

No Legal Fences Are Required

Building 'fences' around the Law (Torah) was a common practice among ancient Pharisee rabbis.¹ Unlike the Sadducees, they had a long history of oral interpretation and commentary on the Torah. An indispensable component of this oral Torah (called 'the tradition of the elders') was the practice of building 'fences' around the commandments. These were additional observations and practices that were instituted to preserve the commandments themselves.

The purpose of the 'fences' was this: Practice them and you won't violate the commandment.

This is an additional level of Law, over and above the God-given ones. No wonder there were so many man-made laws in NT Judaism that Jesus spoke against. For example, here's a few:

Matthew 23:4 (NKJV) – *For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.*

Matthew 23:13 (NKJV) – *“But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.*

Matthew 23:16 (NKJV) – *“Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.’*

Matthew 12:1-2 (NKJV) – *At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, “Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!”*

Some Messianic Christians firmly believe that Jesus built 'fences' around the Torah as well.² This gives them the credence to teach that Christians are to keep the Law (Torah).

They particularly see this in Jesus' injunction about anger in his teachings while on the Galilean mountain.

Matthew 5:21-22 (NKJV) – *“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder;’³ and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause⁴ shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire.*

What they believe is: “He is telling his disciples that if they entertain anger towards anyone, that anger can grow until it becomes an action. Unchecked emotions are all too often acted upon: anger allowed to fester in the heart can lead to murder.”⁵ So, the logic is, if you watch out for the 'fence' (i.e. anger) and keep it in check, you won't break the Law and commit murder⁶.

This is NOT what Jesus was teaching. This understanding comes from a legalistic perspective, not from a Kingdom perspective.

All Jesus' “You have heard it said...” passages are 'fair game' for legalists to see as 'fences'. This includes:

- Vows: Matthew 5:33-37
- Justice: Matthew 5:38-42, 38-42

1 – Dr. Kathleen Troost-Kramer, Professor of Biblical Studies (14-11-2016) “Jesus and His Fences Around Torah” (Blog email from Israel Study Center) [israelstudycenter.com]

2 – Israel Study Center “Rabbi Jesus and Fences Around Torah” (www.youtube.com/watch?v=3447YFU5eUw)

3 – Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17

4 – NU-Text omits *without a cause*.

5 – Dr. Kathleen Troost-Kramer “Jesus and His Fences Around Torah”

6 – Dr. Kathleen Troost-Kramer “Jesus and His Fences Around Torah”

- Sexual Morality: Matthew 5:27-30
- Mercy: Matthew 5:43-48

It is believed that 'fences' around the Law that Jesus taught about were to aid his followers to have righteousness that would surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees⁷.

Now, here's the thing. This is looking at Jesus' teaching with religious glasses on – i.e. from a religion worldview. When you look at the same teaching with a Kingdom worldview or from a spiritual perspective, the picture is completely different.

The Law was the school teacher (tutor) that kept God's people in line.⁸ Once we come to faith in the salvation that we are offered, we no longer needed this Law as our tutor.⁹ PERIOD!

The Law kept us immature, because immature sons are the ones that need teachers/tutors/governors. Maturity in the Spirit and operation out of *agape* love supersedes the Law.¹⁰

Jesus was bringing us into sonship and maturity with his teaching, not further entrenching the Law by showing us how to protect ourselves from breaking these statutes.

How can we go on to maturity when these legal teachings are keeping us from exploring our status as Earth's rulers? It's just like locking up children in the home with a sheltered life to protect them from the world around them.

In the past, there have been many 'fence' structures put in place to protect Christians from transgressing the Law or losing their faith. For example:

- Chastity belts – To prevent breaking adultery laws.
- Bundling¹¹ – To prevent breaking fornication laws.
- Going to church every Sunday – To prevent breaking supposed Sabbath laws.
- Taboos – To prevent breaking a number of laws.
- Compulsory grace at dinner – To prevent the slip into unthankfulness.
- Tithing – To prevent not giving enough so God gets angry.
- Sunday Service – To prevent believers from forgetting to serve God.

The Feasts which were to be a celebration of the Lord's achievements were also a form of a 'fence' against drifting from him. So were the Jewish ceremonies and rituals.¹²

Deuteronomy 8:11 (NKJV) – *“Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today,*

The Israelis were told to write 'The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength'¹³ on the doorposts of their houses and also on their gates. Why? *“Lest you forget the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.”*¹⁴

This was a 'fence'. How? Every time they went out the door or gate they touched this message to remind them so they remained true to Jehovah. This ritual was a protection against their laziness.

7 – Matthew 5:20

8 – Galatians 3:24-25

9 – Galatians 3:24-25

10 – See: Romans 13:8, 10; Galatians 5:14

11 – See: www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/bundling

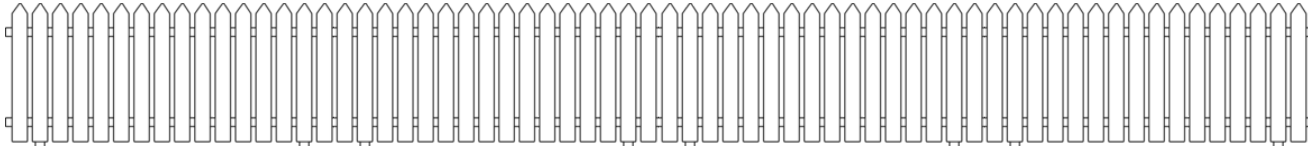
12 – Read Deuteronomy 8

13 – Deuteronomy 6:4-5

14 – Deuteronomy 6:12

'Fences' are to protect those who are weak/vulnerable.

In the Kingdom, sons have freedom and liberty.¹⁵ They are only constrained by the Law of Love (The Law of Liberty).¹⁶ Nothing is legally prohibited, but we choose wisely.¹⁷ We are free to step out in faith¹⁸, and we are free to make mistakes.¹⁹ We are covered by the Blood of the Lord's sacrifice²⁰, so forgiveness and freedom²¹ from condemnation²² are our lot.



We don't need 'fences' to keep us protected like a playpen protects a baby. Mature sons of the Kingdom have the run of the house.

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15 – “Kingdom Citizens Live In Freedom - part 1”

(canberraforerunners.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Kingdom-Citizens-Live-In-Freedom-part1.pdf)

“Kingdom Citizens Live In Freedom - part 2”

(canberraforerunners.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Kingdom-Citizens-Live-In-Freedom-part2.pdf)

16 – “The Law of Liberty” (canberraforerunners.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/22-the-law-of-liberty.pdf)

17 – 1 Corinthians 10:23

18 – Hebrews 11:6

19 – Acts 15:29 (NOTE: “If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well.”)

20 – 1 John 1:7

21 – 2 Corinthians 3:17; John 8:36

22 – Romans 8:1