

## Letter to an Israelite concerning LAW & GRACE



*Hello again everyone. I wrote the following letter years ago to a man who, though he had no discernible Jewish heritage, claimed to be a natural-born Israelite. Because we are about to enter into chapter 11 in the Romans Series, I thought it would be an appropriate time to share this respectful though heated exchange concerning law, grace, and the future of Israel. I open with the man's letter to me. May God bless your reading. —MZ*

**D**ear Martin,  
I settled back on Friday evening to enjoy your latest newsletter, but found myself very saddened instead. I enjoyed it like a toothache. I think I must have cried myself to sleep that night after reading it. It appears to me that you have never really read through all of the law of God, much less studied it, before presuming to chop it into firewood for burning.

The first page was really atrocious! Do you really feel that God is/was so unjust as to subject those who sin in ignorance to capital punishment? The strident tone made

it seem clear that you were accusing its author, God Himself, of sin and unrighteousness. Mr. Zender, Sir, the Bible does not teach what you accused God of doing. Numbers 15:25 says, "It shall be forgiven them, for it is ignorance..." Please see all of verses 24 through 36.

As I started reading, I thought, "I'll bet he doesn't mention or even consider verses from the Gospels which contradict his argument." Sorry to say, I guessed right. To use your own reasoning, Matthew 5:17-19 does not need to be explained, only believed.

I believe that, in some sense the law continues for the Christian today, and in some sense it does not. Truth is seldom found at the extremes. Just as it is not true to say that the law saves us, the other extreme which says the law of God is totally done away is also very untrue. The key is to understand what that continuing purpose is for us today. Important to understand is that God's law was not to be abolished for the Christian, but instead to be written on our hearts and put into practice. Jeremiah 31 and Hebrews 8:10 tie this to the New Covenant, so it is something which has begun to take place during this present "Pentecostal Age," not just in a future age.

Sorry for the tone of this letter, but I cannot hide my disappointment with your latest writing. In my opinion, it seemed poorly researched, outright false on page one, disparaging to God's righteousness, and one-sided in its view of this subject in the New Testament.

—I am an Israelite

**D**ear Israelite,  
Don't be sorry about writing this letter. As you are an Israelite according to the flesh, you have provided me with a unique opportunity to explain the vital differences between God's dealings with your race and His dealings with humanity as a whole. An appreciation of these differences will help many people to better understand the law of Moses.

## WILLFULLY SINNING DONKEYS?

Before I get into the law of Moses, I have some necessary defending to do. How is it that I accuse God of sin and unrighteousness on page one of my latest offering? I simply quote Exodus 19:11-13: God said—

Set a boundary for the people round about, saying: “Guard yourselves concerning ascent into the mountain (Sinai) or touching its outmost part. Everyone touching the mountain shall be put to death, yea death. No hand shall touch him, for he shall be stoned, yea stoned or shot, yea shot; whether beast or man, he shall not live.”

Then I give a fictitious example of Moses carrying this out. Whether any man or beast actually touched the mountain and incurred the penalty is immaterial. The point I was making was that the rule existed, that it would be enforced, and that fear of death attended the coming of law.

You are so anxious to “prove” that God could never be “so unjust as to subject those who sin in ignorance to capital punishment,” that you are seeking refuge in a law that didn’t even exist at the time. I have read Numbers 15:24-36. These verses do say that sins of ignorance are forgiven. But the passage I quoted was from Exodus, chapter nineteen, verses eleven through thirteen. These passages detail events occurring before the coming of law. An ignorant boundary-crosser may have phoned his lawyer, but not even F. Lee Bailey could have cited a nonexistent precept.

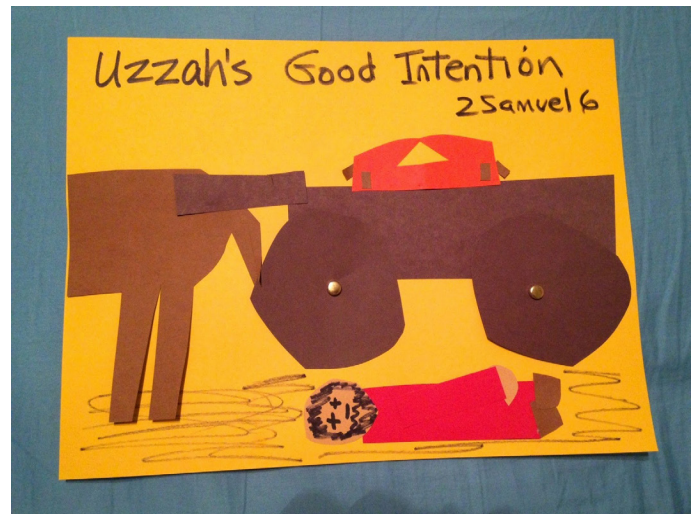
Besides, the death penalty for touching Sinai applied to both man and beast. Note: “No hand shall touch him, for he shall be stoned, yea stoned or shot, yea shot; whether beast or man, he shall not live.” As beasts are not willful



sinners, how else could they have trespassed *except* in ignorance?

The issue here is neither ignorance nor willfulness. The issue is: *touch the mountain and die*.

Have you not read in First Chronicles, chapter thirteen, of how a man named Uzza attempted to steady the ark of the covenant (which contained the tablets of the law) and was struck dead on the spot? The ark was riding on an ox-drawn cart, the oxen stumbled, and the ark started to fall. Uzza instinctively reached out to steady it. Who wouldn’t have? It was the ark of the covenant, for crying out loud. But he touched the ark (that was a no-no) and God killed him instantly (verse ten). *Sheeesh!* So much for Numbers 15. David had a real problem with God’s tactics here (verse 11), and no doubt you still do, if you believe this passage at all.



I’ll admit that this rule, “Touch the mountain and die,” seems harsh. If Moses had dreamed it up, it would have been a sin. But since God Himself drafted it, it’s righteous. “God is righteous in all His ways” (Psalm 145:17).

You are obviously upset. Either 1) God’s methods are troubling you, or 2) you are ignorant of or cannot accept the fact that the present purpose of Mosaic law is to kill (2 Corinthians 3:6). In any case, you’re taking out your frustrations on me. My friend, I didn’t make up that rule. I just quoted Scripture. Personally, I would have let folks off with a verbal warning.

## SUNFLOWERS ON SINAI

Though you don’t mention it in your letter, you have told me personally that you try to do the Mosaic law. This helps explain your attempt to plant flowers around

Mount Sinai. You are in a state of denial. You are like the person who stands over a corpse at a funeral home and says, “Uncle Billy looks great.”

In denying the horribleness of death, the person at the funeral home, deep down, wants to be immortal. In denying the mercilessness of Sinai, you are, deep down, still wanting to please God with the keeping of law. You have what Paul calls “a zeal of God, but not in accord with recognition” (Romans 10:2).

In this segment of Scripture dealing with Israel, Paul writes, “For Christ is the consummation of law for righteousness to everyone who is believing. For Moses is writing of the righteousness which is of law, that a man who does the same shall be living in it. Yet the righteousness of faith is...believing in your heart that God rouses Him from among the dead” (Romans 10:4-6, 9).

Contrast the difference between the righteousness that comes from one’s own efforts with the righteousness that comes simply by faith in the living Christ, who consummated law on your behalf.

### THIS HORSE AIN’T MOVING

Your brethren at Sinai had an excuse for attempting law, in that the law’s underlying purpose to revive sin (Romans 7:9), to cause offenses to increase (Romans 5:20), to dispense condemnation (2 Corinthians 3:9), and to deal out death (2 Corinthians 3:7), was hidden from them. Even if you haven’t grasped these Scriptures to the nations, you should know from the book of Hebrews that “there is coming to be a repudiation of the preceding precept because it is weak and without benefit; for the law perfects nothing” (7:18).

You are still trying to accomplish something that is “weak and without benefit and perfects nothing.” Either you are the most frustrated person alive or a master of self-deception. It’s not the law’s fault that it perfects nothing; the law is infirm because of the flesh (Romans 8:3). But God did what was impossible to the flesh by sending His own Son (Romans 8:3). You are now exhorted to have faith in this Son (Hebrews 10:38), not elbow into His accomplishment by still trying to do the law.

Yes, after all this, the law will still fare forth from Zion (Isaiah 2:3). How? Because there is to be a transference of law (Hebrews 7:12). It will still be law, every jot and tittle of it (Matthew 5:17-19), but it won’t be law in accord with the fleshly precept (Hebrews 7:16). It won’t be the variety of law that made Moses say, “do this and live in it!” (Romans 10:5). That’s the dead horse *you’re* still trying to

ride. It will be the variety of law that He has already consummated: “Christ is the consummation of law for righteousness to everyone who is believing.” But you are an Israelite and so this is too simple for you. You stumble on the stumbling stone:

The nations who are not pursuing righteousness overtook righteousness, yet a righteousness which is out of faith. Yet Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, into a law of righteousness does not outstrip. Wherefore? Seeing that it is not out of faith, but as out of law works, they stumble on the stumbling stone...

—Romans 9:31-32.

### HONESTLY, NOW

Honestly, are you really attempting law? Are you going to Jerusalem three times a year? Are you slaughtering animals on the temple altar? You say, “the ceremonial law (the divine service) has been abolished while the moral law (the Ten Commandments) has not.” But you are making this up. There is no such thing in the Scriptures as splitting the law in this manner. The Scriptures say, “Accursed is everyone who is not remaining in all things written in the scroll of the law, to do them” (Galatians 3:10).



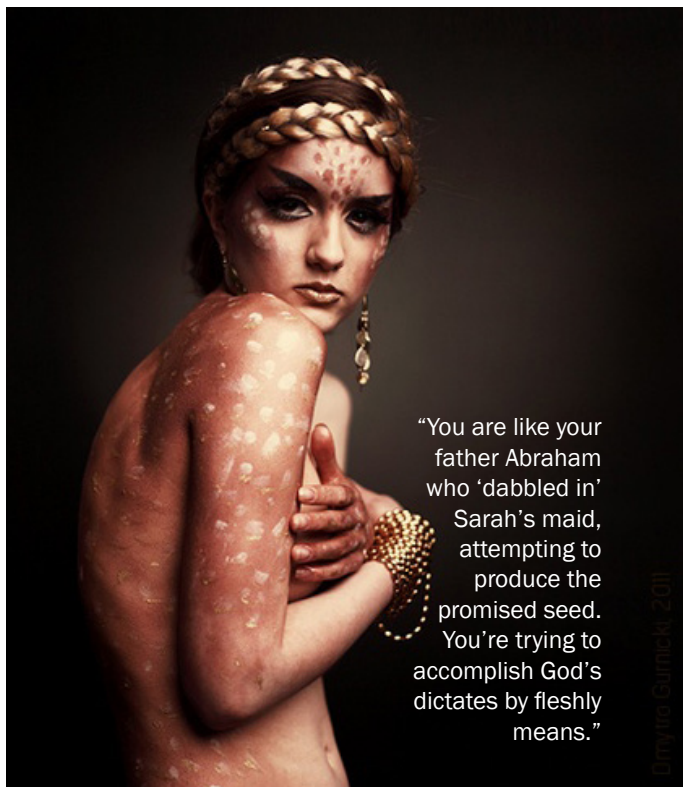
**“There’s nothing wrong with the law; it’s your timetable that’s flawed.”**

I understand that you can't do the whole law today. For one thing, His sanctuary is not in your midst (Ezekiel 37:28). For another thing, the house of Israel is still among the nations (Amos 9:9). For another thing, the Mount of Olives has yet to receive His feet (Zechariah 14:4). For another thing, David, who will preside as king when God's statutes are finally observed (Ezekiel 37:24), is still dead (Acts 2:29). But, brother, don't whack the law short to accommodate your failure. There's nothing wrong with the law, it's your timetable that's flawed.

That you are currently trying to do law (and failing, I safely assume) witnesses to the fact that the new covenant has not yet begun. When the law is written on your heart (which is the essence of the new covenant, Jeremiah 31:31) then you won't be able to help doing it. Then the law will be an inward reality, not an outward compulsion, as at present. In claiming the powers of the new covenant now, you're doing exactly as your brethren of old did; you are "pursuing a law of righteousness that is not out of faith, but as out of law works" (Romans 9:31-32). The antithetical thoughts here are pursuing versus faith.

#### BE LIKE ABRAHAM AND GIVE UP

The new covenant comes when your people stop pursuing. By dabbling in law now, you are like your father Abraham who "dabbled in" Sarah's maid in an attempt



"You are like your father Abraham who 'dabbled in' Sarah's maid, attempting to produce the promised seed. You're trying to accomplish God's dictates by fleshly means."

to produce the promised seed. You're trying to accomplish God's dictates by fleshly means. It's no good. In the current era, the law is supposed to humble you (Romans 7:7-24), not challenge you. Only when Abraham stopped pursuing and apprehended his worthlessness (Romans 4:19) did the promised seed come. Likewise, only when you stop playing law and are reduced to faith (which is actually a promotion), will you appreciate the righteousness of God (Romans 10:3). The well-apprised Israelite today is found waiting for the promise (Habakkuk 2:3), not struggling to fulfill it. Messiah is coming to rescue you (Romans 11:26), not congratulate you.

Now, faith.

As described in your own Scriptures (the letter to the Hebrews), faith is "an assumption of what is being expected" (Hebrews 11:1). The writer confirms elsewhere that the new covenant (Hebrews 10:16) is an expectation (Hebrews 10:23, 7:19). "Now expectation, being observed, is not expectation, for what anyone is observing, why is he expecting it also?" (Romans 8:24). It is your faith that is to be perfected now (Hebrews 12:2), not your law-keeping skills.

#### HERE'S YOUR LIST OF THINGS TO DO

The letter to the Hebrews was written for those of your brethren who had tasted of the wonders of the kingdom at Pentecost, but had seen that kingdom withdraw to an undetermined time in the future (Acts 1:6-7, Romans 11:15,25). Now, resigned to a future fulfillment of the promises (Hebrews 11:13), yours becomes a matter of saluting the promises ahead (Hebrews 11:13), of retaining the avowal of the expectation (Hebrews 10:23), of inciting one another to love and ideal acts (Hebrews 10:24), and of not forsaking the assembling of yourselves (Hebrews 10:25). Elsewhere, you are instructed to wait for Christ's physical return (Zechariah 14:4), to anticipate the reuniting of the kingdoms (Ezekiel 37:15-23), and to look forward to being planted permanently on sacred soil (Amos 9:15). None of this mentions "attempting the Mosaic law."

#### WONDERING, TRYING, PRETENDING

The new covenant is not a good Israelite here and a good Israelite there; it is to be a national covenant (Jeremiah 31:34) that will energize the corporate heart of your people to do all the law (Jeremiah 31:33). Even the new birth (John 3:7) awaits fulfillment, for this concerns the entire nation Israel (Isaiah 66:8), not scattered individuals



“It is your faith that is being perfected now, not your lawkeeping skills.”

from among it. When the Rescuer does arrive out of Zion, “He will be turning away irreverence from Jacob” (Romans 11:26). This will happen at the same time the new covenant begins (Romans 11:27). Has God already begun to turn away irreverence from Jacob? Not according to recent AP reports from the Middle East.

When the law *is* finally written on your heart, you and your brethren—as well as the whole world—will know it. He will be your God, and you shall be His people (Zechariah 8:8). Then, the law shall fare forth from Zion (Isaiah 2:3). In other words, there will be no more trying. There will be no more wondering if, or pretending that, the kingdom has come. When the kingdom does come, it will be so obvious that those who thought it was “spiritual” (that is, an unobservable, non-political kingdom) will laugh with delight. But what could be more spiritual than Christ literally fulfilling His literal promises to literal Israel? —MZ

*(To be continued.)*

Hey Martin,  
You are making Scripture come alive. I have read A.E. Knoch’s *Unveiling* and *Concordant Studoes in the Book of Daniel* over and over, but now, thanks to you I am revived and stimulated. I also appreciate you pointing out the difference between a believer and an unbeliever.

It is becoming more clear to me each day: Satan’s deceptions, the way he blinds people, the way he makes church-goers to oppose Paul’s truth—it’s unbelievable. The organized church believes and promotes everything except the truth of the evangel as recorded by Paul. In fact, the TV and radio preachers insist on everything that is the opposite of truth. It is shocking, ongoing insanity. And my wife fits every part of Paul’s description of someone who is forever learning, but not at any time able to come into the truth (2 Timothy 3:7). It is amazing, her opposition to me. It is so shocking and crazy.

She loves Kathryn Kuhlman, and old YouTube videos of faith healers. She loves today’s Benny Hinn types, too, anything about miracles and healing, and hell and freewill. She is nuts for all of it. *Nuts*.

I guess I have written all this before, but I am so glad you point out 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9. I am hoping that it is a mater of minutes rather than years when we are at ease with Christ before He comes in flaming fire to deal out vengeance upon the Earth, because I just can’t seem to find a way to get away from Christians and church. Keep going, brother! May His grace sustain you!

