

Galatians 4:9-11: Is Torah Weak and Beggarly?

By John K. McKee

Galatians 4:9-11

“But now that you have come to know God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you return again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be in absolute slavery to once again? You scrupulously observe days and months and seasons and years. I am frightened for you; that I have labored wearily over you without a cause”

This Scripture is one that we have thrown at us again and again by Christians who do not want to honor God’s appointed times. They tell us that the Galatian heresy was that the Galatians thought that strict obedience to the Law and circumcision would bring them salvation. Obviously, because of this, we are told that Paul feared for their souls because they began to celebrate the Biblical feast days. On a similar basis, many Christians tell Messianics that they are fearful for us because we are honoring Adonai’s appointed times and following Torah. Is this justified?

It is very true that the letter to the Galatians was written concerning a situation in Galatia where the Judaizers had imposed strict legalisms on the non- Jewish Believers. They asserted that you could only be saved if you were circumcised and honored the Torah to the letter. While there is nothing wrong with circumcision in and of itself, nor is obeying the Father’s Instruction wrong, doing these things with a legalistic attitude will in no way, shape, or form bring eternal salvation! This was the problem with the Galatians, and it is a problem with some Messianics today, unfortunately.

Salvation only comes through being spiritually regenerated through the atoning work of Messiah Yeshua. With this none of us should be in disagreement.

However, in the text from Galatians, Paul writes them, “But at that time when you did not know God, you were in absolute slavery to those, which by nature, are not gods. But now that you have come to know God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you return again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be in absolute slavery to once again?” (Galatians 4:8-9).

Specifically, the apostle says that they were returning² to things which “by nature, are not gods.” In other words, the text plainly attests that they were specifically turning to things that were not of Adonai To assert that these are the Lord’s feasts of Vayikra/Leviticus 23 is to say that His feasts are not of Him. This is patently wrong and we pray that you see the obvious error in accepting this.

What are the “days and months and seasons and years” referred to here? There are several possibilities. The first possibility is that they are non-Biblical, pagan feast days. The foolish Galatians, believing themselves to be saved by their circumcision, could be returning to these practices. A second possibility is that these are extra- Biblical Jewish practices added by some rabbis and legalistically imposed, somehow similar to pagan

Galatian holidays, perhaps involving astrology or mysticism. In either case, the Galatians were returning to things not of Adonai or established by Him.

Paul is greatly concerned that the Galatians are turning to things not of the Father and were being enslaved to them. But they cannot be the Biblical feasts because the Biblical feasts are of God and are certainly not “weak and miserable principles” (NIV).

Author Frank Houtz of *A Sign Between You And Me* offers the following important commentary concerning these verses:

“How can one turn again to something if they had never done it before? Pagans didn’t observe God’s Sabbaths, festivals, or new moon ceremonies. Pagans observed their own festivals; days of the week were set aside to worship certain gods, new moon celebrations complete with satanic rituals, new year’s celebrations with raucous revelry and the welcoming of the seasons. The Right of Spring, the feast of Ishtar, Saturnalia Regalia, Sun day, Moon day, Mars day, Jove day, Mercury day, Saturn day, and Thor’s day just to mention a few. Verse 8 clearly points to this when it says, ‘you served those which by nature are not gods....’ The Galatians were returning to pagan practices, not God’s appointed times.”

It is important to note that many Christians fall into the same errors as these Galatians. When many Christians come to faith in Messiah Yeshua, they turn to honoring “days and months and seasons and years” not established by God. And we point out that some Christians even celebrate the utterly Satanic holiday of Halloween. The vast majority of Christians celebrate non-Biblical holidays and many defiantly refuse to honor Adonai’s appointed times, and put others down who do.

The Christians who criticize Messianics, saying that they are “concerned” because we honor God’s appointments found in Torah, need to read the Scriptures from Galatians a little closer. These texts may very well apply more to them than to us, because most Christians today honor “weak and worthless elemental things” not established by God, but rather man. But fortunately in our day Adonai is awakening many to the importance of His appointed times.