

119

MINISTRIES

“The following is a direct script of a teaching that is intended to be presented via video, incorporating relevant text, slides, media, and graphics to assist in illustration, thus facilitating the presentation of the material. In some places, this may cause the written material to not flow or sound rather awkward in some places. In addition, there may be grammatical errors that are often not acceptable in literary work. We encourage the viewing of the video teachings to complement the written teaching you see below.”

Answering Your Questions (Tattoos, Cremation, Tzitziyot, Sacrifices, Being Holy, and more)

119 Ministries receives thousands of emails a year. And as you would expect, many of those emails contain questions. Quite often, we repeatedly receive various forms of the same questions. Ideally, we would like to have a teaching available for every question we receive, however, some questions can be answered rather briefly, and do not require a regular length teaching to serve as a response. That is the purpose of this teaching series, to offer an easily available vehicle to answer your common questions.

In this teaching series, we will read a collection of hand-picked questions that we have received via email. Then, for whatever it is worth, we will offer a brief response, hopefully leading those interested in the right direction to find the answers they are seeking.

So, let's get started...first question...

I have a question. Are tattoos a sin?

Okay, to start off, we define sin as the breaking of the Torah (i.e. 1 John 3:4). The Torah mentions tattoos in Leviticus 19:28.

Leviticus 19:28

[You shall not make any cuts on your body for the dead or tattoo yourselves: I am the Lord \[YHWH\].](#)

On the immediate surface, it appears that tattoos are a sin. However, it is our current understanding that tattoos are not a sin generally speaking, only in specific circumstances. And determining those specific circumstances will require some careful examination of the context.

Leviticus 19:28 teaches against tattoos, but in the specific context of pagan cultic rituals surrounding the mourning of a death or remembering the death of loved ones.

For additional reference and material, we reveal this immediate context in our teaching [“Can We Shave](#)

[Our Beards?](#)” which covers verse 27. Such context would also relate to verse 28, specific to cutting oneself and getting a tattoo. The cutting of oneself and the tattoo are not separate circumstances, but related. In ancient times, to tattoo yourself, you would cut yourself in a particular pattern or shape, and then rub dye into your wound. This would then form a tattoo. So, a better rendering of this verse from Hebrew to English would be “You shall not make any cuts on your body and tattoo yourselves for the dead.

So, specifically, a tattoo today would not likely be breaking the Torah unless done in such context. However, while not breaking the Torah, tattoos, even today, are often associated with rebellious counter-culture. In addition, many of those who are Torah observant interpret Leviticus 19:28 much more broadly than we have described. Because of this, one might wish to exercise careful consideration as to whether a tattoo is sending a message and purpose that would be well received by others you might associate with in the faith. It could possibly and understandably cause conflict and tension with others, which might cause the exact opposite of your intent in getting a tattoo. That being said, we are certainly not telling you one cannot get a tattoo, but we at least wanted to present some things that perhaps should be considered. We hope we at least offered some thoughts worthy of thinking about.

Next question...

We recently lost a family member. He was cremated. Is cremation acceptable?

We receive this question quite regularly. The typical process in Scripture is clearly burial (Genesis 23:19; 35:19; 2 Chronicles 16:14; Matthew 27:60-66). However, Description is not necessarily prescription. Meaning this, just because something is traditionally done in a certain way in the Bible does not mean the Torah prescribes or requires it.

There is nothing in the Torah that restricts cremation. As we are told in Genesis, because of sin, we now experience death. Death is equated to turning to dust. Cremation simply expedites that process of turning back to dust from which we came. In the end, we will all be resurrected. It does not matter if our body has already completely turned to dust or not, our promised resurrection will come.

But isn't cremation a pagan practice?

Again, the Biblical pattern we see in Scripture for God's people is burial, not cremation. Cremation was a process employed by pagans. However, we are told in the Torah, to simply not worship YHWH in the way that the pagans worshipped YHWH. Cremation is not a form of worship of YHWH. So, while cremation is not the Biblical pattern for God's people, it does not appear to be against the Torah. However, you will find that most will choose to employ the Biblical pattern of burial in most cases, and that is understandable. In the end, those in the faith, whether buried or cremated, will be resurrected to eternal life.

So why do some even consider cremation?

In nearly every instance we are asked about whether cremation is acceptable, we find most actually prefer traditional burial, but find the cost of burial to be an obstacle, and the substantial cost savings of cremation to be attractive. In addition, those who chose cremation often still bury the cremated remains in a special place, thus making an attempt to still somewhat fit the established Biblical pattern of traditional burial.

Next question...

Can you help me better understand the difference between the Law and the Covenant?

This is an excellent question, and eventually, it really deserves more of an in-depth, stand alone teaching.

From a rather basic perspective, a covenant is simply an agreement between two parties. Biblically, there is more to it than that, and we don't want to minimize its importance. In the faith, we are to believe the Word of God to be true. That is our part of the agreement, to believe and have faith that the Word of God is truth. Our faith on our end of the agreement is not works-based, but our faith, if valid, will produce works as a result. Because we believe the Word of God to be true, we seek to live out the Word (Torah) in our faith. Such is the evidence of our faith. Following and believing the Word of God is the same as following and believing our Messiah. Our Messiah only practiced and taught what the Father already presented as the Word of God, which is contained in the Torah.

YHWH's part of the covenant is the offering of different promises. So, the Torah is part of the covenant, as it is the centerpiece of detailing what we believe to be true and thus how we should live out the faith that we believe as truth. We enter the covenant when we believe the Word of God to be truth.

However, the other part of the covenant is YHWH's promises to us. This is how covenants change. YHWH continues to add more promises to us with each iteration of the covenant. This is even stated to be true of the New Covenant: it has better promises, but not a better, or different, law. This again, is just a highly basic overview and really does not reveal all of the different nuances of each covenant.

Hebrews 8:6

But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.

The law remains the same. The law of God does not change. The law defines sin. What is sin one day will always be sin the next day. All righteousness, holiness, and fair judgment is based on the Torah, or the Law of God. Thus, it cannot change unless the definition of righteousness, holiness, and fair judgment can change. The written Word of God (Deuteronomy 4:2), our Messiah as the manifestation of the Word of God (Matthew 5:17-20), and even Paul (i.e. Romans 3:31), say the same in various places.

So, in conclusion, the only thing that changes in the new covenant presented by YHWH is the offering of more and better promises. Some examples include the offering of a resurrection through Messiah Yeshua to save us from death, or promising to never flood the Earth again, or multiplying us as believers, or bringing us into the land...etc.

This is all said to say that a new covenant is not a new law; it is new promise. The New Covenant writes the Torah on our hearts, empowering us to keep it. It doesn't get rid of the Torah. And we are renewed into the same faith that has existed from the beginning, the eternal and unchanging Word of God.

So, while the Torah is part of the covenant, it is part of it in a very specific way. There is really much more to YHWH's covenants with us as believers.

We might also suggest our teaching, the "[Hebrew Root of Covenant](#)".

Next question...

Shalom! I was recently in a discussion with someone who found fault with me because I do not wear my tassels every day. This was something I concluded for myself, that because the command is silent on the frequency of how often tassels are to be worn (as well as which garments), I decided that I was not in sin when I chose to refrain on some days. Now that the issue was used against me, in a manner of speaking, I am attempting to re-evaluate whether I am in the wrong or not. Would you provide me with your stance on this please? Again, to my understanding, Scripture is silent on the frequency, but if you know something I don't, please share. Thanks again and shalom.

We receive questions like this very often. To answer, specifically, as it is written, the Torah is silent regarding the frequency. All we have to go on is what is implied by YHWH in the context.

The Torah-stated purpose of wearing tzitzits is to serve as a reminder to observe YHWH's commandments. We can read this in Numbers 15.

So, the answer to how often we should wear tzitzits is found by asking this question: *How often should we seek to remember to observe YHWH's commandments?*

We would expect the answer to be as much as humanly possible. If we are conscious, then we should want to be remembering YHWH's commandments.

Another way to look at it is to extrapolate the extreme side of determining for ourselves the frequency of wearing tzitzits.

If the frequency of wearing tzitzits is not implied in the Torah, then all we have to do is wear tzitzits for one second of our life, and then we satisfied the commandment. Clearly, with that, it should be obvious that is not what YHWH intended. So, we should apply what YHWH intended. Tzitzits can only serve as a reminder when worn, so, YHWH did not need to be specific, as the intent or purpose behind tzitzits also reveals the intended frequency of wearing them. That frequency is to be as often as possible.

Now, there will be times that it is not possible. For example, some professions or manufacturing jobs would present safety issues if one was wearing tzitzits at the time. In such cases, sometimes a person will place them in their pockets or under their existing clothing as to not compromise their safety. If safety is not a concern, most employers in the United States have to allow a person to exercise their faith, which would include the wearing of tzitzits.

Next question...

Please - Please - Please add a search box on the website so you can look for the videos mentioned BY NAME in other videos, or mention which series the videos you suggest to watch are under. This is another example of a company having a website but never using it themselves to know that it works. Argh!!!

For anyone ever frustrated with the design of the 119 website, we can empathize. Our current website is substantially improved over our previous website iteration. However, please keep in mind, that we are using a template to save costs, with minor customization for our purposes. A fully customized website could cost north of \$100,000 to accomplish all the features we would like to include. Perhaps that could someday happen, but resources are often tight.

But, to answer this concern specifically, we actually do have several available search features to help a

person easily find teachings. In the upper right hand of the website page, you will see a magnifying glass next to a text box that says “search.” Using keywords may help you find blog posts, articles, or teachings related to the subject or title of interest.

Also, on the teaching page, it defaults to sorting teachings by category. If you do not know what category a teaching you are looking for is in, you can view all teachings, and it will place all teachings on one page in alphabetical order. And, even on this page, is an additional search box feature.

While it might still be occasionally challenging to find a specific teaching now that we have over 300 free teachings available, we hope that these tools might lessen frustration until someday we have a website that is as user friendly as we would like.

Next question...

If Yahweh says "live holy" because I am holy - what does that mean for me in my daily walk?

This is a good question. To “be holy” means to be “set apart.” We are set apart by YHWH in the doing of His commandments:

Leviticus 10:7

[Consecrate yourselves, therefore, and be holy, for I am the Lord \[YHWH\] your God. Keep my statutes and do them; I am the Lord \[YHWH\] who sanctifies you.](#)

We see the same in Leviticus 11 in the context of obeying the dietary instructions. YHWH instructs His people to be set apart by following His set apart Torah.

Sometimes people confuse traditions and practices not found in the Torah, or trying to not do what the pagans do, as defining being set apart or holy. But that is not what defines being set apart. Only the Torah can do that. YHWH even defines His own holiness and righteousness by His Torah.

While there are plenty of traditions or other ideas about walking out or faith that are not in the Torah, none of those things have to do with being holy or set apart. It does not mean that such practices are bad or should necessarily be avoided; it should just be recognized that anything beyond the Torah does nothing for holiness or being set apart.

Shalom! I am a big fan of your teachings and was just reviewing your teaching on Passover when it raised a question. In your teaching, you ask “Can we Biblically observe Passover today?” The answer is “No.” You then go on to explain that it can only be done in Jerusalem at the temple. But then you go on to say that during the 40 years in the desert they were keeping Passover? Can you please clarify? Thank you.

So basically, this is asking:

If sacrifices can only be done at the temple in Jerusalem, how were sacrifices done in the wilderness in the time of Moses?

This is a good question. The answer is actually rather simple.

In the wilderness, they had the tabernacle. YHWH moved the altar to the permanent location of

Jerusalem later.

This would not be a change in the Torah, as the Torah simply dictates that such priestly activity be done in the place YHWH chooses. Jerusalem is the last place YHWH has chosen and remains such to this day.

Next question...

Would God ask a person to sin? The story of Abraham sacrificing Isaac is troubling to me.

The events of Genesis 22 certainly contains a situation that raises one's eyebrows.

We, and most others, would understand the whole event as a prophetic shadow of Messiah Yeshua. Yeshua offered himself up voluntarily, as did Isaac. Isaac did not fight back or resist according to the account. He was a willing participant and maybe speculated what was really going on as it was occurring, even asking Abraham where the sacrifice.

It makes you wonder if Abraham seemed to know that YHWH would provide a ram, as that is what Abraham even said in response to Isaac's question. Perhaps Abraham knew this knowing that YHWH would not have him carry out sin. We seem to actually see that understanding presented in verse 5. Abraham actually declares his expectation of both him and Isaac returning back to his young men. If Abraham actually believed Isaac was going to die, that would not have been his expectation.

Genesis 22:5

*Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; **I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you.**"*

Regardless, Abraham did reveal that he was willing to carry it out as requested, fully showing his trust in YHWH, and Isaac demonstrated his trust in YHWH as well.

So, in this, the answer to your question is yes, YHWH could ask, perhaps, but if this story sets the example, he would stop you from carrying it out.

If this series and presentation format interested you, there are many more questions we will be covering in the subsequent parts of this teaching series. As always, if you have questions for 119 Ministries, please use the Contact Us page offered on our website, <http://119ministries.com/contact-us>. And if you do contact us, thank you for your patience as our team works to respond.

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching.

Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom!

For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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