

“Ready to Vanish Away ” – Heb. 8:13

By Ted Gatza

This past week in our Bible class, the question was raised that if Col. 2:14 said that the Law of Moses was nailed to the cross, implying that it had come to an end, why does the Hebrew writer say that it is “ready to vanish away?” (Heb. 8:13)

The Function Of The Law Of Moses

When the nation of Israel was established and the law of Moses was given, it was intended to govern every aspect of Jewish life. From a religious perspective, Jews were obligated to observe various sacrifices, offerings, and feast days. These practices were essential for maintaining a right relationship with God. Additionally, the law of Moses served as a civil law institution, establishing laws and consequences that governed the daily lives of the entire nation.

In a similar way, Christians today are provided with religious laws of worship and conduct that they are to follow. However, God does not compel civil government to enforce these laws. As Christians, we reside in the Kingdom of God, and He will be the one who ensures that His laws are upheld within His kingdom.

Understanding that Christianity is a law applied to individuals, while the law of Moses was a law applied to a nation, helps us understand how Hebrews 8:13 clarifies Colossians 2:14.

Jewish Law In The First Century

During the time of Jesus, the Romans held absolute authority over Judea. The Jews were permitted to practice their religious worship and observe religious civil law within certain limits. Rome prohibited them from executing certain serious judgments without its consent. To enforce these rules, Rome appointed local governors to oversee different regions. Herod Antipas governed Galilee, while Pontius Pilate governed Judea.

The Jews governed themselves through the Sanhedrin, a Jewish court comprising the high priest and rabbis responsible for religious law. This authority significantly impacted Jewish life, allowing the Sanhedrin to make decisions on religious matters and enforce their traditional laws. Despite Roman law being the empire’s supreme law, the law of Moses continued to influence both religious and civil life among the Jews. It was under this Roman-Jewish legal system that Jesus and the apostles lived.

The Law And The Cross

God, speaking through Jeremiah, announced that the Law of Moses would cease to exist and be replaced by a new law. A law that would be etched upon their hearts, not merely inscribed upon

ordinances. (Jer. 31:31) Paul further emphasized this precept to the brethren at Colossi, asserting that the death of Christ marked the end of the law of Moses. (Col. 2:14) Consequently, they were no longer obligated to follow its ordinances of sacrifices, feast days, or civil rules for judgment. The law of Moses had lost its authority and power, and God, the Law Giver, no longer recognized it as binding on the Jewish nation.

The Jews, however, refused to relinquish it. Even after it was “nailed to the cross,” the religious leaders persisted in enforcing its religious and civil ordinances. For instance, in Acts 3:4-5, Peter and John were brought before the rulers, elders, scribes, and the high priest. Similarly, in Acts 5:17-18, the apostles were imprisoned by the high priest and the Sadducees. Despite the law’s demise and its ceasing to be in force, the Jews continued to adhere to it as if it were still valid. They actively enforced the law of Moses until approximately seven years after the Hebrew letter was written. Subsequently, God permanently removed it from them with the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

At that time, the Romans conquered the city, demolished the temple, removed its furniture, and destroyed its religious records. Consequently, the Jews were unable to fulfill their duties as prescribed by the Law of Moses. Temple worship required Levite priests, and without proof of their Levite lineage, no one could perform this sacred duty. In 70 AD, God ended temple worship and its civil ordinances.

Jews Today And The Nation Of Israel

Those who identify as Jews today are essentially proselytes to the law of Moses. They lack the ability to prove their lineage, and none of them can demonstrate their Levite status. Their sole claim is to adhere to a law that is inherently impossible to uphold.

When we examine the nation of Israel today, we see that its form of government is rooted in a parliamentary democracy, not the law of Moses. The nation that currently bears Israel’s name is not the same one that God established in the time of Moses, following the law that God gave to them.

In Conclusion

The Law of Moses, which had been in effect for centuries, came to an end with the crucifixion of Jesus. Despite this, the Jews persisted in following it as if it were still in force. Had they been obedient to His Son, they would have abandoned it. However, since they did not do so, God took away the law from them in such a way that it could never be reinstated. Like a man who dies and returns to the dust, so was the law of Moses. This is evident in the Hebrew writer’s statement, *“...He has made the first old. Now that which decays and waxes old is ready to vanish away.”* The law of Moses came to an end with Christ’s death, and with the destruction of Jerusalem, God ensured that it could no longer be used by anyone.