

“Should,” “Must,” or “Have To”

Our hearts want to communicate something that we think is important. In our exploration of the non-Jewish person's relationship to the Torah, we have scrupulously avoided the use of “must,” “should,” and “have to,” as these ideas are completely inappropriate to the issues at hand.

The use of such words tends to open the door wide to the possibility of legalism taking over. By “legalism,” we mean the belief that adherence to the Torah is a requirement for obtaining, and/or maintaining, one's justification before God. Let it be stated once again for emphasis: We believe there is only one way to be forgiven for one's sin and to stand before the one true God as justified and righteous. That one way is through personal belief in the finished work of Messiah accomplished in His death and resurrection. He is the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father except through Him (John 14:6).

Our teaching on the Torah is not about a way of salvation through obedience to its commandments, but rather an elucidation of biblical instruction for those who have been redeemed by Messiah. The Scriptures define clearly God's holy community as a people whom He Himself has set apart as a light to the nations. We refer to those teachings of righteousness, those instructions for living as a redeemed community, as Torah. Therefore, if we take up the Torah as it truly is and live it, we are the holy community, living out who we are as God Himself defines us by His Word.

One may ask, “How can we engage in a meaningful exploration of this subject without once saying ‘should,’ ‘must,’ or ‘have to,’ when we speak about the believers' embracing of Torah?” We can do so by examining a series of biblical passages that suggest that, at the very least, the relationship of the non-Jewish person to the Torah is one of *divine inclusion* and *encouragement*. That is, we believe that there is sufficient evidence in the Bible to show that God gives His instructions for all gentile believers in Yeshua to fully identify with the land, the people, and the Scriptures of Israel.

In addition, might we also state at the outset that we do not think the words “should,” “must,” or “have to” are appropriate terms to describe anyone's — both Jewish and non-Jewish believers in Yeshua — relationship to the Bible. We hold that there is a completely different way of understanding our walk with the Lord and expressing how that walk functions that does not involve the use of the terms “should,” “must,” or “have to.” Let us explain.

Romans 6:12–13 says,

“Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your

body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.”

This passage describes what happened to us when we put our trust in Yeshua. It tells us that God caused us to identify with the death, burial, and resurrection of Yeshua (Romans 6:3). When that happened, we died, that is, the sinner died — he/she did not survive the crucifixion. We died with Him. Then, when Yeshua was buried, the sinner was also buried with Him. Finally, Yeshua rose from the dead. Hence, in Him we also arose as a new creation hidden in Him — never to die again!

Based on this reality, Paul goes on to describe what life is like for us as new creation humanity in Messiah. He tells us that we have a new relationship to sin. Before we were sinners and as sinners we were slaves to sin. Now, sin does not rule over us — despite how we might feel or act (Romans 6:16–17). Because we are new people and have an entirely new relationship to sin, Paul tells us that life is not about our obligation to any set of rules, laws, or principles. He does not state it in those legalistic terms. Rather, he describes our lives in terms of “presenting” or “yielding” our members to Yeshua who lives in us (Romans 6:12–13).

In other words, we know that Yeshua now dwells in all who have trusted in Him. He desires to live His life in us and through us. How does that happen? It comes about when we give our minds, our eyes, our mouth, our hands, our feet — every part of us — over to Him who lives in us for Him to live His life in us and through us. This is completely different from saying that we “should,” “must,” or “have to” follow any set of rules, laws, or principles.

The biblical instructions are not about obligations. Instead, they create the accurate mirror by which we can now know who we are as the humanity that God created humanity to be and how to live consistently with who we are as that humanity (James 1:22–25). Biblical instructions are the Words of Life.

What we have just described is a completely different way to live our lives as new creation humanity in Messiah. Israel’s calling was to be exactly this light to the nations so that the people of the nations could discover the humanity that humanity was created to be. So that they could discover the human relationships that God created. So that they could discover the Creator who created them. And discover the Salvation that is possible only through the Messiah who is sent to us by the One True God. Anyone from among the nations who saw and heard and embraced this One True God through putting their trust in the finished work of Messiah, they too would be born again. Born from above. Now among the restored humanity. A new creation! Free to live! Embracing the whole of

God's Word as the only way to know what their new life now is.

One of the many implications of this viewpoint is that both Jewish believers in Yeshua and gentile believers in Yeshua do not live their new creation lives by a harsh set of commands whereby they "should," "must," or "have to" follow the Torah. Rather, when we all yield our members to Him who dwells in us we are simply letting the Living Torah live His Torah life in us and through us. Hence, there is simply no room for the oft used deadening formula, we "should," "must," or "have to" follow the Torah. The living of Torah for any of us who are in Messiah is simply a matter of our identity in Messiah. We are a restored humanity and returned to life to live! What does living life look like? We are clearly given the Words of Life within the whole of Torah. This is the same Truth for anyone in Messiah, Jewish or Gentile.