



# OUTREACH ISRAEL NEWS

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**MAY 2020**

**PAUL'S LETTERS**

*from a Messianic Perspective*

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## STATEMENT OF BELIEF

*Outreach Israel Ministries  
and Messianic Apologetics*

There is One Almighty Creator God of the Universe, who has revealed Himself to us in the manifestations of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) came in fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies of the Scriptures and is fully God. It is mandatory for us to believe in a Divine Redeemer to be saved. Salvation is a free gift of God to all who receive Messiah Yeshua into their lives and confess of their sins. Those who reject Messiah will be consigned to eternal punishment.

The Holy Scriptures, Genesis-Revelation, are the inspired, infallible Word of God as revealed in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts.

**Outreach Israel News** is the monthly newsletter of Outreach Israel Ministries, a non-profit organization with an emphasis on reaching, teaching, and encouraging the Messianic community. Subscription to **Outreach Israel News** is without cost and supported only by donation.

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All Believers in Israel's Messiah are to be regarded as a part of the Commonwealth of Israel. Jewish and non-Jewish Believers are to respect one another in mutual love as brothers and sisters, and are to work together for the salvation of the Jewish people and return of Israel's Messiah.

The Torah (Genesis-Deuteronomy) is the foundation of all Scripture, was followed by our Messiah Yeshua, and is to still be studied and heeded by Believers today.

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OIM is an *agapē* ministry, freely and benevolently giving the vast majority of its teachings and resources, without charge, to those who desire to be spiritually nourished.

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# OIM UPDATE

May 2020

It has been another crazy month of inconvenience, obfuscation, consternation, and lamentably death. Obviously, these are not obstacles or events that people find joy in, but instead frustration, and on occasion anger. For whatever reasons that God alone knows, everyone being affected must deal with these uncomfortable and harsh realities from the inherent perspectives they have as human beings. However, for those who believe that the Word of God reveals insight and wisdom from the Creator through various authors, the Apostle Paul communicated to the Corinthians a fundamental understanding about the distinction between the “natural” or “spiritual” person:

“For to us God revealed *them* through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the *thoughts* of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the *thoughts* of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. **Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God,** which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, **but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual words.** But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM [Isaiah 40:13]? **But we have the mind of Messiah”** (1 Corinthians 2:10-16, NASU).

Furthermore, the faithful children of God, with the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, are progressively attaining the mind of Messiah during the conformation process, as described by Paul to the Romans:

**“In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness;** for we do not know how to pray as we should, **but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us** with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows **what the mind of the Spirit is,** because He intercedes for the saints according to *the will of God*. And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. **For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son,** so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified” (Romans 8:26-30, NASU).

Therefore, one can conclude that true Believers, who are “born again” (John 3:3,7; 1 Peter 1:3,23) with a “heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26) and possessed by the Spirit of God, should have some Divine insight and wisdom on how to discern what

is transpiring during these tumultuous times. Yet without God's compassion, grace, and predestined calling, there would **not** be any justification or glorification for **any** man or woman. All would be hopeless and literally at the mercy of the world system, the lust of the flesh, and the Devil (the prince of the power of air), as summarized in this passage:

"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this **world**, according to **the prince of the power of the air**, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in **the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest**" (Ephesians 2:1-3, NASU).

Contemplating the possibility of being "by nature a child of wrath" with the plethora of mixed messages permeating the airwaves, should make followers of Yeshua be extremely grateful that at some point in time, by grace, and personal recognition and confession of this lost condition, there was a solution. The penalty for sin was offered by the blood sacrifice of the Lamb of God, and that through belief and repentance, salvation and eternal life is given. But what if a person does **not** have the Holy Spirit residing in their hearts? How are unbelievers going to respond to the cacophony of voices blurting contradictory statements with authoritative tones? After all, further elucidation by Paul described the "spiritual" forces arrayed against the soul in four distinct ways, which are **not** tangible "flesh and blood" foes:

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, **but against the [1] rulers, against the [2] powers, against the [3] world forces of this darkness, against the [4] spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places**" (Ephesians 6:12, NASU).

This is where things get dicey, because these invisible enemies are extremely powerful, and yet are still simply entities ultimately created by the Almighty One for His purposes, as are all things. But because they are unseen and being orchestrated by the "prince of the power of the air" (the Devil), these nefarious forces are constantly at work in opposition to God. *Now pause for a moment.* Do you remember how susceptible you were to the "wiles or schemes of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11), *before* you were born from above? Be honest with yourself. Think back to when you were younger (pre-salvation days) and how the things of the world were so attractive. Can you recall the music that was captivating, or how important being wealthy or famous seemed to motivate your actions? What about how you dealt with the transition from puberty to adulthood? Reflect on how your interactions with the opposite sex were handled or mishandled.

After a moment of reflection, read this revealing passage from the Apostle John that summarizes what every non-Believer (or Believer) contends with, simply because of their fleshly nature inherited from Adam and Eve:

"Do not love the world nor the things in the world. **If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.** For all that is in the world, **the lust**

**of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life**, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever” (1 John 2:15-17, NASU).

Here in unvarnished terms, the Apostle describes three proclivities of the human heart embedded from conception. The Adversary, being a student of human nature from the Garden of Eden, knows that people are attracted to the things of the world and the systems that have been developed to keep people distracted and away from God. Satan understands the innate desire of the flesh nature, the covetousness found with basic sight of attractive or moving objects that are simply visible to the eyes. Obviously, the classic example is the “light in a box” (or a computer monitor, flatscreen television or cinema), which the Evil One adroitly exploits to influence thoughts. This results in the inherent human tendency to believe and follow whatever is being aired, which activates the naïve and gullible to ungodly actions. Remarkably, this “power of the airwaves” can be as non-threatening as advertising to purchase a product or service, or on the other hand, propagandizing people for ulterior reasons—be they social, political, economic, psychological, or some combination thereof.

With all of the above being stated, imagine what a typical person, void of the Holy Spirit—simply influenced by their human nature with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life dominating their thoughts—can become. Contemplate that there is no Holy Spirit to act as a “governor” on the person, to interpret and counterbalance the natural inclinations of the flesh. Now what if that person achieves great wealth and the power it engenders? What if that person, due to tremendous economic power, can have anything money can buy, yet still not be satisfied? What about achieving political power and the ability to control populations or nations? What if the desires of the flesh, desires of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life have totally blinded a person to the point of concluding that what they are doing is actually in their mind, “helpful for humanity”? Can you imagine what this lack of understanding might do?

At this point in time, with the world literally dealing with an invisible virus that instills fear into the hearts of millions of people, the ability to manipulate actions is unparalleled in world history. Since the ubiquitous communication tools are being carried by most people with smartphones, it is definitely conceivable that nefarious actors, influenced or controlled by the unseen forces opposed to the Almighty, just might want to take advantage of this crisis... Are they?

In many respects, as the End of the Age approaches with the prophesied restoration of all things (Acts 3:19-21) just a matter of time, how curious it is that many of the same cultural influences that were prevalent during the First Century *Pax Romana* are now appearing during *Pax Americana*. One must remember that during the Apostolic Era, most of the epistles being composed were written to encourage Believers enduring severe persecution, or at the very least significant uncertainty. Consider some of the admonitions issued by the Apostle Peter:

“Therefore, since Messiah has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, **so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.** For the time already past is sufficient *for you* to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. In *all this*, they are surprised that you do not run with *them* into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign *you*; but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, **that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to *the will of God.*** The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober *spirit* for the purpose of prayer” (1 Peter 4:1-7, NASU).

“[A]nd *if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men (for by what he saw and heard *that* righteous man, while living among them, felt *his* righteous soul tormented day after day by *their* lawless deeds), then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge the flesh in *its* corrupt desires and despise authority.* Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties, whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord. **But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge, will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed, suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong. They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you, having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children; forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but he received a rebuke for his own transgression, *for a mute donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet.* These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved. **For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.** For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Yeshua the Messiah, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. **For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them.** It has happened to them according to the true proverb, ‘A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT’ [Proverbs 26:11], and, ‘A sow, after washing, *returns* to wallowing in the**

mire'' (2 Peter 2:7-11, NASU).

In addition, a warning from Jude, half-brother of Yeshua, succinctly summarized the problem:

**"Yet in the same way these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties.** But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!' **But these men revile the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed.** Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever. *It was also about these men that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, 'Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.'* **These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage.** But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, that they were saying to you, 'In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts.' **These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit.** But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah to eternal life" (Jude 8-21, NASU).

Throughout his letters, the Apostle Paul gave ancient Believers a solution to the problems of the fleshly, human nature, via various exhortations:

**"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please"** (Galatians 5:16-17, NASU).

**"But you did not learn Messiah in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Yeshua, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. Therefore,**

laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE of you WITH HIS NEIGHBOR [Zechariah 8:16], for we are members of one another. BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN [Psalm 4:4]; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity" (Ephesians 4:20-27, NASU).

**"But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; avoid such men as these.** For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:1-7, NASU).

Of course, the words of the Apostles carry great weight, but even the Messiah Yeshua addressed the problem of fleshly desires, when He was debating and admonishing various Pharisees:

"Yeshua answered them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. **So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.** I know that you are Abraham's descendants; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. I speak the things which I have seen with My Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from your father.' They answered and said to Him, 'Abraham is our father.' Yeshua said to them, 'If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham. But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do. You are doing the deeds of your father.' They said to Him, 'We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God.' Yeshua said to them, 'If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand what I am saying? *It is* because you cannot hear My word. **You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature,** for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me'" (John 8:34-45, NASU).

But to end with a positive note, consider these exhortations from Paul to the Believers in Asia Minor:

**"I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His**

**power toward us who believe.** *These are* in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Messiah, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the [assembly], which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (Ephesians 1:18-23, NASU).

"To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, **to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Messiah, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the [assembly] to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.** *This was* in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Messiah Yeshua our Lord, in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him. **Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf, for they are your glory. For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Messiah may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Messiah which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the [assembly] and in Messiah Yeshua to all generations forever and ever. Amen"** (Ephesians 3:8-21, NASU).

Finally, in these days of convoluted confusion propagated by those with political and/or economic power influenced by the prince of the power of the air, without the governing wisdom of the Holy Spirit, **be discerning and safe from invisible viruses and unseen enemies!** Nevertheless, Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics continually thank you for your prayers and financial support for our efforts to minister to people around the world!

**"The LORD bless you, and keep you; the LORD make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance on you, and give you peace"** (Numbers 6:24-26, NASU).

Advancing God's Kingdom, until the restoration of all things. . .  
Mark Huey

# FAQ

## Paul, Opposed or Not Opposed to the Torah (Law)

by J.K. McKee

I am having difficulty understanding the writings of the Apostle Paul. In my spirit, I believe his letters to be inspired of the Holy One, but in reading them I sense that they might be opposed to Torah. Can you help me with this?

There are a variety of important things that any reader of Paul's letters needs to keep in mind, the foremost being that Paul's letters were written to ancient groups of Believers in the First Century. When Twenty-First Century readers encounter the Pauline Epistles, we are definitely reading *someone else's mail*. Our responsibility, as with any text of Scripture, is to do our best to place ourselves into the original circumstances and setting of a letter's audience, interpret the letter for what it meant to the audience, and then seek a reasonable application for modern times. Unfortunately, the vast majority of those who have difficulty with Paul's letters, either Messianic or Christian, do not keep this in mind. They think that Paul writes directly to them in the Twenty-First Century, almost ignoring how every one of his letters bears the title of its *specific recipients*.

A wide number of today's Messianic Believers tend to have a love-hate relationship with the Apostle Paul. On the one hand, the many passages in Paul's letters that laud the love of God demonstrated via the Messiah Yeshua, and the service that Believers should have one for another, are greatly appreciated. On the other hand, passages in Paul's letters that appear to be negative toward the Torah or Law of Moses are either ignored, or they tend to be interpreted along some traditional Christian (typically dispensationalist) lines.

Few of today's Messianic Believers have really expended significant efforts to dig beyond an English translation of Paul's letters, much less into their background and joining into conversations in contemporary Biblical Studies. The widely-known controversy over Romans 10:4, which is commonly rendered with "Christ is the end of the law" (NASU), although *telos* (τέλος) can also mean "aim," "purpose," or "goal" (Common English Bible), or at least "culmination" (TNIV), is something that can be overlooked. If something like this can be overlooked, then more complicated issues like how to render *dogma* (δόγμα) in Ephesians 2:15, or *exesti* (ἔξειστί) in 1 Corinthians 6:12; 10:23, can catch people completely off guard. Issues like what "under the law" means, as

either having to obey the Mosaic Torah or born again Believers not standing under the condemnation of the Torah upon Law-breakers, are often not even probed or considered.

There are some commonly encountered approaches seen regarding the letters of the Apostle Paul in the broad Messianic movement. Some of these are a bit disturbing, whereas others of these are representative of a particular theological vantage point:

- **View #1:** *"Paul is a false apostle!"* Paul's writings are against Torah and they should not be considered Scripture.
- **View #2:** *"I don't know what to do with Paul."* Paul's writings are somehow inspired Scripture of the Holy One, but they are just too difficult to interpret or handle. Paul's approach to the Torah is too complicated for us to really understand.
- **View #3:** *"Paul is the Apostle to the Gentiles."* Paul's words about the Torah represent a bilateral ecclesiology of Israel and the Church. His letters about Torah speak of Gentiles in the Christian Church not having to follow it, and were not written to Jews who are to keep it. While appearing to be negative, Paul does not think that Gentiles have to follow Torah, as that would erase or blur Jewish and Gentile distinction.
- **View #4:** *"Paul's letters have transmission and background issues to be carefully considered."* The issue of Paul and the Law is a complicated debate in theological studies. In the Lutheran tradition, Paul is believed to place God's Law and God's grace at odds with one another. In the Calvinist and Wesleyan traditions, though, Paul is believed to always uphold God's moral Law as a standard of Christian holiness, to be followed by all. Messianic Believers need to appreciate approaches like that of Calvinism and Wesleyanism, and further investigate the text of the Pauline corpus for its transmission from Greek into English, and potential First Century background issues.

View #4, ***"Paul's letters have transmission and background issues to be carefully considered,"*** is definitely how a ministry like Outreach Israel and Messianic Apologetics have chosen to handle and interpret Paul's letters. We do not consider the Apostle Paul to be anti-Torah by any means, but there should also be no question that Paul, as well as other figures like James, Peter, and John—all believe that faith in Yeshua and what He has accomplished by His sacrifice for sinful humanity, are more important than the Torah of Moses. The Apostolic Scriptures are absolutely opposed to a principle of Torah-keeping for salvation and a legalistic misuse of the Torah. Consistent with the cries of Ancient Israel's Prophets, the Apostolic Scriptures also tend to be

stridently focused on the moral and ethical issues addressed by Moses' Teaching, as Yeshua Himself directed His followers to focus on "the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness" (Matthew 23:23). This does not mean that things like Sabbath-keeping or kosher eating were unimportant, just that the focus of teaching we see in the Apostolic Scriptures seems to be more targeted toward basic human behavioral issues. In terms of the early non-Jewish Believers, who often came from the lower classes, it should not be difficult to understand why the Apostles stridently focused on them repenting from gross sins such as idolatry or sexual immorality.

Like all texts of the Apostolic Scriptures, it would go too far for one to think that the issue of Torah-keeping is the only issue addressed by the Pauline Epistles. Each one of Paul's letters is addressed to a particular ancient audience or person, and likely to issue specific instruction or admonitions for circumstances faced by such audiences or persons. In much of today's Messianic movement, there tends to not be a wide enough comprehension for the actual identity of the audience of Paul's letters, and the basic situation(s) being addressed. If this is done, then readers will see that Paul is not at all anti-Torah.

The following is a brief summary of each of the Pauline letters, listed in their canonical order. This should be useful for providing you with some basic guidelines when approaching Paul's letters as a Messianic Believer:

**Romans:** This letter was largely written to tell the Roman Believers that Paul was coming their way, as he intended to travel all the way to Spain. Not having encountered these Believers before, Paul lays out much of his teaching style and approach in the form of various vignettes. As he does this, he must address the circumstances which have arisen from the Roman Jews having been expelled from Rome by the Edict of Claudius, but were now returning. This created a power struggle between the Jewish and non-Jewish Believers, the latter not being forced to leave. Romans emphasizes how the non-Jewish Believers rely more on the Jewish Believers than they realize, and how all are to respect one another given the universal realities of human sin. Paul lays out in salvation historical terms how all Israel is to be restored, and the place of the nations in such a restoration.

**1 Corinthians:** This letter was composed to address an intensely complicated series of circumstances, for one of the most dysfunctional groups of First Century Messiah followers. The Corinthian Believers had been booted out of the local synagogue, they were factionalized, and they were known by various slogans (i.e., "everything

is permissible for me"). Paul had to address an entire series of problems faced by the Corinthians, including fornication, eating meat sacrificed to idols, and disorderly conduct in the assembly. It is detectable within Paul's letter that he quotes various Corinthian slogans, and refutes them or shows them to be significantly problematic. The doctrine of resurrection is significantly expounded upon as a core tenet of Messianic faith.

**2 Corinthians:** This letter was a follow up to various reports that Paul had received about the spiritual progress of the Corinthians. While the Corinthians still had problems yet to be resolved, they had taken much of the Apostle's admonishment to them seriously, and were improving in their behavior.

**Galatians:** This letter was written to address how the non-Jewish Believers in Galatia had been led astray by outside Influencers (or "Judaizers") who were forcing them to go through ritual proselyte circumcision to Judaism, to really be members of God's people. The "works of law" spoken against in this letter likely had to do less with general obedience to God's Torah, and more to do with ancient *halachah* or how the Torah was followed by an ancient Jewish sect. In Galatians, Paul places the emphasis of membership in God's covenant people on faith in Yeshua and what He has achieved via His sacrifice, not how human works associated with the Torah are to achieve redemption and such membership.

**Ephesians:** This letter was a general epistle written to various assemblies of Messiah followers in Asia Minor. Paul expresses how the great work of Yeshua the Messiah has reconciled Jewish and non-Jewish Believers together as "one new humanity" in the Commonwealth of Israel. Their unity is to be a reflection of the greater work to come in salvation history, and is to be modeled by Believers' good conduct and service to one another, via employment of their unique spiritual gifts in the Lord. This letter was likely written at the same time as Colossians, perhaps expanding various themes seen in Colossians.

**Philippians:** This letter was written to a group of Paul's dear friends in Philippi, as he languished in a Roman prison, not quite knowing what was yet to happen. Unlike some of Paul's other letters, there are no major negative rebukes issued to this audience, as the words

are largely those of great appreciation to fellow Believers. Paul undoubtedly has lived a life with Yeshua the Messiah at its very center, as who He is and what He has accomplished make all human achievements—Jewish, Greek, or Roman—utterly meaningless.

**Colossians:** This letter was written to address a congregation that Paul had never before seen in person, but had grown up in Colossae as a result of his preaching in Ephesus. The people were largely influenced by a false teaching that was rooted within a local Judaism that itself had been infected by the local paganism and mystery cults (perhaps to be described as proto-Gnostic). This false teaching had advocated that Yeshua the Messiah was only one of various intermediary forces, and not really that Divine, and also pushed various ascetic rituals and practices like intense fasting. The false teaching had an emphasis on various Torah practices, but such Torah practices were misused as they were associated with various ungodly emphases.

**1 Thessalonians:** This letter was largely written to provide some reassurances to the Thessalonians, whom Paul had to abruptly leave because of pressure enforced upon him by the local Jewish leaders because of his preaching the gospel. The Thessalonians were experiencing persecution, and Paul gave them some important instruction about the return of the Messiah and future resurrection of the dead.

**2 Thessalonians:** This second letter was written to the Thessalonians shortly after the first letter, because of a misunderstanding of various remarks made about the end-times. The Thessalonians thought the Messiah was imminently coming, probably due to some agitators who had entered in among them, and so Paul must assure them how various events must precede the return of Yeshua.

**1 Timothy:** This first letter to Timothy was composed as Timothy was given the task by Paul of overseeing various assemblies in the vicinity of Ephesus. A false teaching had arisen in Ephesus with inappropriate emphases from the Torah, which had widely overlooked the many key teachings of the Law on proper and upstanding living. Timothy also had to see that proper leaders were raised up among the Ephesians, and see that the women in Ephesus were correctly trained and dignified in their activities.

**2 Timothy:** This second letter to Timothy includes more details about the false teaching that had arisen in Ephesus, which apparently advocated that the general resurrection had already taken place. More than anything else, 2 Timothy represents a kind of “last will and testament” of the Apostle Paul, in Roman imprisonment once again, as he knows he is soon to die and meet the Lord Yeshua.

**Titus:** This letter was written to address the unique service that Titus performed for Paul, helping to get the Messiah followers on the island of Crete established in the Lord. There are some overlaps between the Cretan false teaching, and the Ephesian false teaching faced by Timothy, likely detectable. Titus seemingly had to face a group of opportunistic Jewish people who were misusing the Torah, and negatively influencing the Cretan Believers.

**Philemon:** This letter was written to address the circumstances by which the runaway slave Onesimus encountered Paul in Rome, and how he came to faith in Yeshua as a result. Paul writes this letter to Philemon, a Believer in either Colossae or the Lycus Valley of Asia Minor, entreating him to be kind and generous to Onesimus. Philemon was written at the same time as Colossians.

The Apostle Paul is not anti-Torah, in that he is opposed to the Law of Moses as a standard to be followed by all of God’s people. He makes it clear in Romans 8:4, for example, “that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit,” a certain reference to the New Covenant promise to supernaturally transcribe the Torah onto the hearts and minds of the redeemed (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27). Torah-keeping is to definitely come via the supernatural compulsion of God’s Spirit on those who are in Messiah. Yet, Paul is also clear that who Yeshua is, as the Savior, is superior to the Torah, as he says in Philippians 3:9 that “[I] may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Messiah [or, *the* faithfulness of Messiah], the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith.”

It is irresponsible for any of today’s Messianics to claim that the Apostle Paul is anti-Torah, when most frequently those who make such a conclusion have not conducted a targeted examination of the passages they struggle with, including the Greek source text and potential historical and background issues.