

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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Male Headship: How can your ministry be egalitarian, meaning that both men and women share leadership roles equally, when Scripture says that the man is to be the head of the woman (Ephesians 5:23)?

This entry has been adapted from the commentary *Ephesians for the Practical Messianic*.

Being filled with God's Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) will result in a manner of life for Paul's audience different from their previous pagan experience. Many are agreed that the instructions which complete Ephesians ch. 5, vs. 21-33, are an expansion upon a prior message given in Colossians chs. 3 & 4. Other than how Ephesians 2:14-16 is encountered by Messianics, Ephesians 5:21-33 is *the most* debated and controversial part of the entire epistle for today among interpreters. This is why Ben Witherington urges, "the trajectory and contextualizing of the argument are as important as the details of what Paul says."^a If not read closely and carefully, we are likely to not only miss some key points of Paul's instruction to First Century readers, but also significantly misapply them in a modern setting.

Ephesians 5:21-6:9 compose a very important part of Biblical instruction because it concerns the institution of the family, specifically the institution of the family after the arrival of the Messiah. The Apostle Paul describes the relationship husband and wife are to have to one another (Ephesians 5:21-33), the relationship of children to their parents (Ephesians 6:1-4), and even the relationship of slaves and masters (Ephesians 6:5-9). It is commonly referred to in theological works by the German term *Haustafel*, meaning "house table." One point that should not elude us is the fact that for his audience in Asia Minor, Paul is largely subverting (or even countering) ancient Greco-Roman household codes.

What does this mean for the following verse?

"For the husband is the head of the wife, as Messiah also is the head of the [assembly], He Himself *being* the Savior of the body" (Ephesians 5:23).

A wife is to submit to her husband the same as she would submit to the Lord, as an act of obedience to the Lord—but the principle of mutuality is that the husband too is required to submit: "be subject to one another in the fear of Messiah" (Ephesians 5:21; cf. vs. 30, 33). In the husband's submission to his wife, Paul says, "For the husband is the head of the wife, as Messiah also is the head of the [assembly], He Himself *being* the Savior of the body" (Ephesians 5:23). As the two are submitted to each other, the husband is to recognize himself as the "head" of his wife. But what does the husband being the "head" of his wife mean, specifically? Does it mean that he gets to treat his wife in whatever way he wants? Does he truly get to be an autocrat?

In the Hellenistic world, the husband being the "head" of his wife did largely mean that he got to be an autocrat. In desiring that women be utilitarian tools of the state, Plato said "if we are going to use men and women for the same purposes, we must teach them the same things" (*Republic* 451e).^b This reveals that in the Greek world, giving men and women equal opportunities was not something looked upon favorably. But it was Plato's student Aristotle who specifically taught, "the relation of male to female is naturally that of the superior to the inferior, of the ruling to the ruled. This general principle must similarly hold good of all human beings generally" (*Politics* 1.1254b).^c The question that has dogged many interpreters of Ephesians 5:23, especially in

^a Ben Witherington III, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007) 314.

^b Plato: *The Republic*, trans. Desmond Lee (London: Penguin Books, 2007), 161.

^c Aristotle: *Politics*, trans. Ernest Barker (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 16.

the past twenty to thirty years, is whether or not the Christian Church (and by extension us as the Messianic movement) has adopted a view of the husband being “head” more consistent with Scripture, *or* more consistent with Hellenism.

There are two different views regarding “head” present in today’s evangelical Christian theology:

1. The traditional or **complimentarian** view, which sees “head” as meaning the husband’s authority over the wife.
2. The **egalitarian** view (simply derived from the French *égal*, meaning “equal”), which sees “head” as relating to the man being the “source” or “origin” of the woman.

Complimentarianism

Most of us in our religious experience have been exposed to the **complimentarian** view of “head” in Ephesians 5:23. This is a view which holds that males and females are essentially equal in terms of their spiritual standing before God (cf. Galatians 3:28), but that there are specific roles only designated for males. Since Paul is writing in terms of an ancient society where a top-down, male-dominated family structure was the norm, it would seem fairly obvious that the man, who was created first, should take the lead. The more powerful male family members were responsible for the well being of weaker family members, namely the women. Within this framework, the submission of the wife to her husband comes because she is ordered under her husband. Complimentarians consider that support of their view of “head” as meaning “authority” or “first,” comes from Ephesians 1:22 where Yeshua is seen as “head over all things.”

The available lexical definitions of *kephalē* (κεφαλή) do allow it “to denote superior rank” (BDAG).^d From this point of view, when Paul says “the man is the head of a woman” (1 Corinthians 11:3), and in this epistle that Yeshua is the Head of the assembly (4:15; cf. Colossians 1:18), the husband is first in the family with the wife coming second. Some suggest that Tanach typology of Israel being the wife of God is at work in Ephesians 5:23 (Isaiah 54:4; 62:4; Ezekiel 16:7; Hosea 2:16). As the husband is the head of the wife, the traditional perspective, as summarized by Harold W. Hoehner, would be “It means that she recognizes her husband is the head of the home and responds to him accordingly without usurping his authority to herself.”^e So in this schema, it is the husband who would be the “head of the household.”

Too much can be made of complimentarians who argue that wives must submit to their husbands as though the husband is a complete superior, and women have little value. The basis of a wife’s submission to her husband is obedience to the Lord and is motivated by love. Peter T. O’Brien, supporting a complimentarian view, is right to remind us, “Subordination smacks of exploitation and oppression that are deeply resented. But authority is not synonymous with tyranny, and the submission to which the apostle refers does not imply inferiority.”^f Indeed, the vast majority of complimentarians in today’s Christianity encourage extreme respect and honor to be shown to women. A. Skevington Wood concurs, “He is not implying that women are inferior to men or that all women should be subject to men. The subjection, moreover, is voluntary, not forced.”^g The issue at hand in Ephesians 5:23 is the relation of husbands and wives in marriage. O’Brien is quite specific to state,

“The apostle is not urging every woman to submit to every man, but wives to their husbands. The use of the middle voice of this verb (cf. Col. 3:18) emphasizes the voluntary character of the submission.”^h

^d BDAG, 542.

^e Harold W. Hoehner, “Ephesians,” in John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, eds., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), pp 640-641.

^f Peter T. O’Brien, *Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 412.

^g A. Skevington Wood, “Ephesians,” in Frank E. Gaebelein., ed. et. al., *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 11:75.

^h O’Brien, 411.

It is also too much to say that the traditional perspective argues that a total and blinded obedience of wives to husbands is somehow taught *or demanded* by Paul (and likewise as though Paul would also argue blind obedience to civil government in Romans 13). This is not true at all, and not only of interpreters from the past century. Nineteenth Century commentator Adam Clarke emphasized that a wife must submit to her husband in “every lawful thing; for it is not intimated that they should obey their husbands in any thing criminal, or in any thing detrimental to the interests of their souls.”ⁱ If a husband is engaged in illegal activities, or activities that clearly violate God’s will and Law, then a wife is surely expected to resist.

Traditionalists hold to men and women being spiritual equals in the Lord, but advocate that a man’s position as leader is necessary for familial cohesion. F. Foulkes comments, “in the family, for its order and its unity, there must be leadership, and the leadership is that of the husband and father.”^j But he goes on to describe how a married woman with equal rights in society may “make herself a career as well as her husband,” and how “the New Testament...[says] she may do so, provided that it does not mean the sacrifice of the divine pattern for home life.”^k Most complimentarians today do not oppose women in the workplace, and would solely argue that the issue of male “headship” only concerns the husband as benevolent leader of his family. Christian complimentarians rightly argue against any kind of harsh or dictatorial leadership on behalf of the husband toward his wife and family.^l

Egalitarianism

A second, and widely growing position in today’s evangelicalism, is that of **egalitarianism**. Egalitarians view Galatians 3:28 as meaning that Yeshua the Messiah has brought total equality to the genders, and that roles previously allowed for men in the Tanach can now be opened up for women.^m The lexical definition of *kephalē* (κεφαλή) as “source” like that “of a river” (*LS*),ⁿ meaning the headwaters of a river, is something that egalitarians strongly appeal to.^o When Paul says, “Messiah is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Messiah” (1 Corinthians 11:3), “head” as meaning “source” or “origin” is what is intended, as from the Godhead (*ho Theos, ὁ θεός*) came forth the Messiah, the Messiah is the Creator of the world including the man/Adam, and from the side of the man/Adam came Eve. Philip B. Payne asks how if *kephalē*/head here is to mean “authority,” “Why would Paul say that Christ is the authority of every male human being? Is there any sense in which Christ would be the authority over men but not over women? If so, that would undermine the very universal lordship of Christ.”^p

In Ephesians 5:23, viewing *kephalē*/head as “source,” when Paul says that the husband is the “head” of his wife, it is to be a reminder of what Adam said of Eve: “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (Genesis 2:23). Egalitarians strongly argue that “head” meaning any kind of “authority” in Ephesias

ⁱ Adam Clarke’s *Commentary on the Bible*. E-Sword 8.0.8. MS Windows 9x. Franklin, TN: Equipping Ministries Foundation, 2008.

^j Francis Foulkes, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians* (London: Tyndale Press, 1963), 155.

^k *Ibid.*, pp 156-157.

^l One of the best complimentarian perspectives that I have seen is expressed by Craig Blomberg in James R. Beck, ed., *Two Views on Women in Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), pp 123-184.

^m Keep in mind that the Tanach Scriptures are themselves rather revolutionary when it comes to the role of women, especially when the Torah’s law codes are compared to those of the Ancient Near East.

Consult the author’s article “Answering the Frequently Avoided Issues Messianics Encounter in the Torah” for more details, as well as the relevant sections of *TorahScope, Volume I* by Mark Huey (2010 paperback edition).

ⁿ *LS*, 430.

^o There is actually some lexical debate over what *kephalē* (κεφαλή) should be defined as. *BDAG*, 542 states that *kephalē* is “not source.” William David Spencer addresses this, remarking, “Readers should note, it is one thing to emphasize a definition of ‘head’ within the category of authority, but quite another to specify that the word *cannot* as well mean ‘source’ in the New Testament” (“Editor’s Reflections” *Priscilla Papers* Issue 24:2, Spring 2010).

^p Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul’s Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 130.

5:23 is something that interpreters have read into the text, not being supported by an ideal of male-female equality in the Lord. It is something more influenced by how in much of modern English, the term “head” is associated with leadership, not something always seen in Biblical Greek.

(The idea that most egalitarians are somehow “feminists,” because they advocate that men and women be given equal treatment in the Body of Messiah, is quite dumbfounded. Not withstanding a modern feminist movement that advocates abortion rights and worship of a mother goddess, historically the feminist movement has had many things that both Jews and Christians have supported. This would include things like: opposition to physical abuse and rape, wife beating, sexual harassment and exploitation, bride burning in countries like India, harsh physical labor in rural Africa, abortions of female children because they are female, and infirm female children being allowed to die because they are female. **These are things that all complimentarians oppose.**)^q

Does Paul’s usage of “head” automatically equal “authority”? What does the Greek term *kephalē* (κεφαλή) really mean? There has actually been a considerable amount of ink spilled defending the view that *kephalē* should be viewed as “source” in some key Pauline texts describing gender roles,^r and strong rebuttals issued holding to the position that *kephalē* means “authority.”^s While it is easy to think that the debate over what *kephalē* means has been limited to the scholastic arena,^t it is steadily making its way into materials more common to be accessed by the normal layperson. The publication *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, for example, describes how “Besides its literal, physical meaning (‘head of man or beast’), *kephalē* had numerous metaphorical meanings, including that of ‘source.’ It is this meaning that seems most suited to the texts (1 Cor 11:3 and Eph 5:23) in which the relationship of husband and wife (or man and woman) is addressed.”^u

In terms of the ongoing discussion over what *kephalē* really means throughout the Apostolic Scriptures, most especially in texts like Ephesians 5:23, Aida Besançon Spencer summarizes some important points to consider:

“For us ‘Who is head here?’ means ‘Who is the boss?’ Yet many excellent studies have been done in recent years to prove that ‘head’ (kephale) when used in Greek never stood for the decision maker. Such studies are reinforced by looking at the Bible. ‘Head’ or kephale can refer to a literal head (Matt. 8:20), to hair only (Acts 18:18), to the whole person (a synecdoche, a part representing the whole, as in Ex. 16:16), the top or foundation (Gen. 8:5; Matt 21:42), the source (Col. 2:19), life (Isa. 43:4; Acts 18:6), the first-born (Col. 1:18), and a blessing (Deut. 28:13, 44). What meaning does Paul have in mind in Ephesians 5:23? Whatever meaning Paul has in mind would in some way be analogous to Christ’s relationship to the church.”^v

^q For a more detailed description, consult Craig S. Keener, *Paul, Women & Wives: Marriage and Women’s Ministry in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), pp 5-10.

^r “1 Corinthians 11:2-3: Head/Source Relationships,” in Payne, pp 117-139; specifically his fifteen reasons on why *kephalē* does not exclusively mean “authority.”

^s Wayne Grudem, “The Meaning of *Kephale* (‘Head’): A Response to Recent Studies,” in John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), pp 425-468.

^t Cf. C.C. Kroeger, “Head,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, pp 375-377; J.K. McVay, “Head, Christ as,” in *Ibid.*, pp 377-378.

^u Walter C. Kaiser, Peter H. Davids, F.F. Bruce, and Manfred T. Brauch, *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 641.

A more recent example I found of this is seen in *God’s Game Plan: The Athlete’s Bible 2007*, a study Bible published by the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA). While this publication employed the HCSB, with translation principles that protest the usage of inclusive language in English Bible versions, its comments on Ephesians 5:23 concur closer with an egalitarian view:

“The word ‘head’ when used today has the sense of ‘ruler’ or ‘authority.’ However, in Greek when ‘head’ is used in a metaphorical sense as it is here, it also means ‘origin’ as in the ‘source (head) of a river.’ Woman has her origins in man (Gen. 2:18-23) just as the church has its origins in Christ” (Nashville: Serendipity House Publishers, 2007, p 1149).

^v Aida Besançon Spencer, “From Poet to Judge: What Does Ephesians 5 Teach About Male-Female Roles?” *Priscilla Papers* Issue 4:3, Summer 1990.

Spencer goes on to conclude that if it were Paul's intention to use "head" as meaning decision-maker or authority figure, "he would have used *arche* or 'ruler' (as in Luke 12:11), or 'judge' or 'mind' (used in Philo as the dominant aspect of humans, e.g., Allegory II.5-8)."^w One of the available definitions of *archē* (ἀρχή) is clearly, "an authority figure who initiates activity or process, ruler, authority" (BDAG).^x Andrew T. Lincoln indicates something that we as Messianics should pay close attention to: "In its LXX usage, where it translated the Hebrew שׂר, *rōš*, κεφαλή also took on at times the further connotations of that Hebrew term and had the force of determinative source or origin."^y Payne also asserts, "The LXX translators...almost always chose not to use κεφαλή when שׂר means 'leader,'" further claiming "This is compelling evidence that the vast majority of LXX translators did not regard κεφαλή as appropriate to convey the metaphorical meaning 'leader.'"^z Egalitarians would argue that "source" language is what is used in Ephesians 4:15-16 where Paul describes Yeshua as "head" of the body, also seen in Colossians 2:19 where Yeshua is the source of life for the *ekklēsia*, "the head, from whom the entire body [originates], being supplied and held together." In Payne's estimation for Ephesians 5:23, "The best solution is probably to translate κεφαλή as 'source' and add a note, 'literally, 'head.'"^{aa}

If "source" language for "head" is what is being used in Ephesians 5:23, then it only serves to reinforce the fact that husbands are to love their wives the same as their own bodies (Ephesians 5:28). The analogy made would be that Eve originated from Adam, and so the husband needs to think of the wife as personally originating from himself.^{bb} In the view of Witherington, "It is of course quite true that Paul does not appear here in the guise of the modern feminist. He still speaks of the headship of the man in the family. But that headship has been transformed by the model of Christ."^{cc} It would not be a headship in terms of the husband being the only decision maker, but an equal partner along with his wife in the marriage experience. Any subordination of the wife within marriage is something that came as a direct result of the Fall (Genesis 3:16), and should now be a status reversed by the work of Yeshua (Galatians 3:28).

The issue of viewing "head" as "source" for egalitarians in Ephesians 5:23 is that there is a mutual submission (Ephesians 5:21, 30) which is to be seen in the Body of Messiah, which is a distinct manifestation of Believers' being filled by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) and being changed by God's love. Husbands are to treat their wives the same as they would themselves, as opposed to husbands being absolute autocrats—something that was surely affluent in Greco-Roman society. Egalitarians remind us that while Paul's words about submission are also given in a context where slaves are to submit to their masters (Ephesians 6:5-9), masters were required to submit to slaves if they were Believers (as Paul implies in Philemon). As is further stated, "we are [all] members of His body" (Ephesians 5:30), which for the marriage relationship means "each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must *see to it* that she respects her husband" (Ephesians 5:33).

The value of a good wife to a good husband is not an exclusive concept to Paul. Proverbs 31:10-11 declares, "An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels. The heart

^w Ibid.

^x BDAG, 138.

^y Andrew T. Lincoln, *Word Biblical Commentary: Ephesians*, Vol. 42 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990), pp 368-369.

^z Payne, pp 120, 121.

^{aa} Ibid., 137.

^{bb} Lest anyone think that the creation of Adam first somehow denotes a Divine preference for males, we cannot forget how the Genesis creation account directly countered the competing Mesopotamian mythology. In *Atrahasis*, human beings were given birth by a mother goddess to be the slaves of the gods.

Cf. Stephanie Dalley, trans., *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp 14-15ff.

In the Biblical creation account, contrary to this, humanity is made to commune with God in a garden planted by Him (Genesis 3:8). Females must join with males in order to conceive a child, similar to how the womb-goddess must give birth. But from the Biblical point of view, God portrayed as male cannot give birth, as man and woman are made by the Lord *ex nihilo* or out of nothing (Hebrews 11:3).

^{cc} Witherington, 323.

of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain.” This section of the Tanach actually depicts a husband and wife partnership in business, with the two working together for the mutual benefit of their household (Proverbs 31:12-27). While there may be a great deal of discussion of the male as “head of the household,” egalitarians point out that such language is **not seen in the Apostolic Scriptures**—and they would be correct.^{dd} This phraseology is instead **derived directly from Hellenistic philosophy**; it was Aristotle who said “the head of the household rules over both wife and children” (*Politics* 1.1259a).^{ee} A more literal rendering of *kai gar gunaikos archei kai teknōn* (καὶ γὰρ γυναικὸς ἄρχει καὶ τέκνων)^{ff} might instead be, “rules over wife and children,”^{gg} but the point taken is that the verb *archō* (ἄρχω) appears here, related to the noun *archē* (ἀρχή)—and not *kephalē*/head as used in Ephesians 5:23.

Plutarch later taught, “So is it with women also; if they subordinate themselves to their husbands, they are commended, but if they want to have control, they cut a sorrier figure than the subjects of their control. And control ought to be exercised by the man over the woman, [but] not as the owner has control over a piece of property” (*Advice to Bride and Groom* 142e).^{hh}

Considering these ancient sentiments, egalitarians often argue that the premise for male “headship” equaling “authority” is something that first affected First Century B.C.E.-C.E. Judaism, having adopted some Hellenistic cultural norms in treating women, going off the Biblical mark. These are Hellenistic views of women that likewise made their way into the emerging Christian Church of the Second Century. Craig S. Keener notes how “Some marriages may have been nearly equal, with husbands and wives working in the market together; but the ideal model propagated in ancient society was that wives should be submissive and obedient, often even slavishly so.”ⁱⁱ

Viewing *kephalē*/head as “source” is changing a great deal of contemporary thought in today’s evangelical Christianity. It has helped men have a much higher view of women, and it has helped women see that they need not allow themselves to suffer any kind of “Biblically-based” harassment and/or abuse from men simply because they are female. How Ephesians 5:23 is interpreted in evangelical theology in the days ahead will be a continuing debate, specifically as it regards the ordination of female clergy.^{jj} This is a debate that will affect today’s Messianic movement sooner than many currently think, as it is directly related to the already present discord and battling over Jewish and non-Jewish equality and inclusion.

While a great deal of background material must be considered in properly interpreting Ephesians 5:22-23, it would be a mistake for us to overlook the important Christology here. Paul has said that “the husband is the head of the wife, as Messiah also is the head of the [assembly],” *ho Christos kephalē tēs ekklēsiās* (ὁ Χριστὸς κεφαλὴ τῆς ἐκκλησίας). The reason He is the “head” of the assembly is because He is “the Savior of the body,” *Sōter tou sōmatos* (σωτὴρ τοῦ σώματος).

^{dd} In Torah passages such as Numbers 25:15 where *rosh 'ummot beit-av* (רֹאשׁ אֲמוֹת בֵּית־אָב), “the tribal head of an ancestral house” (NJPS) appears, the LXX notably renders it as *archontos ethnous...oikou patrias estin* (ἀρχοντος ἔθνους...οἴκου πατριᾶς ἐστίν), with the term *kephalē* used in Ephesians 5:23 noticeably absent. Such a “head of the house(hold)” is also not the leader of an individual family, but rather a large nomadic clan within a tribe of Ancient Israel.

^{ee} Aristotle, *Politics*, 33.

^{ff} The Greek source text for these works has been accessed via the Perseus Collection <<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/>>.

^{gg} Aristotle: *Politics*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Adelaide, South Australia: University of Adelaide Library, 2007). Accessible online at <<http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/a/aristotle/a8po/>>.

^{hh} Plutarch: *Advice to Bride and Groom*. Accessible online at <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Moralia/Coniugalia_praecepta*.html>.

ⁱⁱ Keener, *Paul, Women & Wives*, 166.

^{jj} Keener reminds us that women taking a role in Christian ministry, at least, is not something that has only now emerged with the modern feminist movement:

“Women’s ministry...became increasingly accepted in many times of revival, including the Wesleyan revival that changed the course of spiritual life in Britain and the Second Great Awakening in the United States. Pentecostal and Holiness groups were ordaining women long before modern secular feminism and unbiblical arguments for women’s ordination made it a divisive issue in some circles” (*Two Views of Women in Ministry*, 244).

Messiah being the Savior of His Body is a concept directly taken from the Tanach, where the LORD God is depicted as the Savior of His people (Deuteronomy 32:15; 1 Samuel 10:19; Psalm 24:5; Isaiah 12:2; 45:15; 62:11; Micah 7:7; Habakkuk 3:18). The usage of Yeshua being head of the Body, here, leads me to conclude that Ephesians 4:15-16 is what is more in view, as opposed to Ephesians 1:22. The power and vitality of Yeshua as Divine Savior comes from the head to the rest of His Body—us as Believers. Yeshua is the Source in Heaven of what His people on Earth are supposed to be.

The teaching for husbands here is that being the “source” of their wives, they are to act toward their wives the same way that Yeshua has done for all people—sacrificing themselves if need be.

The concept of Biblical submission for the Body of Messiah begins with the main admonition, “Submit to one another out of reverence for Messiah” (Ephesians 5:21). From this mutual submission to one another, the wife is to submit to her husband (Ephesians 5:22, 24). She is to respect her husband because he is her *kephalē* (“head”), correctly meaning her origin as Eve came from Adam (Ephesians 5:23; cf. 1 Corinthians 11:3, Grk.). Husbands demonstrate a submission to their wives via a manifestation of the love Yeshua Himself demonstrated, by dying for His followers (Ephesians 5:25-27). Most significant and subversive for the ancient period, is how “husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies” (Ephesians 5:28), a testament to how woman came from man as her head/source. Jewish and classical history are both replete with examples of how women were commonly treated as either the significant inferiors of men, or sub-human to some degree.^{kk} Here, Paul expresses how “no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Messiah does the [assembly]” (Ephesians 5:29). A husband is to treat his wife the same way he would *treat himself*. The relationship and oneness that husband and wife are to have together is to teach Believers important things about the relationship that the Messiah has to the *ekklēsia* (Ephesians 5:30-32).

The significant requirement that the Apostle Paul places on the husbands in Asia Minor is, “husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it” (Ephesians 5:28). While one can certainly see a reaffirmation of one loving his neighbor as himself,^{ll} loving one’s neighbor is not as specific as husbands loving their wives *hōs ta heautōn sōmata* (ὡς τὰ ἑαυτῶν σώματα)—“as their own bodies.” Presumably, the same careful attention and respect that a husband shows his own body, is the same kind of attention that he should now show toward his wife. As Paul has said it previously in 1 Corinthians 7:4, “The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband *does*; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife *does*.” The mutual responsibility does not just relate to spirituality or personal attitudes, but what a man or woman does with the human body God has framed, as the Psalmist declares “for I am fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14).

(The commentary *Ephesians for the Practical Messianic* has much more to say regarding the issues of Ephesians 5:21-6:9).

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^{kk} Cf. summary in Loren Cunningham and David Joel Hamilton, *Why Not Women? A Fresh Look at Scripture on Women in Missions, Ministry, and Leadership* (Seattle: YWAM Publishing, 2000), pp 71-92, 101-109.

^{ll} Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8.

Mark 7:19: What does it mean that “Jesus declared all foods clean”? Does this mean that the kosher dietary laws were abolished by the Messiah? I am confused.

Many Christians will readily admit that Yeshua, as a First Century Jew, observed the dietary commandments of the Torah. But, they will say that Yeshua abolished the kosher laws in the Gospels. Did Yeshua truly abrogate these commandments as many Christians believe? Mark 7:18-19 is often used as a proof text to say that the Messiah annulled *kashrut* law:

“And He said to them, ‘Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?’ (Thus He declared all foods clean.)” (NASU).

Many will examine these two verses, here quoted from the New American Standard, and then make their case that Yeshua did indeed “declare all foods clean.” But in order to understand what He is truly saying here, we must consider the entire scope of His statements, and examine the Greek source text.

Previously, Mark 7:1-5 tells us, “The Pharisees and some of the scribes gathered around Him when they had come from Jerusalem, and had seen that some of His disciples were eating their bread with impure hands, that is, unwashed. (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, thus observing the traditions of the elders; and when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots.) The Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, ‘Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?’”

Notice that the issue that this group of Pharisees brings against Yeshua relates to His Disciples eating with unwashed hands. These Pharisees held to a tradition that required them to “give their hands a ceremonial washing” (NIV) or “wash the hands to the wrist” (YLT), before eating, which is what Yeshua’s Disciples failed to do. This, and related traditions, are described in the Mishnah tractate *Yadayaim*.

It is with this background that Yeshua tells these Pharisees that what goes into a person does not defile him, but it is what comes out of a person that does. This spiritual principle is by far what is most important as Proverbs 12:18 tells us, “There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing,” as what we say can be administered as a deadly weapon. However, even though this is true, this does not suddenly negate or make unimportant the need to eat as God has told us. These Pharisees were making an issue out of an extra-Biblical tradition in regard to ritualistic hand washing before eating. Author David Friedman makes the following important observations from his book *They Loved the Torah*:

“In this passage, Yeshua nowhere negated the validity of *kashrut*. To do so would contradict his statement of Matthew 5:17-18, where he said he had not come to abolish the Law. Instead, Yeshua was teaching about the misconceptions of the נטילת ידיים (Hebrew, *n'tilat yadayim*, the ritual hand washing before meals). The group of Pharisees in this text always carried out this ritual hand washing before each meal, believing that not to do so according to their specific method would cause a person to be ritually defiled. Therefore, Yeshua said, ‘To eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man.’ That is, not performing the ritual hand-washing ceremony according to the method of this group of first-century Pharisees did not make one impure before God, and thereby did not obligate the person to cleanse himself ritually.”^a

Another description of this comes later in Matthew 15:1-2: “Then some Pharisees and scribes came to Yeshua from Jerusalem and said, ‘Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.’”

Friedman makes another important observation, “In Matthew 15:2, [this] is considered a type of ‘tradition of the elders.’ In the Greek text παραδοσιν των πρεσβυτερων (*paradosin ton presbuteron*) reflects the Hebrew concept מסורותי האבות (*masortey ha'avot*, or ‘traditions of the fathers’) and not a mandated *mitzvah* [commandment] from the Torah. This concept denotes the

^a David Friedman, *They Loved the Torah* (Baltimore: Lederer Books, 2001), 25.

development of traditions, not necessarily found in the Torah, which deal with how to perform a certain *mitzvah*.^b

The Complete Jewish Bible renders Mark 7:19 as “**Thus he declared all foods ritually clean,**” meaning that it was unnecessary to participate in the extra-Biblical ceremonial hand washings to eat. This rendering could be valid, however the Greek text does not say, “Thus He declared” in it at all. It simply reads *katharizōn panta ta brōmata* (καθαρίζων πάντα τὰ βρώματα). Literally what this means is “purging all the foods” (LITV).

There is a debate in Bible translation regarding how *katharizōn panta ta brōmata* should be translated. The majority of modern English versions render it as “**Thus he declared all foods clean**” (NRSV) or something close. Many English versions render this phrase in parenthesis (), indicating the opinion of some that this statement may have been added by a scribe in later centuries to clarify Yeshua’s words. However, there has always been the long-standing minority opinion that “purging all the foods” is the more accurate translation. Robert A. Guelich remarks, “Others view this as a possible anacoluthon drawing an obvious, if sarcastic, conclusion that the digestive process ‘cleanses all foods.’”^c

In the context of Mark 7, Yeshua says that it is not eating with unwashed hands that makes one unclean, but what goes into a person’s heart. He then finishes His discourse with saying that food, *which Biblically does not include pork or shellfish*, eaten with unwashed hands does not defile a person: “*This is because it does not enter into his heart, but into the belly, and goes out into the wastebowl, purging all the foods*” (Mark 7:19, LITV). That food which is eaten with unwashed or dirty hands is processed by the natural functions of the body and “is eliminated, *thus purifying all foods*” (NKJV).

Two liberal English translations, surprisingly enough, properly render Mark 7:19. *The New Covenant* by Willis J. Barnstone renders it as “since it doesn’t enter the heart but the stomach, and goes into the sewer, purging all foods.”^d *The Original New Testament* by Hugh J. Schonfield says, “because it enters his stomach, not his mind, and is evacuated in the toilet.”^e

“Thus He declared” is an addition by Bible translators that is not in the Greek text. On the contrary, the text speaks of a person’s bodily elimination of food by excretion. This is confirmed by the parallel passage in Matthew 15:17: “Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated?”

Yeshua the Messiah did not abrogate the Biblical dietary commandments in Mark 7. He criticized a group of Pharisees for their ritualistic handwashing and said that food eaten with unwashed hands was not unacceptable. But at the same time He also said that what is more important is what comes out of a person’s mouth. Those of us who follow the dietary commandments need not be harsh to those who do not. We need to speak words of encouragement and life into these people that the Holy Spirit may convict them to fully obey the Lord.

posted 13 November, 2006

^b Ibid.

^c Robert A. Guelich, *Word Biblical Commentary: Mark 1-8:26*, Vol. 34a (Dallas: Word Books, 1998), 378.

^d Willis J. Barnstone, trans., *The New Covenant* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2002), 68.

^e Hugh J. Schonfield, trans., *The Original New Testament* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), 22.

Mark of the Beast: What do you believe the mark of the beast is, or will be?

Revelation 13:16-17 tells us, “And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, and *he provides* that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, *either* the name of the beast or the number of his name.” The mark of the beast is received by those who follow after the antimessiah/antichrist, and is required for them to conduct in commerce. Given the advent of modern technology and electronic transactions, it is possible to say that the mark of the beast will probably be some kind of microchip or biotechnology implant. There will be seemingly “logical reasons” given by global authorities in the future for the necessity of such implants, including the dangers of identity theft and terrorism. Nevertheless, the eternal fate of those who take the mark of the beast is not a pleasant one:

“And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name” (Revelation 14:11).

Consult the editor’s article “**What is the Mark of the Beast?**” for a more detailed discussion of this issue.

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Matthew 5:17-19: How can you say that the Law of Moses is still to be followed by Christians today, when it is quite clear that “Jesus fulfilled every jot and tittle of the Law.”

This entry has been reproduced from the forthcoming paperback edition of *The New Testament Validates Torah* (due sometime 2011)

Pastor: Matthew 5:17: Jesus fulfilled every jot and tittle of the Law.

“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.”

According to Yeshua the Messiah’s words here in Matthew 5:17, delivered within His Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chs. 5-7, the Savior clearly states what His views are regarding the Torah of Moses. Along with Psalm 23 and the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17), Matthew 5-7 includes the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:2-12) and the Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13), the four passages together composing the most frequently read and valued sections of the Bible for most evangelical Christians.^a *Yeshua’s statements about the Torah are not at all hidden away in some obscure place.* Yeshua (Jesus) says very plainly that His purpose was not to “abolish” the Torah or Law of Moses, but to “fulfill” it. The challenge for theologians over the centuries has been in what context Yeshua “fulfills” the Law.

Many think that Yeshua’s “fulfilling” of the Law is to be equated with some kind of abrogation or abolishment of it. But the Messiah’s words run contrary to this: “Do not suppose that I came to throw down the law or the prophets” (YLT). He by no means came to “destroy” (KJV) or “demolish” (The Message) Moses’ Teaching. The Greek verb *kataluō* (καταλύω) has a variety of important connotations, as *TDNT* indicates, “From the basic sense ‘to put down,’ *katalýō* means ‘to destroy’ in various contexts...A second meaning is then to ‘invalidate,’ e.g., the law in Mt. 5:17.”^b In Matthew 5:17 Yeshua asserts, “Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets” (RSV), so any claim that the Messiah came to do away with the Torah or

^a Cf. Allen, *God’s Psychiatry*.

^b F. Büchsel, “*katalýō, katályma*,” in *TDNT*, 544.

significantly devalue it in some way, must be rejected. He clearly tells us that He did *not* come “to end” or “bring to an end” (LS)^c the Law of Moses.

If Yeshua the Messiah did not come to abolish the Law of Moses, as many errantly conclude, then what was His purpose regarding “fulfillment”? The Greek verb *plēroō* (πληρώω), commonly rendered as “fulfilled,” in the most general sense means “to make full, fill (full)” (BDAG).^d While this can relate “to bring to completion that which was already begun, complete, finish” (BDAG),^e likely via the fulfillment of prophecy, *plēroō* can notably also mean “to perfect, consummate,” in the context of “to make complete in every particular; to render perfect” (Thayer).^f AMG describes how the verb *plēroō* can imply “Figuratively, to fill, supply abundantly with something, impart richly, imbue with.”^g

When Yeshua came to “fulfill the Law,” it was with the expressed intention to demonstrate how valuable the Torah is for the instruction of the faithful, because His very Sermon on the Mount is predicated upon the validity of Moses’ Teaching. *He came to perfect it.* Yeshua surely came to show His generation the great spiritual dynamic of the Torah, that had either been lacking or skewed in the previous generations (even though there had been various Jewish teachers who also recognized certain religious and social problems needing to be fixed). Yeshua the Messiah, as the Word of God made manifest in the flesh (John 1:1), came to fulfill the Torah for humanity by **embodying it to its fullest extent** in His teachings, actions, and deeds. In His ministry Yeshua demonstrated how to live the Torah properly and embody its principal emphasis: the great love of God (Deuteronomy 6:5; cf. Mark 12:30; Matthew 22:37; Luke 10:27). By His perfect obedience to the Torah, Yeshua could be regarded as being without sin, and thus be acceptable as atonement before the Father.

Further on in Matthew 5:18, Yeshua dismisses any idea that by fulfilling the Torah, its importance and validity will somehow end by His work. He says, “**For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.**” Yeshua the Messiah says the Torah is not going to pass away until Heaven and Earth pass away. Not only does He say that the Torah will not pass away, but that “one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law” (KJV), or “not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished” (RSV). These are references to the minutest strokes of the Hebrew letters of the scroll of the Torah, which can sometimes change the meaning of a word, clause, or sentence—indicating that the finer details of what the Torah says are very important to our Heavenly Father. The Messiah similarly says in Luke 16:17, “it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail.”

The pastor’s words, “Jesus fulfilled every jot and tittle of the Law,” is quite misleading when kept within the larger context, because it would assume that *all has been fulfilled when it surely has not*. “All” was certainly not “fulfilled” following the ministry, execution, resurrection, and ascension of Yeshua—as *much more* is still to come in future salvation history. In particular, there are still Messianic expectations in the Law and the Prophets that we are waiting to see manifest, as God’s people urgently desire to see the Messiah return and establish His Millennial Kingdom on Earth.

Contrary to what some may not realize, Heaven and Earth are still with us today. We can walk outside and see the ground and see the sky *and* even look at the wider cosmos. If Heaven and Earth are still with us today, why do we have those who say that the Torah or the Law of Moses has been totally abolished? Are its principles regarding human conduct and behavior so irrelevant for our modern condition?

^c LS, 410.

^d BDAG, 828.

^e Ibid.

^f Thayer, pp 517-518.

^g Spiros Zodhiates, ed., *Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1993), 1177.

The Messiah issues a great warning to those who teach others to disobey God's commandments in the Torah. In Matthew 5:19, He further says, "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others *to do* the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." What we may assume from these words is that one's status in the Kingdom of God is determined by how one handles or approaches the Torah. If one teaches from the Torah, affording the Torah its due respect and honor, and encourages others to keep its commandments, such a person will be considered great in the Kingdom. If one teaches against the Torah and its commandments, that person will be considered the least.^h

Interestingly enough, a dispensational theologian like John F. Walvoord, who believes that the Law of Moses was only to be in place for Israel until the cross and the emergence of the so-called "Church Age," still has to conclude,

"The spiritual and moral principles of the Law...continue...Accordingly, though the Mosaic Law as a direct application was terminated, the moral and spiritual principles involved were to continue forever...Building on this revelation, Jesus declared that breaking the commandments and teaching others to do this will call for judgment, resulting in some not entering the kingdom. On the other hand, those who obey the Law and the moral principles of the kingdom 'will be called great in the kingdom of heaven' (v. 19)."ⁱ

One of the most sobering words from our Lord appears in Matthew 13:41-42, speaking of His return. Yeshua says that there will be a day when,

"The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." He also says, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS' [Psalm 6:8]" (Matthew 7:21-23).

These references to lawlessness or *anomia* (ἀνομία) regard how the condemned handled or approached the Law of God. Even though they attempted to serve God, did they at all eschew or disregard obedience to His commandments? Some have interpreted being "least" in the Kingdom as not being in the Kingdom at all. And unfortunately, there are voices you will encounter in the Messianic community who make it their job to judge the salvation of many Christians who are not pursuing a Torah observant lifestyle *as they are*. **It is not our job to judge the salvation of anyone** (a job *only* God Himself has, as Creator being able to fairly judge the human heart). Many evangelical Christian people are not "lawless," although they may have an under-developed view of the Law.

It is surely our job to take the words of the Messiah very seriously. If we are not pursuing compliance with what He has told us concerning the Torah, then will we be spending an eternity separated from Him? The Torah is God's standard of what He considers acceptable and unacceptable. If we are not pursuing an acceptable lifestyle in accordance with His holiness and

^h Note that there is some debate over what Yeshua specifically means when He refers to "these commandments." There are some theologians who recognize that Yeshua does not speak against the Torah, but believe that "these commandments" He speaks of only relate to those specific commandments He talks about in His Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chs. 5-7, not all of the commandments in the Torah.

Certainly, the commandments that Yeshua specifies in His Sermon on the Mount **are those that we should not dispute are absolutely imperative to keep**. Anyone, especially in a Messianic community that claims to be "Torah observant," who fails to keep them will most certainly be considered "least." Nevertheless, Yeshua as a First Century Jewish Rabbi and our example for living upheld the validity of all the commandments of the Torah as key instruction for His followers.

ⁱ John F. Walvoord, *Every Prophecy of the Bible* (Colorado Springs: Chariot Victor Publishing, 1999), pp 365, 366.

righteousness, then are we in rebellion to God? Are we making ourselves out to be God? *Thankfully, only He knows...*

Reading Yeshua's words in **Matthew 5:17-19** has caused many Believers, at the very least, to reexamine and reevaluate many of the teachings and views of modern Christianity in relation to the Law. Upon reading these three verses, many have been convicted by the Holy Spirit that the Torah is relevant instruction for Believers today, and is to be followed. *These are the primary verses that relate to Torah obedience for us today*, because if we do not understand the Messiah's position on the Law, then we are likely to misunderstand what the Apostles' position on the Law is as well. Perhaps even more important as it relates to the development of our theology, if one comes from the position that Yeshua did away with the Torah, various passages of Scripture will be *translated into English* to reflect this presupposition.^j But if the Messiah did not do away with the Torah, then diligent Messiah followers will have to do some digging, to see where major Christian Bible translations may come up short, or where various passages need to be considered further for context, historical analysis, and theological synthesis.

Few Christians realize this, but Judaism's rejection of Yeshua as the Messiah primarily has to do with the fact that the institutional Church widely teaches that He abolished the Law of Moses. As author Michael Brown validly summarizes, using the vantage point of the American presidency,

“What would we think of a presidential candidate who assured his voters that he would only *uphold* the requirements and *fulfill* the goals of the Constitution and never *abolish* our country's customs and laws, yet two years after his election, plunged the country into complete anarchy? Would this be *fulfillment* of the Constitution or *abolition* of the Constitution? It is the same with the Law of God. If Jesus promised to fulfill it but instead abolished it, then He would be a liar and not the Son of God.

“Do you know this is one of the greatest objections to the gospel that religious Jews have had? If Jesus was truly the Messiah, why did He do away with the Law?”^k

Indeed, why do many Christian theologians assert that Yeshua abolished the Torah or Law of Moses, when all of the Messianic prophecies of the Tanach or Old Testament speak to the contrary? Do these prophecies not tell us that when the Messiah comes to establish His Kingdom that the Torah will fully go forth from Zion? One of the most important missional admonitions in the Bible, which is also employed within the traditional Sabbath liturgy of the Jewish Synagogue,^l speaks of the Torah going forth to the nations and world peace being enacted:

“And it will come about in the last days that the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains. It will be raised above the hills, and the peoples will stream to it. Many nations will come and say, ‘Come and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD and to the house of the God of Jacob, that He may teach us about His ways and that we may walk in His paths.’ For from Zion will go forth the law, even the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And He will judge between many peoples and render decisions for mighty, distant nations. Then they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they train for war” (Micah 4:1-3).

“Now it will come about that in the last days the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; and all the

^j Christian Bibles that may translate various verses of Scripture from an anti-Law or anti-Torah perspective (i.e., Mark 7:19; Romans 10:4; Ephesians 2:15), are no different than Jewish Bibles that translate Scripture from the perspective that Yeshua is not the Messiah (i.e., Isaiah 7:14; Psalm 22:17).

^k Brown, *Our Hands Are Stained With Blood*, 82.

^l Jules Harlow, ed., *Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals* (New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 2007), 139; cf. J.H. Hertz, ed., *The Authorised Daily Prayer Book* (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1960), pp 473-475; Nosson Scherman and Meir Zlotowitz, eds., *Complete ArtScroll Siddur, Nusach Ashkenaz* (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1984), pp 432-433.

nations will stream to it. And many peoples will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us concerning His ways and that we may walk in His paths.' For the law will go forth from Zion and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples; and they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war" (Isaiah 2:2-4).^m

Prophecies such as these hardly sound like the Messiah coming to abolish the Law—especially if the Messiah is to rule and reign over Planet Earth, and the Torah is to go forth from Jerusalem! And more to the point: no good Bible teacher or theologian is ever going to honestly argue against world peace.

Various Jewish Rabbis of the past century, as a result of interreligious dialogue, have certainly been able to examine the New Testament as a valuable historical and philosophical text. Many have properly recognized, at least from a factual perspective, that Jesus did not abolish the Torah. Alfred J. Kolatch states the following in *The Second Jewish Book of Why*:

“During his career as preacher to his fellow Jews in Palestine, Jesus was careful to point out that he had no intention of promoting the idea that observance of Jewish law should be abandoned. The Synoptic Books of the Bible (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) portray Jesus as a practicing Jew...Given Jesus' portrayal as an observant Jew in the Synoptic Gospels, the total abandonment of Jewish ritual by the Christian Church seems strange. It is explained as an attempt by Church Fathers to draw a sharp distinction between Jew and Christian and thereby strengthen the Church. The abandonment is also the result of the great resistance encountered by Paul (and others) in his missionary activity among the Gentile population outside of Palestine. Paul found himself unable to win converts to Christianity when he insisted on adherence to biblical laws such as those pertaining to the Sabbath, family, purity, and especially circumcision.”ⁿ

To Kolatch and many other Jewish teachers and researchers, their problem is not with Jesus and His Torah observance. *Rather, their problem is with Paul.* Kolatch goes on and says, “Paul condemned as his enemy those Christians who continued to follow the Old Jewish law of circumcision, because by their actions, he said, they were shaking the faith of ignorant Christians and were turning away Gentiles from the new message he brought them.”^o To only compound the complexity of this dilemma, it is not at all helpful when one witnesses the thoughts of a Christian theologian like R.T. France, who in his Matthew commentary (*NICNT 2007*) actually says, “Matthew took a very conservative line on legal observance, believing that the Christian disciple was bound to continue to obey all the commandments of the Torah just as much as, or indeed more meticulously than, those Jews who had not followed Jesus...If that is what Matthew intended, the interpreter must face the fact that this teaching is out of step with the overall thrust of NT Christianity and with the almost universal consensus of Christians ever since...”^p

Many of the New Testament verses we will examine in this section of *The New Testament Validates Torah* are found in the Pauline Epistles. We are not to interpret what Yeshua says about the Torah in light of what we think Paul might say. Rather, we are to interpret and examine the Apostle Paul's words through the lens of what Yeshua the Messiah says! *Paul himself would agree with this.* He wrote his disciple Timothy that Yeshua's revelation and words on matters remain primary, and that one's doctrine must be in alignment with the Messiah's doctrine:

^m For a further examination of Micah 4:1-3 and Isaiah 2:2-4, consult the author's exegesis paper “The Torah Will Go Forth From Zion.”

ⁿ Alfred J. Kolatch, *The Second Jewish Book of Why* (Middle Village, NY: Jonathan David Publishers, 1985), pp 80-81.

^o *Ibid.*, 81.

^p R.T. France, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 179.

“If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, **those of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah**, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited *and* understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain” (1 Timothy 6:3-5).

Yeshua’s words in Matthew 5:17-19 **about the Torah being valid instruction for His followers**, remain primary to whatever else is said in the Apostolic Scriptures (New Testament) about the Law of Moses.⁹ You will find that it is not as difficult as you might think, to view passages that may appear or have traditionally been interpreted as anti-Torah, to actually not be anti-Torah. More than anything else, the pastor’s mistake and the mistake of many others, has been in not carefully examining the relevant verses.

posted 08 March, 2011

⁹ Given the importance of these verses within the debate over the Torah’s validity, a more detailed analysis of Matthew 5:17-19 is provided in Chapter 9, “Has the Law Been Fulfilled?”

Matthew 10:28: How can your ministry adhere to an ongoing punishment for the condemned in the Lake of Fire, when Yeshua Himself clearly says that the condemned will be destroyed?

In Matthew 10:28 Yeshua says, “Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” The emphasis of His remark is clearly that we are to fear God, versus fearing human beings. While human beings might have the power to kill a person, God has the power to do something much worse. What this something actually is, however, is debated among expositors.

The traditional view of eternal punishment is often that the unrighteous condemned will be eternally tormented in a literal Lake of Fire, concurrent with Revelation 14:11, “And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.” Many evangelical interpreters believe that the unrighteous condemned will be punished in a literal Lake of Fire, with literal fire and smoke and brimstone. Many others, however, believe that the images of fire, smoke, and brimstone are only representative, and that they were the worst images that a First Century Jew could conjure up in regard to God’s punishment on sinners. A metaphorical view of eternal punishment, *while adhering to the Lake of Fire as an ongoing punishment*, holds that the images of the Lake of Fire are often representative of the separation that the unrighteous will experience, not to be pressed too literally. What both a traditional and metaphorical view of eternal punishment have in common is that they consider the condemned to suffer a judgment that never ends.

Annihilationism is the idea that the process of being eternally condemned is not something that is ongoing. Rather, what is ongoing is only the effect of being eternally condemned, and the unrighteous are merely snuffed out of existence. The primary Scripture that annihilationism is based on is Matthew 10:28, and annihilationists make the strong point of indicating that Yeshua says to fear Him “who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” Since it would seem that God will *destroy* the condemned, it is assumed that this means that rather than punish them indefinitely forever, that He will simply obliterate them from existence. Hence, this is why proponents of this view are often called *annihilationists*. There are annihilationists present in the Messianic movement, but there are also annihilationists in evangelical Christianity and liberal Christianity as well.

Advocates of annihilationism pay particular attention to the English word “destroy,” and insist that God will “destroy” sinners in the Lake of Fire, when in English itself “destroy” has a wider variety of definitions than just “wipe out of total existence.” Indeed, the main English definitions of destroy include: “to tear down, demolish,” “to ruin,” “to do away with,” and “to kill.”^a “Destroy” in an entirely English context need not be what annihilationists insist it means. “Destroy” can very well mean existing in a completely decrepit and demolished or ruined state—as opposed to meaning completely extinct.

Not surprisingly, the Greek verb *apollumi* (ἀπόλλυμι), used in Matthew 10:28, likewise has considerable variance. Some possible definitions of this verb include: “To destroy, ‘kill,’ in battle or prison;” “to suffer loss or lose,” “to perish,” and “to be lost.”^b A related noun, *apōleia* (ἀπώλεια), likewise means “destruction,” “ruin,” “perishing,” or “loss.”^c AMG notes that in many cases, “the verb must not be thought of as indicating extinction, but only change from one state of being to another. Nothing actually becomes extinct, but everything changes.”^d So, when we apply the definition of “ruin, destroy” (BDAG)^e for *apollumi*, we cannot insist on a strict definition of “destroy” as meaning “obliterated out of existence.”

On the contrary, when we take into consideration the varied usages of *apollumi* throughout the Greek Apostolic Scriptures, including references to ruined wineskins (Matthew

^a Webster’s New World Dictionary and Thesaurus, 170.

^b A. Oepke, “*apollymi*,” in TDNT, 67.

^c Ibid.

^d Zodhiates, *Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, 230.

^e BDAG, 115.

9:17), lost sheep (Matthew 15:24), and rotten food (John 6:27), it is perfectly valid for one to interpret Matthew 10:28 as meaning something *other than* complete and total annihilation. Synthesizing all of the varied applications of *apollumi*, Matthew 10:28 can be rendered with “fear Him who is able to **utterly ruin** both soul and body.” With this rendering, the reality of an ongoing, eternal punishment is maintained—while recognizing that the condemned sinner is going to undergo a severe change for the worst.

Many are agreed that the closest Hebrew equivalent for *apollumi* is the verb *avad* (אָבַד), as *avad* is typically rendered with *apollumi* in the Greek Septuagint. *Apollumi* is rendered as *l'avdan* (לְאָבְדָן) is used in the UBSHNT in Matthew 10:28, and gives us some clues as to what Yeshua may have orally spoken.

In the Qal stem (simple action, active voice), *avad* can mean “become lost,” “go astray,” “perish,” “be ruined,” or “be carried off” (*CHALOT*).^f In the Piel stem (intensive action, active voice), *avad* can mean “give up as lost,” “let perish,” “destroy,” and “dissipate” (*CHALOT*).^g These definitions provide us with the same array of options that *apollumi* gives, regarding how we are to consider the “destruction” of the wicked as either a complete annihilation, or utter ruin/devastation. In the Hebrew Scriptures, *avad* is used to represent utter defeat (Joshua 1:7), the overthrow of a nation (Deuteronomy 28:51), as well as the taking of a life (Exodus 10:7; Leviticus 23:30; Deuteronomy 7:10, 20; 2 Kings 10:19). *Avad* can likewise refer to the enslavement or loss of a people (Numbers 21:29), as well as broken objects (Psalm 31:12).

Avad has the same basic array of meanings as does *apollumi*. From this connection and the uses of *avad*, must we likewise insist upon an annihilation of the unrighteous condemned?

While exegetically, both the verbs *apollumi* and *avad* allow for the “destruction” of the wicked to be something other than annihilation (namely being “utterly ruined” for eternity), the question of what will actually occur is **ultimately one of ideology**. If one believes that a loving God could never eternally torment sinners in some way or another, then one’s examination of the Scriptures will reflect this belief. Likewise, if one believes that a loving God would not allow sinners to only be “snuffed out,” and that an ongoing punishment is the only just punishment, then one’s examination of the Scriptures will reflect this belief. But note that the One who will dispense such punishment is God Himself. The punishment that is meted out upon the unrighteous condemned *can only be* something that an Eternal Being can deliver. Are there things worse than being dead for eternity, meaning snuffed out of existence and annihilated? This is a question that will continue to be debated, as each interpreter has to decide which value judgment to make.

The message of the gospel, though, is that no one has to experience such punishment. All of us can eternally commune with the Lord and be spared from the eternal fate that awaits those who reject Him.

posted 29 August, 2007

^f *CHALOT*, 1.

^g *Ibid*.

Messiah, Confirms the Covenant: How do you respond to the teaching which says that the Messiah confirms the covenant of Daniel 9:27?

There has been a particular interpretation of Daniel 9:25-27 circulating among many Christians, and to our deep concern, among some Messianic Believers as well. This interpretation claims that it is not the antimessiah/antichrist that makes or confirms the “covenant with many,” but rather that it is actually Yeshua the Messiah. A careful reading of the Biblical text will show this interpretation to be flawed and actually *supportive of antinomianism*. Let us review these verses.

To set the stage, Daniel 9:25-26 tells us “you are to know and discern *that* from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince *there will be* seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end *will come* with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.”

The occurrence of the first seven weeks and then the sixty-two weeks took place from the decree issued to Nehemiah that the Temple in Jerusalem was to be rebuilt to the point of Yeshua’s “cutting off.” This cutting off was His crucifixion and death. After this, we are told that “The people of a prince yet to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary” (Daniel 9:26, CJB).

It is important that we understand that the prince who is to come in the future *is not the Messiah*. He is a descendant of the Romans who destroyed Jerusalem in 70 C.E., a destruction that took place after the Messiah’s being “cut off.” It is not the Messiah that makes or confirms the covenant in Daniel 9:27, but it is this other leader, for “He will make a strong covenant with leaders for one week of years” (CJB).

The alternative view held by some today is that the Messiah confirmed “the covenant” through His ministry on Earth. Because Yeshua’s ministry lasted roughly three-and-a-half years, it is said that the first half of the Seventieth Week has already occurred. All that remains now is a three-and-a-half year Great Tribulation where the Holy Spirit will be poured out incredibly upon Believers so they can perform miracles greater than He did.

Although we will not deny the admonitions in Scripture of the Holy Spirit being poured out on the saints in the Last Days (Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:17-18), Yeshua warns us very strongly that “False messiahs and false prophets will appear and produce signs and omens, to lead astray, if possible, the elect” (Mark 13:22, NRSV; cf. Matthew 24:24). Adherents of this interpretation, many of whom are found in charismatic or Pentecostal-type arenas, are usually led more by their emotions of wanting to see “the Spirit poured out,” rather than rationally and realistically exegeting the Scriptural text. There can be a danger in wanting to see “the Spirit poured out” that can cause misinterpretations.

In addition to not accepting this interpretation because the “he” of Daniel 9:26-27 is the prince of the people who destroyed Jerusalem (the Romans), we as Messianics must not accept it even more so on the basis of what Yeshua’s “cutting off” is believed to be. As it is commonly asserted that if it is Yeshua who confirmed “the covenant,” likewise then He is the One who will put “a stop to sacrifice and grain offering” (Daniel 9:27b). According to most adherents we have encountered, who are in mainstream Christianity, this means that He terminated all the functions of the Torah or the Law of Moses from the animal sacrifices to the Sabbath to the Biblical holidays to the dietary requirements. This, as should be obvious, is a position that we, as Torah obedient followers of the Lord, must reject.

If we accept this interpretation, then who are the people that destroyed Jerusalem in 70 C.E.? Adherents of this belief run into a serious problem here. The pagan people who destroyed Jerusalem were the Romans who had no regard for the God of Israel and who were not “Yeshua the Prince’s people.” More notably, the Messiah Himself tells us to look for the Abomination of Desolation in Matthew 24:15-21. If we follow through, are we to assume that He, Yeshua, is the One who commits it in Daniel 9:27? Surely not.

If we accept the belief that it was the Messiah who confirmed the covenant of Daniel 9:27, then the logical end is that we also dispense with the Torah, as have many proponents of this interpretation. We must likewise conclude that it is Yeshua who commits the Abomination of Desolation, and not the antimessiah.

The Messiah's words in Matthew 5:17-19 stand very clearly against this. Yeshua said that the authority of the Torah stands until Heaven and Earth pass away. Even more important, we must understand that animal sacrifices *will be occurring* in the Millennial Kingdom, so it is impossible that He has terminated the validity of the Torah—including these ordinances. (Consult our FAQ entry **Sacrifices, in the Millennium**.) The sacrifice of Yeshua is certainly superior to the animal sacrifices of the Temple, but the Book of Acts is clear that the Apostles continued to participate in the Temple service as long as the Temple stood, and would have understood the animal sacrifices as a memorial of the Messiah's final sacrifice. It is obvious here that it is the antimessiah/antichrist who stops the sacrifices during the middle of the Seventieth Week, not the Messiah.

The assertion that there is a "Seventieth Week of Messiah" is misguided and as Messianic Believers we should not accept it—unless we are prepared to become antinomians against the Torah and believe that Yeshua the Messiah commits the Abomination of Desolation.

(This entry has been adapted from the editor's book *When Will the Messiah Return?*)

posted 13 April, 2006

Messianic: What does it mean to be "Messianic"?

Aside from the fact that semantically, the terms "Messianic" and "Christian" mean the same things—both detailing a belief in the Anointed One or Messiah/Christ—probably the biggest difference between the belief systems of "Christianity" and "Messianism," if the latter can be termed that, is that being *Messianic* entails a much stronger connection to the practices of the Hebrew Bible or "Old Testament," such as the seventh-day Sabbath or *Shabbat*, the appointed times of Leviticus 23, the kosher dietary laws, and regular (often weekly) study of the Torah.

When we refer to being "Messianic" on this website, it is to identify with a readily available movement within the "Christian world" which places a very high emphasis on the Hebraic origins of our faith, most of which are not necessarily emphasized in many Christian churches. Although we would certainly point out that doctrinally there are many similarities between mainline evangelical Christianity and the Messianic movement, there can be differences in regard to ecclesiology (the study of God's elect) and Torah application. But just as Christianity itself is quite diverse, so is the emerging Messianic movement.

Consult the editor's article "**Introduction to Things Messianic**" for a more detailed discussion.

updated 13 November, 2006

Messianic Judaism, Negativity Toward Two-House Teaching: Why do you think that Messianic Judaism exhibits a great disgust and disdain toward the Two-House teaching? Why can I not get my Messianic Jewish friends to be reasonable and sit down and examine the Scriptures?

The question of why today's Messianic Jewish movement is largely negative toward the Two-House teaching of Judah and Ephraim is very complicated. On the one hand, many Messianic Jews feel that Messianic non-Jews who believe themselves to be "returning Ephraim" are trying to usurp the position of being Israel from them, and by extension Judaism as a whole. When a Messianic non-Jew enters into a Messianic Jewish congregation and possibly claims that he is of the "Tribe of X," when no proof is given and the Jewish person knows that he is of the Tribe of Judah or Levi, some extreme skepticism is rightly displayed. Furthermore, there are many independent Messianic non-Jews who in a quest to become Torah obedient, disregard or are

hostile to a great deal of Jewish custom and tradition as though it has no validity. This negativity toward Judaism is only responded in kind by Messianic Jews who will disregard any Scriptural reference to the restoration of all Israel.

The solution to these problems is not difficult to see on paper, but is rather difficult to emulate in practice. When any of us emphasizes the Two-House teaching of Judah and Ephraim, we must first recognize the Jewish leadership of Israel. Without Judaism and the Jewish people, almost all of us would be lost without any form of Israel, a Bible, and most significantly Yeshua the Messiah. What any of us read about the Two Houses of Israel regarding the division of Israel into the Northern and Southern Kingdoms is undeniably written from the perspective of the Southern Kingdom. The Biblical Books of 1&2 Kings and 1&2 Chronicles were compiled from the royal annals of the Kingdom of Judah. It would be best for anyone teaching about the Two Houses of Israel to have it rooted in the history of Scripture and the traditions that we see in Judaism.

If emphasized as a part of the Jewish eschatological expectation, Messianic Jews should hopefully not have a problem with the Two-House teaching—or at least not casually disregard it as “heresy.” Unfortunately because of a great deal of sensationalism, both on the pro- and anti-Two-House side, Messianic Judaism today widely discounts the Two-House teaching as having any validity. This may be in response to the fact that proponents of the Two-House teaching largely *do not emphasize* the unification of the House of Judah, scattered House of Israel/Ephraim, *and* the nations as **eschatology**—ultimately being the message of the restoration of God’s Kingdom on Earth via the return of the Messiah—but instead as some newfound “identity.” Furthermore, Messianic Judaism’s inability to want to discuss this subject in a reasonable manner may be symptomatic of the fact that it does not have a very developed eschatology, as the Two-House teaching is firmly rooted in an understanding of the Last Days.

The only major solution to the negativity that exists in Messianic Judaism today is for Two-House proponents to see how they can refine their understanding so it does not become any kind of “racial teaching,” but rather one that is consistent with how mainline Judaism expects to see all Israel reunited. God is the only One who can identify anyone as “this tribe” or “that tribe,” and ultimately as people from all over the world, whether native born of Israel or not, are involved in the restoration of all Israel. Messianic non-Jews in the Two-House movement need to become more sensitive and appreciative toward Jewish custom and tradition related to the Torah, and recognize the Jewish leadership of Israel. Perhaps then some of the rhetoric that we see against this teaching from Messianic Judaism can be toned down, and we can realistically examine it from the Bible.

For a further discussion of this issue, consult the editor’s article “**The Ephraimite Error: Critical Errors.**”

posted 11 December, 2006

Messianic Terms, not exclusively used: Why do you not exclusively use Messianic terms in your writings?

TNN Online is a large website with information detailing a wide range of Biblical subjects. As such, we receive an incredibly large amount of visitors whose Scriptural views range from the far Left to the far Right, with many views expressed in-between. We receive many inquiring Christian visitors in addition to Messianic visitors. With this understood, we find it necessary to meet many people *where they currently are* in their walk with the Lord.

Some Messianic Believers with whom we fellowship wonder why we do not exclusively use Hebraic terms or names in our writings. There are many Messianic websites on the Internet which have the same kind of outreach to Christians as we do and find that if they do not use familiar English names and titles such as Jesus, Christ, Lord, and God then they will “lose” their readers. We have kept the use of the English name of our Messiah, Jesus, to a minimum, but

believe that it can be a major stumbling block to people to use terms that they are entirely unfamiliar with. The principal Messianic terms that we use are: Yeshua, Messiah, and Torah. With some notable exceptions, we have limited ourselves to only these three.

Certainly, we have no hesitancy to talk about Yeshua the Messiah or Jesus Christ, because they are both the Same Person. However, we do need to be “all things to all people” and if we were to exclusively refer to both our Savior and Biblical figures by Hebrew names many would not understand us. So, we do find it necessary to use, even at a minimum, our Messiah’s English name so we can readily emphasize to mainline Christians who access TNN Online that we do worship the same God and serve the same Lord.

updated 13 November, 2006

Mixed Fibers: What do you think about Leviticus 19:19 and Deuteronomy 22:11 and wearing clothes of mixed fibers? These Scriptures do not seem very clear.

Leviticus 19:19 says, “You are to keep My statutes. You shall not breed together two kinds of your cattle; you shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed, nor wear a garment upon you of two kinds of material mixed together.” It lists a variety of forbidden mixtures, not only pertaining to kinds of materials or cloth, but also breeding different kinds of cattle and different kinds of seed. The challenge in interpreting this text correctly does not relate to the principle that we are not to mix things or have an imbalance of them, but how we apply this today in the clothes we wear. Based on this verse alone, it would seem that we can only wear clothes that are of one type of fabric.

Many Messianics can get confused from this verse, because of the simple reason that many clothes today are made of mixed threads or different types of fabrics. One of the most common types of mixed fabric today is cotton and polyester. Does this mean that we are to throw out all of those clothes that have synthetic fabrics in them?

It is important that we let the Scriptures interpret themselves here. Deuteronomy 22:11 clarifies what is said by telling us, “You shall not wear a material mixed of wool and linen together.” Here, the text is specific and indicates that a mixture of wool and linen is prohibited. This is because the combined fibers of wool and linen are a poor combination and that garments made of this mixture will wear out very easily. This is to be contrasted with mixtures today such as cotton and polyester, which is actually very strong and versatile.

We need to interpret these verses together, noting that they forbid us from mixing wool and linen. We do not believe that it forbids the mixing of organic and synthetic fabrics. This commandment was originally given in an Ancient Near Eastern context where linen and wool were the two major fabrics. It was not given in a time when more diverse organic fabrics, in addition to synthetic fabrics, would exist.

updated 13 November, 2006

Moses, Write the Entire Torah?: Do you honestly believe that Moses wrote the entire Torah or Pentateuch? How could Moses have written that he was the “humblest man who ever lived,” or have written about his own death?

There are two points of view which are often espoused relating to the written origins of the Torah. Among fundamentalist Jews and Christians, it is believed that the Written Torah that exists, Genesis-Deuteronomy, was entirely written by Moses himself, and has been preserved perfectly since the Ancient Israelites were in the wilderness. The exact opposite of this, believed by liberal Jews and Christians, is that the Torah was compiled after the Babylonian exile, by the Yahwist (J), Elohist (E), Deuteronomist (D), and Priestly (P) classes of, or sources from, Israelite society. This theory, commonly called the JEDP documentary hypothesis, advocates that Moses did not write the Torah, but rather these writings are attributed to Moses and that the Torah as it exists today is largely a product of the post-Babylonian exile. The majority in the Messianic

movement believe that Moses wrote the entire Torah, whereas most in liberal Judaism and Christianity believe that Moses did not write it.

We believe that Moses is the principal author or compiler of the first five books of Scripture, the Chumash or Pentateuch, himself. There are parenthetical phrases that were likely written at another date. Genesis 14:14 is a glaring example of this, appearing very early in the text, where Abraham pursues Lot's kidnappers "as far as Dan." This appears long before the Israelites enter into the Promised Land and ascribed geographical place names to where they settle. Some would say that since Moses was a prophet, he prophesied this into being, but that is doubtful given the fact that this is a place name, and not an event. This was obviously a textual addition added at a later date to clarify for readers where Abraham actually pursued. It does not subtract from the value of the text, nor the event that takes place, nor does it subtract from essential Mosaic composition.

Numbers 12:3 says, "Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth." In the NASB and NIV translations, the text actually appears in parentheses (). Truly, if Moses did live as the most humble man on the face of the Earth, at least at the time of writing this, then Moses' being so humble would have prevented him from ever having written this. This likewise appears to be a textual addition to the Torah from a later date. In a similar vein, the final chapter of Deuteronomy details the death of Moses and how the Lord buried him. This is something that Moses could not have written about in such detail, but it does not immediately mean that it was written many centuries later as liberal critics of the Bible often claim. The *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* notes,

"Such scholars as R.D. Wilson, Merrill Unger, Douglas Young, R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and R.K. Harrison easily accept that the final chapter of Deuteronomy was likely appended by Joshua or someone else in Moses' inner circle. This, in fact, supports the view of the continuity of the writing prophets, a theory that each successor prophet writes the last chapter of his predecessor's book. The addition of a chapter on Moses' funeral by another prophet is in accordance with the custom of the day in no sense takes away from the belief that Moses was the author of everything up to that final chapter."^a

There have been parenthetical additions to the Hebrew text of the Torah since the time of Moses. This does not subtract from the value of the text, the events that took place, and certainly not the message of the text. It also does not mean that Moses did not write or oversee the writing of the vast majority of the Torah, but it is to say that textual additions have been made along the way. We do not believe that Moses wrote that he was the humblest man on Earth, or about his own death. These were statements added by either someone in his inner circle, perhaps one of the seventy elders, or Joshua who succeeded him.

For a further discussion about these, and related issues, consult our varied FAQ entries on the composition of the books of the Bible. Also recommended is D.W. Baker, "Source Criticism," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch*, pp 798-805.

updated 29 September, 2007

^a "Pentateuch, Mosaic Authorship of," in Norman L. Geisler, ed., *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 587.