

LA2. Not Returning to the Enslavement of Legalism.

We are not to return to the enslavement of legalism.

This precept is derived from His Word (blessed is He):

Key New Testament Scriptures

Mark 7:13

Thus, with your tradition which you had handed down to you, you nullify the Word of God! And you do other things like this.

Galatians 3:23

Now before the time for this trusting faithfulness came, we were imprisoned in subjection to the system which results from perverting the Torah into legalism, kept under guard until this yet-to-come trusting faithfulness would be revealed.

Galatians 5:1-4

What the Messiah has freed us for is freedom! Therefore, stand firm, and don't let yourselves be tied up again to a yoke of slavery. Mark my words- I, Sha'ul, tell you that if you undergo b'rit-milah the Messiah will be of no advantage to you at all! Again, I warn you: any man who undergoes b'rit-milah is obligated to observe the entire Torah! You who are trying to be declared righteous by God through legalism have severed yourselves from the Messiah! You have fallen away from God's grace!

Colossians 2:8

Watch out, so that no one will take you captive by means of philosophy and empty deceit, following human tradition which accords with the elemental spirits of the world but does not accord with the Messiah.

Additional New Testament Scriptures

Romans 14:1-23

Galatians 2:14-21, 3:2, 5, 10-12, 4:4-10, 21, 5:18

Related New Testament Mitzvot

LA01 Being Enslaved to God & His Righteousness, & Not by Sin

Supportive Tanakh Scriptures

Leviticus 25:55

For to me the people of Isra'el are slaves; they are my slaves whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; I am ADONAI your God.

Comment

The *Mitzvot* of the Mosaic *Torah* were given to Israel – not to the Gentile Nations. Centuries after Moses, Yeshua initiated the New Covenant, prophesied by Jeremiah, by becoming our sacrifice for sin and, after returning to his Father, by sending back the Holy Spirit to indwell those who were willing to receive him. At first, the Jewish followers of Yeshua believed that both Yeshua and the Holy Spirit were only for them. When, however, the Holy Spirit came upon Gentile believers as well (see Acts 10:44-48), they realized that the New Covenant was for Gentiles also, and that there had become a spiritual equality of Jewish and Gentile believers in Yeshua (see Galatians 3:26-29 and Ephesians 2:11-19).

It is important to note that there is no Scripture that makes either Yeshua's sacrifice or the Holy Spirit's arrival conditioned on men's obedience to the *Torah*. To be sure, leading a repentant life was needed to enjoy them to full advantage, but their availability was not conditioned on anyone obeying the *Torah*. *Sha'ul* taught this to the Gentiles of Galicia (most of whom had recently come out of heathenism) but, sometime after he left Galacia, he heard that the Gentile Galatian believers had departed from his teaching. Apparently, some Jewish believers (who had come from Jerusalem) influenced the Gentile Galatian believers to believe that receiving Yeshua and the Holy Spirit was not enough, and that God required them to be circumcised and observe the *Mitzvot* of the *Mosaic Torah* in the same Jewish way as they.

There are three problems with this. First, the so-called “Judaizers” diminished the distinctiveness and importance of Jewish identity by requiring that Jews and non-Jews live in the same Jewish way. Second, the “Judaizers’ own style of Jewish life very likely embraced the Jewish traditions taught and practiced by the Pharisees of Jerusalem; if so, the very example of their lives would have taught the Gentile Galatian believers the legalism of adding human rules to divine law and treating them both as divine. Third and perhaps most significant, the “Judaizers” diminished the primacy of Yeshua and the Holy Spirit by promoting the view that abiding by Jewish practices was needed in order to be righteous and have a righteous relationship with God.

The title of this *Mitzvah* is “Not Returning to the Slavery of Legalism.”¹ The part about “not returning” is derived from Galatians 5:1: “.. *don't let yourselves be tied up again to a yoke of slavery.*” The slavery referred to in Galatians is to the Pharisaic legalism of its day, and although *Sha'ul's* letter is to Gentiles, the warning of putting rule-keeping ahead of a relationship with God applies to Jews as well. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says:

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is valuable for teaching the truth, convicting of sin, correcting faults and training in right living; thus anyone who belongs to God may be fully equipped for every good work.”

This of course applies to the Scriptures of the Mosaic *Torah* and to Jews as well as Gentiles, so the *Torah* itself is not about what *Sha'ul's* letter to the Galatians is warning us Jews. The warning to us is our propensity for putting rule-keeping ahead of relationship. We should keep

¹ Whereas derivations of the word “legalism” (e.g. “legalistic”) are used in the CJB translation of Galatians, they do not appear in the Greek and are not used in other translations.

God's *Torah* as appropriate in the New Covenant but our motive should not be to receive God's favor. We should want to keep God's *Torah* because we love Him and know that He wants us to keep it.

Related Mitzvot in Volumes 1 & 2

A07 Confessing, Repenting, and Making Restitution for Our Sins

G08 Serving, Worshiping, Praising, & Praying to God

G13 Dedicating Ourselves to God

M01 Pursuing Righteousness & Doing What Is Right

M11 Resisting Temptation to Sin