

Romans 9:30-33

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"What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."

In true Pharisaical fashion, Paul poses a question to make a point. He shows that God indeed has granted righteousness to the gentiles, but in no way do they replace Israel. This verse, out of context from the following chapters, can easily be used to reach a false conclusion. As we will see, Paul repeats the question in chapter 11, and gives the answer there.

To pursue the Torah on the basis of faith is a good thing and not done away with by faith in Yeshua (e.g., Romans 3:31). Torah observance is not what Paul condemns. However, to pursue the Torah apart from faith (i.e., "earning your salvation") is to "stumble over the stone."

Paul states that much of Israel has stumbled over the Torah and the Messiah. These are intertwined as Torah and Messiah are "one," and that "one" is the covenant plan of God, expressed in the Torah and enacted in the Messiah. Israel did not arrive at the goal of the Torah, which is Yeshua (Romans 10:4).

The stumbling stone and the object of faith are all at once; God, Messiah and Torah. God is both a sanctuary and stumbling stone to Israel:

Isaiah 8:14 - And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Isaiah 28:16 - Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.