

Reader Questions - Answers

Dear fellow Mennonite Brethren and our Companions

The following questions were sent to me by one of my readers:

If salvation is by Grace - then what good would it do to keep the Torah?

Much. Our forefather, Menno Simons, never accepted Luther's doctrine that we are justified by faith alone. Menno rightly understood that true faith is accompanied by profound inner change, separation from the world and an exemplary life. Shaul (Paul) said long ago that, "Not the hearers of the Torah are righteous in the sight of Elohim, but the doers of the law shall be declared right." (Rom. 2:13). We **are** saved by grace. However, the question implies that we don't need to do anything after we have believed.

How much of the Torah must you keep to be saved? All of it, or just parts?

None. This was the issue that led to the council at Yerushalayim in Acts 15. Some overly zealous Jews were saying that the new believers had to be circumcised in order to be saved. Not so, said the council; the Ruach (Spirit) of Elohim has already come upon the new believers because they have believed in Yeshua Messiah. Nevertheless, those new in the faith needed some guidance in Torah obedience and were instructed to abstain from fornication, idolatry and the eating of blood which are all Torah requirements. Similarly, Shaul pointed out the plight of his unbelieving brethren who were trying to establish their own righteousness through Torah works without proper knowledge (Rom 10:2-3) and without faith in Yeshua (Heb.4:2). While Torah obedience by itself can never bring salvation, it does not follow that the Torah is nullified through faith. On the contrary faith establishes Torah! (See Rom. 3:31).

If you break the Torah, where will you find forgiveness, since the daily sacrifice ended more than 2000 years ago?

The daily sacrifices were never intended to take away sin, but only looked forward to the perfect sacrifice that was to come. Our Messiah died once for all that through Him we might have the forgiveness of our sins. All sins committed in weakness, ignorance or omission can be forgiven. There is no sacrifice for deliberate sin.

If we are the Israelites, then who are the people in Israel?

From the Scriptures, from history and by common understanding there are about thirteen million Jews in the world today and roughly half of that number lives in the country of Israel. The same sources tell us that the house of Judah includes the tribes of Benjamin, Levi and a small remnant from all the other tribes. The multiplicity that YHWH promised Avraham came through Jacob's grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh. One of the most difficult concepts for Christians to grasp is that while all Jews are Israelites, not all Israelites are Jews. The number of non-Jewish Israelites living in the world today is in the billions. Our Mennonite people are from the house of Israel (Ephraim and Manasseh).

When Christ spoke with the Centurion who had faith, did he tell him to go and keep the Torah?

The centurion was already keeping Torah. In order to get Yeshua's attention, he sent elders from the Yehudim (Jews) with their testimony that he loved their nation and had built a synagogue for them. This indicates that the centurion feared YHWH and accepted Torah while not converting fully to Judaism. Inadvertently the centurion also testified to Yeshua's Torah obedience by saying, "For I also am a man under authority." In that statement, the centurion was acknowledging both his submission to the authority of Rome and Yeshua's submission to His Father's Torah. Yeshua was a circumcised Jew who wore the tzitzit, revered the Sabbath and went up to Yerushalayim three times a year in accordance with Torah requirements. In the verses just previous to this incident, Yeshua had warned about those who build a house without a foundation,- a strong warning to those who claim to be redeemed but do not perform the eternal commands of Torah. (Luke 7:49).

You said you can give us your "full assurance" that what you say is true. Based upon what exactly? The Scriptures? Or just what you feel is true. If it is the scriptures, then you might want to re-read Paul's letter to the Romans.

I can give you my full assurance that what I say is true based on experience. Torah obedience is infinitely more rewarding than all the traditions Christians keep for which they have absolutely no Scriptural basis. Moreover, Elohim gives His Ruach to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32). I can give you the most obvious of Scriptures that command Torah obedience with no avail. (Try Joshua 1:8, Psalm 19:7-1, Matt. 5:18-19, John 15:10, Acts 21:20-24 and Rev.14:12). Yet, you might just be able to hear if I tell you before Elohim and through Yeshua Messiah that my testimony is true.

In reference to Shaul's letter to the Romans (which I have quoted several times), I refer to Kepha's (Peter's) warning that Shaul's letters are hard to understand and have been twisted into the delusion of lawlessness. Those who break YHWH's commandments (the unstable that Kepha refers to) on a regular basis (albeit in ignorance and unbelief) will never be able to understand the subtleties and depth of Shaul's powerful arguments in balancing faith with obedience (2 Pet. 3:15-17).

I would really like to read your full answer to these questions - or maybe you can't answer them?

I believe I have answered these questions very effectively. They are good but not difficult. Questions and comments are always welcome. I pray constantly that my Mennonite brethren might recognize that they are from the house of Israel; turn from their unbelief, idolatry and lawlessness; and be a part of the great cloud of witnesses at Yeshua's coming.

I would be happy to send you a free copy of Norm Willis' book *Nazarene Israel* if you email me your address.

Shalom

Maria Wiens

"Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people" Debarim 4:6

Be sure to let me know if you wish to unsubscribe.