



Fulfilling Messiah's Torah

I. Introduction

- a. Review
 - i. Session Two: The Scriptures—authority and validity
 - ii. Session Three: The Covenants—the promises of Scripture were made in the context of covenants; all Scriptural (non-universal) covenants were made with Israel
 - iii. Session Four: The Art of Anti-Assimilation—the Jewish people have been set apart from the nations
- b. Purpose of this session: to show that Torah is at the very core of the Jewish people's identity, and our identity as (Messianic) Jews is seriously lacking without it; to explore what Torah is so that we may determine how it is to be applied to our lives as disciples of Messiah.

II. What is "Torah"?

- a. Languages
 - i. Hebrew = תּוֹרָה, Torah
 - ii. Greek = νόμος, nomos
 - iii. English = law; direction, instruction
- b. Traditional
 - i. Pentateuch (Chumash = bound edition)
 - ii. B'reshiyt (Genesis) through D'variym (Deuteronomy)
- c. According to Moses
 - i. Before the Exodus—only used once, Genesis 26:4 (Important note: Av'raham obeyed ADONAI's תּוֹרָה, *torotai*—remember our teaching on covenants: Av'raham was not required to obey; his obedience was a righteous response to ADONAI.
 - ii. After the Exodus
 1. Exodus 24:12; General statement referring to Israel's keeping of Torah
 2. Leviticus: "Torah"=instructions concerning the levitical/priestly services, including sacrifices, how to handle people with leprosy, etc. (Lev.26:46, summary statement for mo'adiym)
 3. Numbers: instructions governing certain marital issues, the taking of the Nazarite vow, the red heifer
 4. Deuteronomy
 - a. The bulk of Deuteronomy itself is Moshe's exposition and reiteration of the Torah (1.5); D'variym 12 - 26 is a summary of the instructions of Torah with additional clarifications.
 - b. Torah is specific enough that it can be written down in one place (17:18, 27:3ff, 30:10, 31:9, 31:24 the king is to make a copy of it for himself, written on the stones at the Jordan river crossing, written in a book by Moses) and read (17:19, 31:11)

- c. D'variym 30:9-10, "Then ADONAI your God will prosper you abundantly... if you obey ADONAI your God to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the Torah, if you turn to ADONAI your God with all your heart and soul."
- iii. Summary: According to Moshe, the word "torah" refers to both the individual commands themselves as well as the collection of those commands and instructions as written down by Moshe. Israel is not blessed just because she keeps the letter of law. The way Israel keeps Torah is an indicator of the condition of her heart toward God.
- d. According to the Prophets (sampling)
 - i. ADONAI said to Joshua, 1:8, "This book of the Torah shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success."
 - ii. David on his death-bed to Solomon, 1Kings 2:3, "Keep the charge of ADONAI your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances, and His testimonies, according to what is written in the Torah of Moshe, that you may succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn..."
 - 1. The Kings of Israel—Their histories distinguished as "good" or "evil" depending on how they kept Torah.
 - 2. Josiah—revival because of the rediscovery of Torah (2Kings22:1ff) 2Kings 23:25, "Before [Josiah] there was no king like him who turned to ADONAI with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the Torah of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him."
 - 3. The prophets to Israel constantly indicate failure to keep Torah as the beginning of Israel's backsliding, and the point of Israel's return.
 - iii. Isaiah 5:24, "Therefore, as a tongue of fire consumes stubble and dry grass collapses into the flame, so their root will become like rot and their blossom blow away as dust; for they have rejected the Torah of ADONAI Tz'vaot and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel."
 - iv. Jeremiah 6:19, "Hear, O earth, behold, I am bringing evil on this people—the fruit of their devices—for to My words they gave no attention, and My Torah—they kick against it."
 - v. Ezekiel 22:26, "Her priests have done violence to My Torah and have profaned My holy things; they have made no distinction between the holy and the profane, and they have not taught the difference between the unclean and the clean; and they hide their eyes from My Shabbats, and I am profaned among them."
 - vi. Hosea
 - 1. Hosea 4:6, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the Torah of your God, I also will forget your children."
 - 2. Hosea 8:1, "Put the shofar to your lips! Like an eagle the enemy comes against the house of ADONAI, because they have transgressed My covenant and rebelled against My Torah."
 - vii. Zechariah 7:12, "They made their hearts like flint so that they could not hear the Torah and the words which ADONAI Tz'vaot had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets; therefore great wrath came from ADONAI Tz'vaot."
 - viii. Malachi 4:4, "Remember the Torah of Moses My servant, even the statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horev for all Israel."
- e. According to the Writings (Sampling)
 - i. Psalm 1:1-2, "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his

- delight is in the Torah of ADONAI, and in His Torah he meditates day and night.”
- ii. Psalm 19:7, “The Torah of ADONAI is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of ADONAI is sure, making wise the simple.”
 - iii. Psalm 40:8, “I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Torah is within my heart.”
 - iv. Psalm 94:12, “Blessed is the man whom You chasten, O ADONAI, and whom You teach out of Your Torah....”
 - v. Proverbs 28:4, “Those who forsake the Torah praise the wicked, but those who keep the Torah resist them.”
 - vi. Proverbs 28:9, “He who turns away his ear from listening to the Torah, even his prayer is an abomination.”
 - vii. Proverbs 29:18, “Where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained, but happy is he who keeps the Torah.”
- f. Summary: Breaking (violating) Torah or keeping (guarding) Torah indicates Israel’s heart-condition toward ADONAI. Those who despised Torah (the wicked) were destroyed, those who loved Torah (the righteous) prospered.

III. Messiah’s Torah

- a. Perpetual Nature of Torah
 - i. Matthew 5:17-19, “Do not suppose that I came to throw down the Torah or the Prophets—I did not come to throw down, but to fulfill. Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter or one stroke of the Torah will pass away until all comes to pass. Whoever then breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”
 - ii. Luke 16:17, “But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Torah to fail.”
- b. The Greatest Commandments
 - i. Mark 12:28-34, “One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, ‘What commandment is the foremost of all?’ Yeshua answered, ‘The foremost is, “Hear, O Israel! ADONAI is our God, ADONAI is one; and you shall love ADONAI your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.” The second is this, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” There is no other commandment greater than these.’ The scribe said to Him, ‘Right, Teacher; You have truly stated that He is one, and there is no one else besides Him; and to love Him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as himself, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.’ When Yeshua saw that he had answered intelligently, He said to him, ‘You are not far from the kingdom of God.’”
 - ii. Matthew 22:36-40, “‘Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Torah?’ And He said to him, ‘You shall love ADONAI your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. A second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang the whole Torah and the Prophets.”
- c. Weight of the Torah—Matthew 23:23, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier [matters] of the Torah: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.”
- d. Yeshua’s Torah Roots
 - i. Luke 24:44, “Now He said to them, ‘These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Torah of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”
 - ii. Acts 28:23, “When they had set a day for Paul, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Yeshua, from both the Torah of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening.”
 - iii. Without Torah, we have no Messiah, for we would have no testimony

IV. Does Paul Think that Torah is Bad?

- a. Paul's opinion about Torah must be in harmony with Yeshua's—and it is.
 - i. Romans 3:31, "Do we then nullify the Torah through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Torah."
 - ii. Romans 7:12-14, "So then, the Torah is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. Therefore did that which is good become death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, so that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful. For we know that the Torah is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin."
 - iii. Romans 7:22, "For in my inner being I delight in God's Torah."
 - iv. Romans 10:4, "For the goal at which the Torah aims is the Messiah, who offers righteousness to everyone who trusts." (CJB)
 - v. Romans 13:8, "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled Torah. For this, 'You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of Torah."
 1. Echoes Yeshua's teaching about the greatest commandment
 2. Yeshua also says, Matthew 7:12, "In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Torah and the Prophets."
 - vi. Galatians 3:21, "Is the Torah then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be!..."
- b. Where did we get the idea that Paul thinks Torah is bad?
 - i. 1Timothy 1:8, "We know that the Torah is good, provided one uses it in the way the Torah itself intends." (CJB)
 - ii. From Messianic Jewish Manifesto, Stern, p.129-130, "Whatever Sha'ul is trying to communicate by these expressions, one thing is clear: Sha'ul regards them negatively: being "under the law" is bad, and "works of the law" are bad. Christian theology usually takes the first to mean, 'within the framework of observing the Torah' and the second, 'acts of obedience to the Torah.' This understanding is wrong. Sha'ul does not consider it bad to live within the framework of Torah, nor is it bad to obey it; on the contrary, he writes that the Torah is 'holy, just and good' (Romans 7:12).

C.E.B. Cranfield has shed light on these two phrases... he writes, '...the Greek language of Paul's day possessed no word-group corresponding to our 'legalism,' 'legalist,' and 'legalistic.' This means that he lacked a convenient terminology for expressing a vital distinction, and so was surely seriously hampered in the work of clarifying the Christian position with regard to the law. In view of this, we should always, we think, be ready to reckon with the possibility that Pauline statements, at which first sight seem to disparage the law, were really not directed against the law itself but against that misunderstanding and misuse of it for which we now have a convenient terminology. In this very difficult terrain Paul was pioneering.'

If Cranfield is right, as I believe he is, we should approach Sha'ul with the same pioneering spirit. We should understand *erga nomou* not as 'works of law,' but as 'legalistic observance of particular Torah commands.' Likewise, we should take up *nomon* to mean not 'under the law' but 'in subjection to the system that results from perverting Torah into legalism.' This is how these phrases are rendered in the Jewish New Testament."

V. The Transformation of Torah

- a. Overview of Hebrews
 - i. Hebrews 4:14-5:10—Yeshua the High Priest in the order of Melchizedek
 - ii. Hebrews 7:1-10—Melchizedek's priesthood
 - iii. Hebrews 7:11-28—Yeshua like Melchizedek
 - iv. Hebrews 8—Yeshua's priesthood compared to the earthly priesthood prescribed in Torah
 - v. Hebrews 9:1-10—Priestly service in the earthly tabernacle

- vi. Hebrews 9:11-28—The blood of Messiah
- vii. Hebrews 10:1-18—Yeshua’s atoning sacrifice once and for all
- b. Hebrews 8 comes in the middle of the writer’s exhortation to trust in the high priesthood and once-and-for-all sacrifice of Yeshua—Yeshua’s sacrifice and priesthood is better than all earthly sacrifices and priesthood.
 - i. Hebrews 8:6 (CJB), “But now the work Yeshua has been given to do is far superior to theirs [the priests], just as the covenant he mediates is better. For this covenant has been given as Torah on the basis of better promises.
 - 1. The New Covenant has been given as Torah—not to annul it, but to fulfill it (Remember Yeshua’s words about Torah)
 - 2. What are the better promises? Let’s find out.
 - ii. Hebrews 8:7, “Indeed, if the first [?] had not given ground for faultfinding, there would have been no need for a second...”
 - 1. Not new (as in “new covenant”), but second. A first and second what?
 - 2. Context: the priestly service / sacrificial system
 - iii. Hebrews 8:8-13, “For God does find fault with them [who? The people] when he says, “See! The days are coming,” says ADONAI, “when I will establish over the house of Isra’el and over the house of Y’hudah a new covenant. It will not be like the covenant which I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by their hand and led them forth from the land of Egypt; because they, for their part, did not remain faithful to my covenant; so I, for my part, stopped concerning myself with them,” says ADONAI. “For this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Isra’el after those days,” says ADONAI: “I will put my Torah in their minds and write it on their hearts; I will be their God, and they will be my people...” By using the term, ‘new,’ he has made the first [?] “old”; and something being made old, something in the process of aging, is on its way to vanishing altogether.”
 - 1. A first [?] is being made old? Context: the priesthood / sacrificial system / means for atonement
 - 2. The writer of Hebrews is teaching us that Yeshua’s “new” service as high priest is part of the new covenant. This conclusion agrees with Hebrews 7:12ff, which says in the CJB, “For if the system of cohanim is transformed, there must of necessity occur a transformation of Torah.” And, indeed, the Torah itself is transformed by the blood of Yeshua, and it is now not only written on tablets of stone, but on hearts of flesh—this is the better promise.
 - 3. Even if “first” is not referring to the priestly service, but to the covenant itself, the context of the whole passage indicates that the writer is referring to the priestly service as an “aging” or “vanishing” aspect of the Torah—not the entire Torah itself. (Remember Yeshua’s words!) But even if this understanding is completely wrong, and every occurrence of “first” is referring to the Torah, something that is “in the process” or “on its way” to vanishing has not yet disappeared, and therefore remains in effect until it does.
- c. Why is the new covenant new? Torah is now written on Israel’s heart. This does not nullify the written Torah—it makes Israel finally able to keep it!

VI. Fulfilling Messiah’s Torah

- a. Application
 - i. “I have not come to throw down, but to fulfill.”—Yeshua’s interpretation/explanation of how to keep Torah is the correct one.

- ii. “...all things which are written about Me in the Torah....”—Torah testifies about Yeshua; when we do the commands of Torah, we learn about the person and nature of Messiah
- iii. “...the new covenant in My blood...”—having Torah written on the heart is part of the new covenant inaugurated by Yeshua’s blood. Forgiveness of iniquity and the forgetting of sin are new covenantal provisions that affect a change in the Torah-keeper, so that he can keep Torah, receive its blessings, and be redeemed from the curse of Torah.
- iv. “with my mind, I am a slave to God’s Torah” (Romans 7:25) The Spirit of Messiah lives in those who are Messiah’s, and the mind controlled by the Spirit (rather than the flesh) can “submit itself to God’s Torah.” (8:7)
- b. Paradigm Challenger: it is virtually impossible to keep Torah today—and here’s why:
 - i. We are in dispersion (Diaspora)
 - ii. The Temple/Temple Service no longer stands
 - iii. Torah was not given to individuals, but to a people/nation/ community
 - iv. Though Torah was given for a united nation, there is no loop-hole that says if the nation is dispersed Torah is no longer binding. As individuals, we have to persevere with the constant reminder that our people have broken the Torah, and that we keep it to the best of our ability as the firstfruits of the final return of Israel to God.
 - v. (Gentile relationship to Torah—in a later session)
- c. Final Thoughts
 - i. Fulfilling Messiah’s Torah is not about Torah-keeping, it is about loving ADONAI and loving our neighbor as ourselves. Torah is a means to that end, not the end itself. One keeps Torah, not because He is forced to or in order to gain righteousness or assurance of salvation, but out of the obedience that comes from loving ADONAI—paying attention to what He says, and clinging to Him.
 - ii. Are Messianic Jews obligated to keep Torah? As the true covenant-keepers—the “Israel of God”—my understanding, based on the Scriptures, says that the answer is ‘yes.’ For some, what Torah-keeping means—or looks like—is a matter of debate, and we will be looking at this from a practical standpoint in the next teaching. But it seems to me that there is nothing in Scripture that supports the idea that once a Jew becomes a believer in Messiah, he is no longer obligated to live as a Jew, especially since many of the commands of Torah were given as “perpetual statute[s] throughout your generations.” The Jewish people—the sons of Israel—are never given the option, according to Scripture, to keep or not to keep Torah. On the contrary, the Master himself told His Jewish disciples that not a jot or a tittle will pass away from the Torah.
 - iii. When we [Messianic Jews] have a positive view of God’s Torah, we are re-connecting with a foundational aspect of our identity as Jews, and a source of sanctification as disciples of Messiah. When we keep the Torah with our hands and our feet, we are only doing what has already been put in our minds and written on our hearts.