Pesach* JBY should eat only the *mazza*, the unleavened bread, symbolizing abstaining from sin and the challenge to live a holy life.⁵ The feast of *mazzot* reminds us of

⁴See Benjamin and Ruben Berger, *Bereitet dem Herrn den Weg!* (Hombrechtikon: Echad, 1993), 53–63. Cf. Gershon Nerel, *Messianic Jews in Eretz-Israel (1917–1967)* (Dissertation, Hebrew University, Jerusalem 1996), 227.

⁵See Michal Charish, "Not on the Mazza Alone," in *Kivun* (Jerusalem), vol. 27 (2002), 8–9 (Hebrew).

the importance of "the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5:8, NASB). Most Israeli JBY eat only *mazza* during the *Pesach* week. The same kind of bread is used during the rest of the year for the other occasions of celebrating Communion.

KASHRUT (KOSHER FOOD)

Whereas the Old Testament dietary laws were primarily given for the Jews, the New Testament also instructs Gentile believers to distinguish between food that is *kasher* (permissible) and *terefah* (forbidden). The council of apostles at Jerusalem decided even the Gentile believers should "abstain from things sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals" (Acts 15:29). Basically and wherever possible, JBY should keep the dietary laws of *kashrut*, avoiding meat such as pork, seafood, and creeping animals. In the state of Israel it is no problem for JBY to keep the elementary dietary laws of *kashrut*, although obviously such abstaining has nothing to do with salvation or achieving a higher spiritual status.⁶

The apostle *Sha'ul* (Paul) also makes it very clear that one should not be legalistic in these matters. As in the case of observing *Shabbat*, both logic and the guidance of the Spirit must be used in order to eat and bless the food, with thanksgiving (1 Timothy 4:1–5). Moreover, as with disciples of Yeshua from all the nations, JBY should likewise *not* make the issue of food a source of arguments and quarreling. The proper principle has to be as follows: "Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience" (1 Corinthians 10:25).

This principle applies not only to buying in shops but also when being invited as guests to a meal, when totally unable to control the circumstances. In such cases much sensitivity and flexibility need to be practiced. Often also much creativity is needed, and nowadays even in the Diaspora it is common to ask for a vegetarian meal. It is not difficult at all to ask for "health food" and so to keep the *kashrut*.

Practically, JBY accept the rabbinical rules of ritual slaughtering and need not develop their own system of supervising the

⁶See Moshe Emmanuel Ben Meir, *From Jerusalem to Jerusalem—Excerpts from Diary* (Jerusalem 2001), 88 (Hebrew).

slaughtering of animals and the distribution of meat. JBY should also remind themselves of the principle that it *is* permissible for Jews to mix milk and meat. The Torah only forbids the slaughtering of the young-born animal together with the mother: "Do not cook a young goat in its mother's milk" (Exodus 23:19; 34:26).

HANUKKAH AND CHRISTMAS

Hanukkah (Feast of Dedication) is explained in the apocryphal book of Maccabees as a commemoration of the victory of the Jews over the Syrians in 165 B.C. The festival is mentioned once in the New Testament (John 10:22), yet there is no commandment whatsoever to observe this feast. We may compare this situation with the text mentioning the first disciples who sold their private property and shared everything in a communal life (Acts 4:32–37) in that there is no biblical commandment that all believers must always live in a communal system without private belongings.

The celebration of Hanukkah by lighting candles for eight days—as a reminder of the miracle of the cruse of oil that burned for eight days instead of one—introduces a "divine benediction" on the candles that was never given by God. God never commanded the lighting of such candles. This is a traditional festival and should not be imposed on JBY. In the state of Israel, for example, children do celebrate Hanukkah with their peers in the kindergarten and in the schools, but this festival has no meaning for congregational life, particularly as it has no Messianic significance rooted in the Bible.

According to *Halakhah*, Hanukkah begins on the 25th day of the Jewish month of Kislev, and it stands as a counterpart for Christmas, Feast of the Messiah. Within the Jewish commonwealth one can easily observe how the Hanukkah celebrations appear to be interchangeable with Christmas. In order to avoid confusions between these two feasts of light, JBY should celebrate the Festival of the Messiah, and not Hanukkah, to highlight the significance of the Incarnation and the fulfillment of the numerous Messianic prophecies in the Bible. The specific dates of December 24/25 are not important, but only the fact that, as an act of solidarity with all believers in the Messiah in the world,

JBY share in the greatest event in history. In this way JBY keep the spiritual proportions with regard to celebrating the festivals. The festival of Yeshua's advent into this world is more significant than the Festival of Dedication, even though this festival is not ordained in Scripture.

PURIM

Like Hanukkah, Purim represents the victory of the Jews over their enemies. Interestingly, however, while the book of Esther is included in the scriptural canon, the name of God does not appear in the book. In reality, the Feast of Purim has become a carnival of costumes and of silly activities. During this feast it is permissible for minors to smoke cigarettes, and the celebrants are encouraged to get drunk. According to *Halakhah*, it is a "Mitzvah" (religious duty) to dine and drink.

Unlike Hanukkah, Purim is not mentioned in the New Testament. From a national viewpoint, in the state of Israel, for example, children annually celebrate this feast and remember the deliverance of the Jews from their foes. Yet Purim should not have a role in the congregational life of JBY. There is no biblical or theological justification to celebrate this feast, as it has no linkage whatsoever to the Messiah. The national identity of JBY is not weakened when they do not celebrate Purim in their assemblies. In fact, during the second temple period Purim did not possess a canonized status among the festivals of Israel.⁷

Neither Purim nor Hanukkah brought lasting victory—or comprehensive salvation—for the Jewish people. The enemies and haters of Israel have not disappeared. Modern "Hamans" and "Antiochuses" are still fighting against the Jews. The only comfort and hope for Israel is in Yeshua.

NO NEED FOR A MESSIANIC HALAKHAH

Because JBY are totally free of keeping the *Torah shebaal peh*, the oral law, they should not develop their own *Halakhah* based

⁷See, for example, Aharon Oppenheimer, "Love of Mordechai or Hatred of Haman? Purim in the Days of the Second Temple and Afterwards," in *Zion* 62 (Jerusalem 1997): 408–18 (Hebrew).

on those customs and decrees originating from non-believers in Yeshua. In fact, the modern followers of the so-called *hazal*, the Jewish sages, still reject Yeshua and oppose his teachings. How can the deniers of Yeshua set an example for JBY?

There are explicit cases where the New Testament and *Halakhah* sharply clash. First, when praying, men among JBY should not wear a cap (*kippah*) on their heads, against the practice of some JBY today. In the New Testament we read that during worship men should take off their hats (1 Corinthians 11:7). Second, it is no secret that within mainstream synagogues JBY are unwelcome as *persona non grata*. Since the name of Yeshua is still anathema in the normative synagogues, why do JBY need to use the term *beit-knesset* (synagogue) for their assemblies? *Kehila* (congregation) is a preferable term, since it does not hold any connotations to the *minim* (meaning “apostates” and referring to JBY) mentioned in the regular *siddur*, the Jewish prayer book.

The only teacher of JBY must be Yeshua, not the *hazal*. It is the duty and responsibility of JBY to focus totally on the teachings of Yeshua and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, JBY should remind themselves of the words of Yeshua concerning the rabbis and their traditions: “Hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men’s faces” (Matthew 23:13)—and especially these words: “Woe to you experts in the law [Torah], because you have taken away the key to the knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering” (Luke 11:52).

CONCLUSION

Because Torah does not only mean “law” and “ordinances” (Greek, *nomos*), but also “teaching” and “educating” (Greek, *didachē*), it is of utmost significance for modern JBY to carefully observe the Torah of the Messiah, first given in the Old Testament and later revised in the New Testament. All the teachings and ordinances of Yeshua, as the ultimate and divine authority, should be understood and implemented by JBY through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

It is absolutely true that Yeshua broke down the dividing wall of hostility between Jewish believers and other believers in Yeshua from the nations (Ephesians 2:11–16). Yet at the same

time, Yeshua did *not* establish another wall between JBY and the Torah. Just as there is a spiritual unity around the Messiah between Jews and Gentiles, in a real sense JBY still have a physical and ethnic unity with the whole nation of Israel.

It should be emphasized that the fence Yeshua removed is not the Written Torah or the national commandments. The fence Yeshua removed, with the destruction of the second temple, was the Mosaic covenant. While all five of the Levitical offerings are now a part of the one sacrifice of the Messiah, his sacrifice now provides a focus on salvation for all peoples, Jews and Gentiles alike, who become a part of the one body of the Messiah. And so Saul/Paul wrote, “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law [Torah] of Messiah” (Galatians 6:2).