

Introduction

Part 4

Is the Torah still Binding?

Studying the Scriptures in both the English and the Hebrew languages, the major premise that tends to come forth (from the Hebrew Scriptures) based upon the teachings in the Tanach and the Apostolic Writings is that the Torah is still binding and that Hashem, did not intend for Yeshua's appearance to render irrelevant the message of the Torah but is in fact a part of the message of the gospel which is to walk in righteousness, holiness, justice, and truth, and to seek the Lord God of Israel all the days of our lives. These instructions do remain valid for us today taking the peshat (simple) reading of the biblical texts in contrast to what modern theologies teach. Modern theologies would have us believe the Apostolic Writings supersede the Torah. The Apostolic Writings however are in fact a first century commentary on the Torah as a way of life. The majority of Christian denominations however subscribe to some version of replacement theology, that the church has replaced Israel, and that the New Covenant has replaced the Old.

For those whom I have talked with, one of the major issues with obeying Torah is in regard to the halakhic distinction between Jews and gentiles where the typical Christian feels obeying the Torah would make them wannabe Jews. This is a by-product in a sense that the To-

rah movement's approach to obeying the Torah is to take hold of the way Judaism obeys Torah, or at least, to apply a mode of Jewishness to the application of the Scriptures to our lives. The Torah movement views this as the most legitimate and important religious lifestyle to strive for. Is this a right or wrong approach to take? The major opinion in Christianity both historically and today is a resounding "YES."

Today we live in information overload, where there is unprecedented access to the Rabbinic texts, and to ideas which for the modern church goer are foreign. This explosion of information and accessibility to information has helped to facilitate this Jewish mode of appropriation and application of the Scriptures in our lives. Take for example, some 30 years ago, a non-Jewish non-academic student learning Talmud would have been difficult to fathom. Today however we find many followers learning about the weekly Torah portion from popular Web portals such as aish.com and chabad.org. For some believers who are trying to connect to the God of Israel and to Yeshua the Messiah, the answer is to live like a Jew. This approach comes as a consequence of studying God's Word and taking seriously the 5 books of Moshe and considering the following questions. "*How does the church understand the application of Torah today?*" Note how in Part 3 we looked at this in relation to the parallel to the pagan nations. Additional questions we can ask are, "*Was the Torah something temporary until the coming of the Messiah Yeshua?*" And "*Why are these Scriptures not applicable today?*" An example may be found in the book of *Devarim / Deuteronomy 12:28*? Modern translations are discordant on these questions. For example, *Galatians 3:24* appears to state contradictory interpretations on the Greek text according to Paul while examining the various English translations New Living Translation (NLT) and the NIV as compared to the NASB.

Galatians 3:24

3:24 Let me put it another way. The law was our guardian until Christ came; it protected us until we could be made right with God through faith. (NLT)

Galatians 3:24

3:24 So the law was our guardian until Christ came that

we might be justified by faith. (NIV)

Galatians 3:24

3:24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. (NASB)

Looking at these translations illustrates the significance on how important it is in choosing an English translation, because modern theology has deeply effected the biblical translators. The the NLT translation states that the law “*was*” our guardian “*until*” Christ came speaking of something that has passed. The NIV also states this in a similar way. The NASB however states the Law “*has become*” a tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. Note how according to the NASB the Torah is a means for guidance in righteous living, and for directing us to the Messiah and is to be lived out by faith. This leads us to conclude that the choice of translation of the bible has serious implications for our understanding the Scriptures in relation to our understanding on the application of Torah for our lives. The Messiah Yeshua opened up access to the Torah as it is to be performed by faith and not out of route to earn merit of our own accord. In regard to the validity of Torah for our lives today, take for example the following statements from the book of Deuteronomy.

Devarim / Deuteronomy 12:28

12:28 ‘Be careful to listen to all these words which I command you, so that it may be well with you and your sons after you forever, for you will be doing what is good and right in the sight of the Lord your God. (NASB, כח שִׁמְרֵם וְשָׁמַעְתֶּם אֶת כָּל-הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוְנֶךָ לַמַּעַן יֵיטֵב לָךְ וּלְבִנְיֶיךָ אַחֲרָיֶךָ עַד-עוֹלָם כִּי תַעֲשֶׂה הַטּוֹב וְהַיָּשָׁר בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ:

Moshe writes that these Mitzvot, Mishpatim, and Chukim, are all designed for the purpose of causing our lives to go well, not only for us but also for our sons and daughters and all future generations in the sight of God. Moshe is placing a great amount of emphasis upon the Torah command as a way of living and walking before God that is

connected to the covenant of God. The reason being, the Lord God of Israel and Yeshua His Messiah do not want us to live in sin, but to walk in righteousness, holiness, justice, and truth. Shortly following these words, Moshe makes more statements saying:

Devarim / Deuteronomy 12:32-13:4

12:32 'Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it. 13:1 'If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, 13:2 and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,' 13:3 you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God is testing you to find out if you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. 13:4 'You shall follow the Lord your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him. (NASB, א את

*כָּל-הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי מְצַוֶּה אֶתְכֶם אֹתוֹ תִשְׁמְרוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת לֹא-
תִסֹּף עָלָיו וְלֹא תִגְרַע מִמֶּנּוּ: פ ב כִּי-יָקוּם בְּקִרְבְּךָ נָבִיא
אוֹ חֵלֶם חֲלוֹם וְנָתַן אֵלָיךְ אוֹת אוֹ מוֹפֵת: ג וְבָא הָאוֹת וְהַמֹּוֹ-
פֶת אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר אֵלָיךְ לֵאמֹר גִּלְכָה אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהִים אַחֲרֵים אֲשֶׁר
לֹא-יִדְעֶתֶם וְנִעְבְּדֵם: ד לֹא תִשְׁמַע אֶל-דִּבְרֵי הַנָּבִיא הַהוּא אוֹ
אֶל-חֹלֶם הַחֲלוֹם הַהוּא כִּי מִנְסֶה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֶתְכֶם לְדַעַת
הִישָׁכֶם אֱהָבִים אֶת-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם בְּכֹל-לְבַבְכֶם וּבְכֹל-נַפְשׁ-
כֶּם: ה אַחֲרֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם תֵּלְכוּ וְאֹתוֹ תִירָאוּ וְאֶת-מִצְוֹתָיו
(תִּשְׁמְרוּ וּבְקִלּוֹ תִשְׁמָעוּ וְאֹתוֹ תַעֲבֹדוּ וּבוֹ תִדְבְּקוּן:*

This is the significance of the Torah, to keep us on the straight and narrow path, and to test what people say whether it is from the Lord God of Israel or not. Might this had been what happened when the early church left the study of the Torah and believed only in the signs and wonders of the God of Israel because of the power of the Name of Yeshua? Note in [Matthew 7](#), Yeshua speaks of the power of the Name in the midst of a people who thought they were saved but in the end

were workers of iniquity. Did the church's leaving the understanding of Scripture from a Torah perspective the natural by-product of the rabid anti-Semitism we see in history and even today? If we do not take a Torah perspective that was established from the beginning, an Israel centric understanding of Salvation that is brought by the God of Israel to all the nations of the earth (*Isaiah 2*), then what we find is the gradual development of replacement theology which leads to the natural conclusion of anti-Semitism!

As a result of these historical developments, specifically, the church leaving Torah, Christian apologists starting as early as the Second Century, began to turn against the Jews, characterizing them as "*Christ Killers*." Consider the following examples: (This information was taken from "*The Catholic Encyclopedia*" <http://www.newadvent.org>)

The Epistle of Barnabas (100 AD) — This writing was a contender for inclusion in the Bible. It is a good demonstration of how profoundly Greek methods of interpretation had already impacted Christians. The writer insisted that the Old Testament was never meant to be read literally, but was to be interpreted allegorically.

The writer argued that "*only the Christian could make sense of the Bible*." The "*carnal Jews*," with their "*earthly mind-set*," had failed to recognize the hidden message of their own Scriptures, and as a result, had eternally forfeited their entitlement to the covenant promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Ignatius of Antioch (c. 50-117) — He said that "*those who partake of the Passover are partakers with those who killed Jesus*." (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07644a.htm>)

Justin Martyr (100-165) — He claimed God's covenant with Israel was no longer valid and that the Gentiles had replaced the Jews.⁹ Additionally, he was the first to identify the Church as "*the true spiritual Israel*."¹⁰ And

he declared that the plight of the Jews — their exile and persecution — had happened “in fairness and justice” because they had “slain the Just One.” (<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/01282.htm>)

Irenaeus (130-202) — *He was a student of Polycarp who, in turn, was a disciple of the Apostle John. He declared that “the house of Jacob and the people of Israel are disinherited from the grace of God.” And he argued this because they “have rejected the Son of God” and “they slew Him.”* (<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103321.htm>)

Clement of Alexandria (c. 150 – c. 215) — *Claimed that Israel “denied the Lord” and thus “forfeited the place of the true Israel.”* (*The Writings of Clement of Alexandria: Exhortation to the heathen, T. & T. Clark, 1884, pg 238*)

Hippolytus of Rome (170-235) — He is considered by many to be the most important theologian of the 3rd Century. He was a student of Irenaeus. He declared that the Jews had been darkened in the eyes of their souls “*with a darkness utter and everlasting.*” He further stated that they were destined to be “*slaves to the nations, not for four hundred years as in Egypt, nor seventy as in Babylon, but... always.*” (<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0503.htm>)

Tertullian of Carthage (155-230) — *He blamed the Jews for the death of Jesus and argued they had been rejected by God.* (<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0308.htm>)

Cyprian of Carthage (c. 200-258) — He was a student of Tertullian. He wrote: (<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/050704.htm>)

I have endeavored to show that the Jews...departed from God and lost God's favor... while the Christians succeeded to their place, deserving well of the Lord by faith, and coming out of all nations and from the whole world. We Christians when we pray, say "Our Father" because He has begun to be ours, and has ceased to be the Father of the Jews, who have forsaken Him.

Origen of Alexandria (185-254) — He was responsible for much Anti-Semitism, all of which was based on his assertion that the Jews were responsible for killing Jesus. In one of his treatises he wrote: (<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04164.htm>)

"We say with confidence that they [the Jews] will never be restored to their former condition. For they committed a crime of the most unhallowed kind, in conspiring against the Savior of the human race... It accordingly behoved that city where Jesus underwent these sufferings to perish utterly, and the Jewish nation to be overthrown, and the invitation of happiness offered them by God to pass to others — the Christians..."

Based upon these few sources, the anger and hatred of the Jewish rejection of Yeshua has led to a great animosity against the Torah and obedience to the commands. As a result of centuries of believing the Jews have departed from God and His favor, we find today a modern theology that has impacted the minds of many believers, such as the doctrine of Dispensationalism. If you take an objective view of the doctrine of dispensationalism and speak to many people concerning this doctrine, based upon my past experience, the consequences of a dispensationalist view may be summarized in the following way.

Consequences of Dispensationalist Perspective

- *The faith of men previous to Yeshua was some how deficient.*

- *Dispensationalist view leads to a Replacement theology God does not operate in the same ways he once did, therefore the Gifts of the Spirit have ceased (Non-Denominational, Baptists)*
- *God does not operate in the same ways as he once did, however, the Gifts of the Spirit still exist (Pentecostal)*

Here again as we find in the English translations of the Scriptures, there is a discordance amongst denominations on the interpretations of dispensationalism.

Dispensationalism is a religious interpretive system for the Bible. It considers Biblical history as divided deliberately by God into defined periods or ages to each of which God has allotted distinctive administrative principles. According to dispensationalist interpretation, each age of the plan of God is therefore administered in a certain way, and humanity is held responsible as a steward during each particular time frame he finds himself living in. Throughout Scripture, God revealed Himself and His truth to humanity in a different ways. Humanity is therefore held responsible to conform to that revelation. If humanity rebels and fails the test, the Lord God judges humanity and introduces a new period of probation under a new administration. Note the inherent “*works based*” interpretation on the consequences of God’s judgment on mankind which leads to the “*faith alone*” theology.

One of the most important underlying theological concepts for dispensationalism is the idea of progressive revelation. While some non-dispensationalists start with progressive revelation in the New Testament and refer this revelation back into the Old Testament, dispensationalists begin with progressive revelation in the Old Testament and read forward in a historical sense. The most significant aspect of dispensationalist doctrine is that the Biblical covenants are associated with the dispensations under which the Biblical covenants are compared and contrasted. In addition to the comparison and contrast of the Biblical covenants, the promises of God that are found within the covenants, dispensationalism places a particular emphasis upon to whom these promises were written. This has resulted in certain fundamental

dispensational beliefs, such as making a distinction between Israel and the Church, and causing the Torah to be irrelevant for the believer today.

All dispensationalists profess a definite distinction between Israel and the Church. For dispensationalists, Israel is an ethnic nation consisting of Hebrews (Israelites), beginning with Abraham and continuing in existence to the present, and is not a part of the Gentile church. Dispensationalists do not understand the Gentile church as being grafted into Israel per Paul's words in *Romans 11*. Dispensationalists also believe the Church consists of all saved individuals in this "*present dispensation*" of which started at the "*birth of the Church*" in Acts (Pentacost), this is a topic we discussed at length in Part 1 of this series in relation to the "*birth of the church*" theology. Dispensationalism teaches a distinction between Israel and the Church but this is not always mutually exclusive, in the sense that there is a recognized overlap between the two in relation to "*Jewish Christians*," those who are ethnically Jewish and also have faith in Yeshua the Messiah, but these Jews must also have left (turned their backs upon) the Torah and Judaism. Classical dispensationalists refer to the present day Church as a "*parenthesis*" or temporary interlude in the progression of Israel's prophetic history and so this theology introduces something distinctly different based upon the history of the Bible that is not Israel centric. Progressive dispensationalism on the other hand "*softens*" the Church-Israel distinction by seeing some Old Testament promises as expanded by the New Testament to include the Church. However, progressives never view this expansion as replacing promises to its original audience, Israel.

Another consequence of the thousands of years of anti-Torah theology have resulted in Covenant Theology. Covenant Theology is the alternative opinion to dispensationalism which presupposes that God has one people Israel and the promises to Israel made in the Old Testament were fulfilled by Jesus Christ, the new Israel, where the Church is the "*New Israel*" and has become the new object of Abraham's hope. Dispensationalists criticize Covenant Theology as being identical with what they term "*Replacement Theology*" or Supersessionism, the concept that the Church has replaced Israel. However, in Covenant Theology, the church is not a replacement for the nation of Israel, the church



is known as the “*spiritual Israel*.” Many dispensationalists also hold to this interpretation, and this comes out of modern theologies as “*we are Israel now*,” or “*we are Jerusalem*.” If you hear a preacher teaching that he is teaching a theology and not a biblical truth. Covenant Theologians distinguish between Israel of the flesh (ethnic Hebrews) and Israel of the Spirit (the universal Church), which began with Adam and Eve and matured largely within ethnic Israel. Jewish Christians are included in this spiritual Israel and they must have had “*converted*” which is understood as having left Torah and Judaism. Covenant Theologians on the other hand also accuse Dispensationalism of replacement theology. The position of Covenant Theology on the relationship of the physical and spiritual Israel have classically used *Romans 2:28-29* as a proof text, however, this is not necessarily a correct interpretation on *Romans 2*, as we discussed in Part 2, that at the heart of every gentile believer should be the heart of a Torah observant Jew. Dispensationalism rejects the notion of supersessionism, and still considers the Jewish people as God’s chosen people, and sees the modern State of Israel as resulting in the Israel who will receive the fulfillment of all God’s Old Testament promises, eventually, one day in the future, etc.

While studying the book of Romans, the central theme discussed at length in *Romans 9-11*, which has been ignored throughout most of Church history, is that in these last days, God is raising up thoughtful, Spirit-directed Gentiles who are heeding the call of God and His desire for Gentiles to reach out to Jewish people with Love and Power from a Torah based perspective. Gentiles from other nations who have embraced the present Torah movement by the calling of God’s Spirit are also passionate about Jewish things, such as the Jewish Roots of our faith in Yeshua, and reaching out to Jewish people with the Gospel message.

The basic premise of the Church is that the Law has passed with the birth of the Church at Pentacost (the festival of Shavuot, feast of weeks). The point is there has been an awakening to the Torah amongst the non-Jewish people of faith, who do not believe the Torah has ceased as a way of life for God’s people. This may further be emphasized in an example taken from Midrash Tehillim 100, Part 4 where we find the rabbis speaking of a time to come when the sacrifices will cease, stating that “*In the time to come, all offerings will cease, except the prayer*”

of thanksgiving.” The question for us today, “*is what the rabbis are saying here the same concept of the cessationism of Torah and modern theologies?*” What is being taught in the Midrash is that the rabbis hoped through the progression of time mankind would advance to the point that there would no longer be a need for expiatory sacrifices. It may be within this context they are expressing only the feeling of gratitude to God would remain. Another source for this reference is found in *Midrash Rabbah Leviticus Parashat 9, Part 7* and *Midrash Tehillim 56, Part 4*. The idea here is that all sacrifices would be annulled whereas the thanksgiving unto the Lord God of Israel would remain. *Midrash Tehillim 100, Part 4* states that the term thank offerings is used of prayer and of offering as well. *Tehillim / Psalms 56:12*, states: *עָלֵי אֱלֹהִים נְדָרַי אֲשַׁלֵּם תּוֹדַת לָךְ: 56:12 Your vows are binding upon me, O God; I will render thank offerings to You. (NASB)* The MT states תּוֹדַת plural for thanksgivings, which is a reference to both prayer and the offerings. How are we to understand these words in the sense of the cessation of the sacrifices and of Yeshua the Messiah? In *Matthew 5:19*, Yeshua said that He had come to fulfill the Torah commands, even to the “*least*” of these, making a distinction on the nuances found within the Torah on what the Lord expects of His people, and so in Yeshua’s statement he was saying the commands are to be put into practice, even to the least, or the lowliest command. The Torah directs our attention forward to the coming of the Messiah, and in His fulfilling the command, He established a continuity for His followers, to walk in the manner that He walked (*John 13:15*) saying that He has set the example for us. The true direction to which the Torah points is that it is to be obeyed, and therefore these words of Yeshua turns on a conformity to Yeshua’s teachings as the Lord God of Israel’s seeking for us to live in righteousness, holiness, justice, and truth. Our motivation is to be out of our love for God, which is based upon a work of the Lord in our hearts to seek and to serve Him. In addition, we do not want to live as the nations in opposition to God’s Torah (*Parashat Ekev, 1 Maccabees 1*) This is illustrated in *Isaiah 2* which speaks of all the nations streaming to Jerusalem and to receive the counsel of God and see the guidance of His godly people. *Isaiah 56* supports this idea on Torah obedience, Isaiah wrote about this in the following way:

Isaiah 56:1-8

56:1 Thus says the Lord, 'Preserve justice and do righteousness, For My salvation is about to come And My righteousness to be revealed. 56:2 'How blessed is the man who does this, And the son of man who takes hold of it; Who keeps from profaning the sabbath, And keeps his hand from doing any evil.' 56:3 Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord say, 'The Lord will surely separate me from His people.' Nor let the eunuch say, 'Behold, I am a dry tree.' 56:4 For thus says the Lord, 'To the eunuchs who keep My sabbaths, And choose what pleases Me, And hold fast My covenant, 56:5 To them I will give in My house and within My walls a memorial, And a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name which will not be cut off. 56:6 'Also the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, To minister to Him, and to love the name of the Lord, To be His servants, every one who keeps from profaning the sabbath And holds fast My covenant; 56:7 Even those I will bring to My holy mountain And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.' 56:8 The Lord God, who gathers the dispersed of Israel, declares, 'Yet others I will gather to them, to those already gathered.' (NASB)

Based upon these verses, the Lord calls to His people for justice and speaks of His salvation being revealed shortly, and blessed is the one who takes hold of this. Isaiah states that we are to take hold of the covenant in order to please our Father in heaven, and that the Lord will cause *56:6 'Also the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, To minister to Him, and to love the name of the Lord, To be His servants, every one who keeps from profaning the sabbath And holds fast My covenant; (NASB)* Calling-drawing foreigners who will join themselves to the Lord and to Israel. What does it mean to join one's self to the Lord? Is this not to walk in God's ways, and to bring glory to

His name through righteous living and our love for one another? Isaiah connects these things to prayer and the house of prayer, the holy mountain of God in Jerusalem, and the altar of God and His sacrifices. Yeshua taught obedience to the Torah, which is why his teachings always directed our attention back to the Tanach as something that is to be obeyed. Most of Christianity however celebrates their freedom from *“the bondage of the law,”* however the Apostle James himself called it the *“perfect law (Torah) of liberty”* (James 1:25). In addition, Christian theologians love to point to *Acts 15* in relation to the cessation of the Law, and yet it is clear that the Jerusalem council’s decision did two things: 1) Requiring gentile believers to begin their walk of faith by following four instructions lifted straight out of the Torah, and 2) indicating the new gentile converts (by faith) will learn more at synagogue. Otherwise, there would have been no point in mentioning *“For the law of Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath,”* (Acts 15:21, NIV) if the expectation was not that gentiles would learn more Torah after joining themselves to the God of Israel by their faith in the Messiah Yeshua. The Gentile believers would be converted by the brit milah of the heart (changed from the inside) by their faith, and begin to learn what it means to walk in God’s ways. Scripture clearly indicates that the Torah is for all mankind. It was given to His chosen people so they could be a light unto the nations and spread God’s instruction throughout the earth. (Isaiah 2)

Midrash Tehillim 100, Part 1 continues saying, *“Thus, also in the verse The voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voice of them that will say, Give thanks to the Lord of hosts, for the Lord is good, for His mercy endures forever, and of them that will bring offerings of thanksgiving into the house of the Lord (Jeremiah 33:11), Give thanks to the Lord is an enjoining of prayers of thanksgiving; while them that will bring offerings of thanksgiving is an enjoining of thank offerings.”* The basic premise is that within the context of God’s powerful work in our life, we are able to give praise to Him and His ways, we bear the testimony of God in our lives His enabling power to be free from sin, and our sacrifice is in the manner in which we live our lives. We live our lives according to His will, and not according to our own will. The application of the

Torah for our lives is summarized by Sforno according to his commentary on *Bereshit / Genesis 49:1* Part 1.

Sforno on Bereshit / Genesis 49:1 Part 1

באחרית הימים לקץ הימין בבוא גואל שיהיה אחרית ימי האומות אויבי ה' ומלכותם שתתמלא סאתם עד סוף מלואה כאמרו כי אעשה כלה וכו' וכזה דבר בלעם באמרו באחרית הימים כמו שהעיד באמרו וקרקר כל בני שת וכן הנביאים באמרם והיה באחרית הימים יהיה הר בית ה' נכון כראש ההרים וזה הגיד יעקב כזה באמרו כי יבא שילה ולו יקהת עמים אוסרי לגפן עירה וכו'.

בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים, at the end of the period allocated to life on earth as we know it. Yaakov speaks of the arrival of the Messiah which will signify the end of the existence of the nations that oppose G'd and the Kingdom of G'd on earth. At that time the measure of sin that these nations accumulate will be full to overflowing, so that G'd will feel at liberty to bring about the appropriate retribution. [the concept is as old as Avraham, to whom G'd explained that realization of his offspring disinheriting the Canaanites will have to await the time when the measure of sin of these people will be full. (Genesis 15:16). Ed.] Our author, drawing on various prophecies of the Books of Prophets to support his interpretation of באַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים, "the end of days," quotes Jeremiah 46:28 "for I will make an end to all the nations among which I have banished you; but I will not make an end of you!" He also quotes Bileam's prophecy in Numbers 24:14 detailed in verse 17, in which he prophesies the doom befalling all the nations pre-eminent in his time and describes Israel as triumphant at that time. He adds that his prophecy is not one the fulfillment of which is imminent, but that much time will elapse before it will be realised. Similar prophecies are not only found in Michah 4,1 but even in our chapter when blessing Yehu-

dah in verse 10, Yaakov speaks of the time frame he has in mind as the one when Shiloh will arrive, the one to whom nations will pay homage.

Sforno states that in the end times, his reference to the end times is to that of the arrival of the Messiah, will bring the end of the existence of the nations. This interpretation inherently speaks of being joined with Israel in the sense that the nations are those who are “other” than Israel. The measure of the sin of the nations will be overflowing, and the Lord will bring retribution upon these ungodly peoples. (*Look at the NT parallel in 2 Thessalonians 1*) The point is that in this time period, only those who are left are those who had joined themselves with the Lord God of Israel and with His Messiah as *Jeremiah 46:28* states “*for I will make an end to all the nations among which I have banished you; but I will not make an end of you!*” speaking of His people. Indeed the Lord is good and He is looking out for His people, and has a plan for His people from the beginning. The question is, do you want to be a part of that plan? If so, join yourself with Yeshua the Messiah and with the Lord God of Israel today!

Because Judaism has viewed the Torah as applicable for all generations, the Jewish people have guarded and maintained “*the Torah way of life.*” In other words, it is believed what the Jewish practice is a more authentic version of proper Torah observance. Even the concept of Teshuvah is different than found in Christianity in the sense that Repentance is something we do both in the spiritual realm and in the physical realm by turning from sin. Repentance is not simply a emotional event that occurs due to one’s sorrow over sin. The natural conclusion is by studying the Rabbinic literature we may obtain the closest approximation of how Yeshua himself would have lived. Therefore, next week we will look at why it is important for understanding the Scriptures from a Rabbinic perspective.



