



haDerek - a Guide to the 'Hebrew' Way

PART 3 – Arguments against the Way

by Tim Kelley

In our previous installment, I made the statement “actions speak louder than words”, and I used that statement to show that the actions of the apostles, especially in the book of Acts, show that they still continued to follow, guard, and teach the Torah. But in reality, their actions did not speak louder than their words because their words in support of the Torah and the Hebrew walk were pretty loud themselves. The problem is not, nor has it ever been, that they said one thing and did another. Their words match their actions to a tea! Unfortunately, theologians have taken their words out of context and twisted them around to make it appear they were saying what they clearly were not.

So how does one defend the Torah, the word of God, the words of the Messiah, and the actions of the Apostles against those who would claim that some, if not all, of Gods law is no longer applicable. How does one respond when asked if God’s law is applicable today? I submit that the best defense is to know the questions before they’re asked, and to always be ready with an answer. The apostle Peter addressed the believers in Asia Minor during a time very similar to ours. In his letter, he admonished those who were being persecuted by their family and friends to –

^{NKJ} **1 Peter 3:15** . . . always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear . . .

If we’re going to be able to give an answer, we’ll need to know the scriptures . . . not only what they say, but also the context in which they were written. That context includes not only the Hebrew or Greek behind the words, but also the prophetic understanding and culture in which it was written. For instance, one question I get oftentimes when asked why I believe the entire Torah is still applicable for believers is this –

“So you believe we should stone people who pick up sticks on the Sabbath”?¹

This question often comes from those who actually observe the Sabbath yet believe that some of God’s law has been “done away”. It’s supposed to paint me into a corner. My answer is simply -

“the context of that example is of a person who is part of a nation of people who all share the same walk, yet that person is acting defiantly against the King (YHVH). He wasn’t just taken out and stoned, but the King directed them as to what should happen. In subsequent cases, the act would have to be witnessed by at least two witness, taken to court, and the court would have to provide a verdict. Obviously, that would not happen today, so no, I don’t believe we should stone people who break the Sabbath, but when Messiah returns, He will determine if it’s reinstated.”

When answered within the context of the scripture, a person oftentimes has no recourse but to move on to a different topic since to continue the discussion would continue to expose their lack of scriptural knowledge.

Let’s now begin to look at some of the questions people tend to ask about the observance of God’s law and attempt to answer them within the context of the Bible. We’ll start with three of the “hard” ones.

Question #1 – Did not Paul say that the Law is a curse?

This is taken from Paul’s statement in Galatians 3:10 and 3:13.

¹ Numbers 15:32-36

^{NKJ} **Galatians 3:10** For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed *is* everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them."

^{NKJ} **Galatians 3:13** Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed *is* everyone who hangs on a tree") . . .

The web site GotQuestions.org states what I believe is the common understanding of this phrase. It says –

“As opposed to the blessing, which is grace, the Law is a curse upon all mankind, none of whom can possibly fulfill its requirements. While the Law itself is perfect and holy, those who try to justify themselves before its holy Author bring not His blessing, but His curse upon themselves. The Bible itself tells us what the curse of the Law is: “All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law’ (Gal. 3:10).”²

The problem with this understanding is that the scripture never says that the Law is a curse. Instead, it says that there is a curse that's associated with disobedience to the law. In other words, the “curse of the law” is the curse that comes about as a result of disobedience, and that curse can be found in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28.

^{NKJ} **Deuteronomy 28:15** " But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:

In both the Leviticus and the Deuteronomy passages, the culmination of the curse is that the people will be scattered throughout the nations –

^{NKJ} **Leviticus 26:33** I will scatter you among the nations and draw out a sword after you; your land shall be desolate and your cities waste.

^{NKJ} **Deuteronomy 28:64** " Then the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods, which neither you nor your fathers have known -- wood and stone.

This is the “curse of the Law”. It's not the law itself.

Bible history shows that Israel did turn from God, and as a result the curse was placed on Israel. The nation was split and the northern 10 tribes were scattered throughout the nations and soon began to consider themselves to be “gentiles”.

So what is Paul saying in Galatians 3? He is showing the Galatian people that it's not their works (works of the law) that have redeemed them from the curse, but it was their faith in Messiah Yeshua. What's more, if they think it was their works that redeemed them, they are still under the curse.

Question #2 – Wasn't the Law nailed to the cross?

Paul's letter to the Colossians, like most of Paul's letters, was written to a synagogue congregation in Asia Minor that was more than likely composed of believing Jews as well as non-Jewish believing “gentiles”³ who are at least in part, descendants of the northern Israelite tribes that were scattered throughout the nations as a result of the curse given in the law of Moses. These people were for all practical purposes “dead” to the ways of YHVH until they began to be called back to YHVH as a

² <http://www.gotquestions.org/curse-of-the-law.html>

³ Colossians 1:21-22

result of Messiah Yeshua's death and resurrection which paved the way for the curse to be lifted and their return to the "commonwealth of Israel". But like it was in Galatia, there were some who were trying to convince these non-Jewish Israelites that Messiah's sacrifice was not enough . . . to be accepted by God, they would have to observe certain Jewish traditions –

^{ESV} **Colossians 2:8** See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

Paul did not want the Colossians to be compelled to follow Jewish tradition, but instead showed the non-Jews that they were being "resurrected" from their dead state (being without YHVH) by the death and resurrection of Messiah Yeshua by whom their sins (as a people) were forgiven.

^{NKJ} **Colossians 2:13** And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,

In other words, the sins that brought on the curse are now forgiven. Paul then restates what he had just said except that he stated it in the Greek legal terms of the day.

^{KJV} **Colossians 2:14** Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

In this passage, the phrase "handwriting of ordinances" is from the Greek "cheirographon tois dogmasin". *Cheirographon* (Strong's 5498) simply means something written, but in the context of 1st century Greek/Roman culture, it referred specifically to a note of debt that would have to be repaid. Dogmasin (Strong's 1378) means "decrees", "rules", "ordinances" which, in the context of Paul's letter, is the Torah; but it's not the Torah that is against us, it's the debt that was against us, and Yeshua has taken IT – the DEBT⁴ and nailed IT to the cross.

By blotting out the note of debt, what's left is a clean piece of paper. The sins that were once there are now gone. Thus He's disarmed the debt collector – haSatan.

^{NKJ} **Colossians 2:15** Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

This leads right in to the next question . . .

Question #3 – Doesn't Paul say that the Biblical festivals are mere shadows, but the real thing is Christ?

This question is based on Paul's statement following what we just talked about. To better answer the question, let's go a little further back in chapter 2 to lay some groundwork. In the first few verse of chapter 2, Paul is warning the people (those returning northern-tribe Israelites) to not be taken captive by those in the congregation who want to draw you into oral tradition (which Paul considers to be of as much value as the dogma of the pagan world) but to remain rooted in the understanding that they are a part of the people of God because of what Yeshua had done for them. Because Yeshua had removed their "debt", God had reconciled them to Himself⁵ and they should now consider themselves fully vested into the community of Israel. As such, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, they will be able to understand the walk of God just as, if not better than, their Jewish counterparts. With that said, he admonishes them to . . .

⁴ Note that "it" is a singular pronoun and refers to the singular noun "cheirographon" – the note of debt. On the other hand, "dogmasin" is plural, thus it is not the antecedent of "it".

⁵ Col. 1:19-21

^{NKJ} **Colossians 2:16-17** . . . let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

In other words, they don't need to feel inferior to the Jews in regards to those things. They don't need to submit to their (the Jews') traditions regarding what's kosher or not, what foods can be eaten in what sequence, how to observe the festivals, or anything like that. That's not to say that those traditions are bad . . . they're just not necessary. As long as they observe them in accordance with the Torah, they have nothing to worry about..

Paul then gave a reason why the non-Jews might actually find more meaning in the festivals than their Jewish brothers. For clarity, I'll again quote vs. 16 & 17, but this time from the Young's Literal Translation.

^{YLT} **Colossians 2:16-17** Let no one, then, judge you in eating or in drinking, or in respect of a feast, or of a new moon, or of sabbaths, ¹⁷ which are a shadow of the coming things, and the body *is* of the Christ;

Did you get what Paul just said? He said that the food laws and festivals are an image of the future of the body of Messiah, and we understand that to be correct because they picture major events in the history of the bride of Messiah – Israel.

Shalom Aleichem