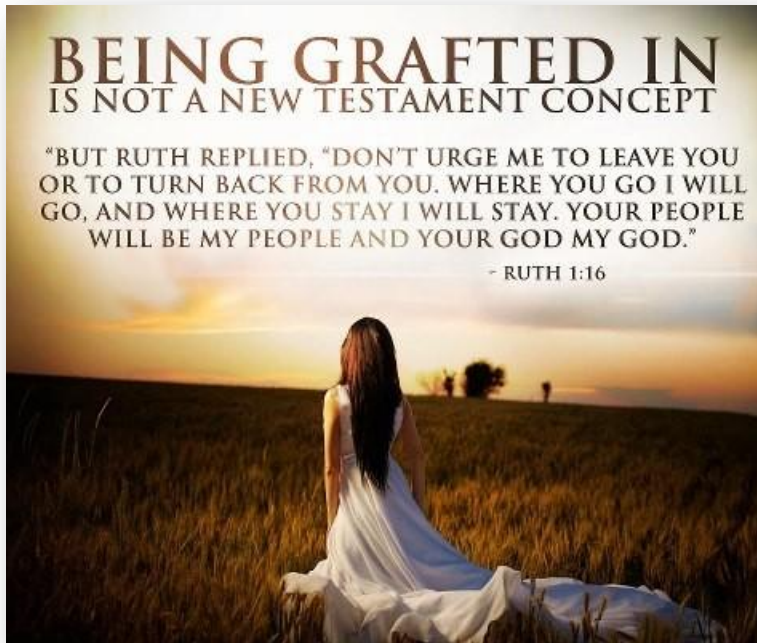


# THE TORAH



Torah is the Hebrew word for the first 5 books of the Bible and it is the foundation of the Old Testament just as the Old Testament is the foundation of the New. The Old Testament (Tanach) is the Holy Scripture that Jesus (Yeshua, in Hebrew) taught from, and His Disciples referred to, since there was no New Testament until well after the time of the Apostles that succeeded Him. The Old and New Testaments are inseparable and only when used together do we have a complete, unified, divinely-inspired Bible.

I have gathered much information on The Torah to help those incarcerated understand more of the Bible. For many years I sat in church and listened to what the Pastor had to say and then went home and many times never opened my Bible again until the following Service that I attended. I knew it was wrong and yet I felt that the man behind the pulpit was teaching me

everything that was right, as he was the Pastor. I felt that he had a special place in the body of Christ and when he spoke, he spoke the words of God.

One day I decided to open my Bible myself and read a few chapters, I started to read scripture that I had heard the pastor say and yet when I read the scripture before it and after it, there was a whole different meaning. What really got to me was the fact that I was sitting listening to a man's opinion and not necessarily what the Word of God was telling me. This is why I have decided to put this to print. I have done a lot of research and compiled a series of books that I think will help you understand the word of God better.

The Bible is our roadmap to Heaven and it is from cover to cover, not just the words in the New Testament but the whole BIBLE. Please pray and ask the Lord to help you as you read the Word of God, the Holy Spirit will be your guide. Now let's move forward with the Torah.

What does Torah mean? It is the five books of the Bible. You will find that this may be repeated over and over as you read this book, but I felt it was important to do that to help you understand a little better.

## The Torah

Five Books of Story, Law, and Poetry.



For Jews, the concept of "Torah" is much broader than the books themselves, the delimited concept of the Torah. "Torah" can refer to all of traditional Jewish learning, but "the Torah" usually refers to the Torah she'bi'ktav, the written Torah, also known as the Humash (the five volumes or Pentateuch, sometimes referred to as the Five Books of Moses). Readings from the Torah, which are divided into 54 weekly portions (parshiyot), have always been the centerpiece of the Sabbath morning service, and as such, its stories, laws, and poetry stand at the center of Jewish culture.

The Torah retells God's creation of the world, the selection and growth of the family of Abraham and Sarah in relationship to God in the land of Canaan, the exile and redemption from Egypt of that "family-become-nation" known as Israel, and their travels through the desert until they return to the land of Canaan. Along the way, Israel enters into a covenanted relationship with God, and God reveals many of the rules for governing a just society and for establishing appropriate worship.

Traditionally, the Torah has been seen either as a document that was entirely revealed to Moses by God on Mount Sinai (along with the whole of the Oral Torah, i.e. the Mishnah and other works of Rabbinic literature which build upon the written Torah) or that Moses completed the Torah during the trek through the wilderness (including what was revealed on Mount Sinai). Historians and literary critics, noting historical inaccuracies and duplications that indicate a composite text have suggested that the Torah includes sources from the period of King David and King Solomon (around 1000 BCE), from the seventh century BCE during the reign of King Josiah, and from the sixth century BCE during the Babylonian exile.

In the works of the prophets, and in many of the writings, narrative elements from the Torah like the exodus from Egypt are re-used to make new points. Laws from the Torah like the specifics of Sabbath law prohibitions are also commented upon and expand their scope in later works. Another set of connections between the Torah and the Prophets is indicated by the weekly Prophetic portions (haftarot), which are paired with each of the 54 weekly Torah portions (Parshat haShavua).

The English names for each of the Torah's five books are actually Greek, and like the Rabbinic names for the books, they are descriptive of the contents. The common names for the books come from a significant word in the beginning verses of the book. The following are the names of the five books and a brief summary of each:

Bereishit ("In the Beginning") / Genesis ("Origins") tells the story of creation, Noah and the flood, and the selection of Abraham and Sarah and their family as the bearers of God's covenant. Stories of sibling conflict and the long narratives of Jacob and his favorite son Joseph conclude with the family dwelling in Egypt.

Shemot ("names") / Exodus ("The Road Out") tells of how the family of Jacob grew and then was enslaved in Egypt. The baby Moses, born of Israelites but adopted by Pharaoh, becomes God's prophet who, after bringing 10 plagues down upon Egypt, leads the Israelites through the Red Sea to freedom and to the revelation at Mt. Sinai. The story of the Israelites worshipping the golden calf, which follows soon after the revelation at Mt. Sinai, is almost obscured by lengthy materials on the building of a sanctuary in the wilderness.

Vayikra ("And God Called") / Leviticus ("Laws of the Levites") deals mostly with laws of Israelite sacrificial worship. Related rules include the basis for Jewish dietary laws (kashrut) and issues of purity and impurity. The holiness code, which describes a sanctified communal life, is a highlight of the book.

Bamidbar ("In the Wilderness") / Numbers ("The Census") begins with a census of the Israelites and the tribe of Levi. A group of Israelites spy out the land of Canaan; their discouraging report sends them back into the desert for an additional 38 years, during which the Israelites continue to

behave badly, rebelling against the authority of Moses and his brother Aaron, and having illicit relations with Moabite women.

Devarim ("Words") / Deuteronomy ("Second Law") is Moses' final message to the people of Israel before they cross over the Jordan River into Israel. Moses reminds the people of how God has redeemed the people from Egypt and of the details of the covenant between Israel and God. In stark language, Moses describes the rewards for observance of the laws of the covenant and the punishment for disobedience. Finally, Moses passes along his authority to Joshua who will lead the people into the land.

## Torah

Sefer Torah at old Glockengasse Synagogue (reconstruction), Cologne

Torah (/ˈtɔːrə/; Hebrew: תּוֹרָה, "Instruction", "Teaching") is a central concept in the Jewish tradition. It has a range of meanings: it can most specifically mean the first five books of the Tanakh, it can mean this, plus the rabbinic commentaries on it, it can mean the continued narrative from Genesis to the end of the Tanakh, it can even mean the totality of Jewish teaching and practice. Common to all these meanings, Torah consists of the foundational narrative of the Jewish people: their call into being by HaShem (often vocalized by non-Jews as Yahweh or denoted in English translations of the Bible with small caps as the Lord), their trials and tribulations, and their covenant with their God, which involves following a way of life embodied in a set of religious obligations and civil laws (halakha).

In its most specific meaning, it consists of the first five books of the Tanakh written in Biblical Hebrew. The names of each of these books in Hebrew are taken from the first phrase in each book: Bereshit ("In [the] beginning",

Genesis), Shemot ("Names", Exodus), Vayikra ("He called", Leviticus[1]), Bamidbar ("In the desert", Numbers) and Devarim ("Words", Deuteronomy).

In rabbinic literature the word Torah denotes both these five books, Torah Shebichtav (שבכתב תורה, "Torah that is written"), and an Oral Torah, Torah Shebe'al Peh (פה שבעל תורה, "Torah that is spoken"). The Oral Torah consists of the traditional interpretations and amplifications handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation and now embodied in the Talmud and Midrash.[2]

According to religious tradition, all of the teachings found in the Torah, both written and oral, were given by God to Moses, some of them at Mount Sinai and others at the Tabernacle, and all the teachings were written down by Moses, which resulted in the Torah we have today. According to a Midrash, the Torah was created prior to the creation of the world, and was used as the blueprint for Creation.[3] The majority of Biblical scholars believe that the written books were a product of the Babylonian exilic period (c. 600 BCE) and that it was completed by the Persian period (c. 400 BCE).[4]

Traditionally, the words of the Torah are written on a scroll by a sofer on parchment in Hebrew. A Torah portion is read publicly at least once every three days, in the halachically prescribed tune, in the presence of a congregation.[5] Reading the Torah publicly is one of the bases for Jewish communal life.

## When Was The Torah Written?

Some sources indicate that it was given by Moses in 1280 BCE. The first written books are indeterminate. This date is based on what is known as the 'late date' for the Exodus, the Torah being written sometime shortly after when the Israelites went to Sinai.

Other sources put the Exodus, and thus the Torah, somewhat earlier in around 1440 BC.

This is based on two things. Firstly, the verse below:

1 Kings 6:1 (King James Version):

1And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month Zif, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the LORD.

Separately, archeologists have dated the beginning of the construction of the temple as 961 BC.

If you simply add the two dates (961 and 480), this arrives at a 1441 BC date for the Exodus and the Torah of course soon after in 1441 or 1440 BC.

The Torah, the first five books of the Bible (Bereishit -Genesis, Shemot - Exodus, Vayikra - Leviticus, Bamidbar - Numbers and Devarim - Deuteronomy), is traditionally ascribed to Moses as having written it during the Exodus from Egypt. The Bible confidently states that Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt 480 years before the fourth year of Solomon's reign, which would therefore be approximately 1444 BCE. Because archaeological evidence has made the this date for the Exodus untenable, some liberal Christians have suggested that the Exodus really took place shortly before 1200 BCE, when Israelites are known to have begun to arrive in the Palestinian hinterland. Modern Jews generally believe an intermediate date of round 1313 BCE.

However, biblical scholars say that Moses was not really the author of the Torah. They say it was written by a number of authors or sources over a period of several centuries during the first millennium BCE. The main sources of the Torah were:

- The J (Yahwist) source, who always used 'YHVH' as the name for God and presents tradition from the point of view of the southern kingdom, Judah, using archaic Hebrew. J was a gifted storyteller who was especially interested in the human side of things and had his own characteristic vocabulary. J referred to Moses' father-in-law as Reuel or Hobab.
- The E (Elohist) source, who always used 'Elohim' as the name for God and presents tradition from the point of view of the northern kingdom, Israel, using archaic Hebrew. E referred to Moses' father-in-law as Jethro.
- At some time around 650 BCE, J and E were combined by Judaeen editors, producing a composite known to us as JE.
- The D (Deuteronomist) source, who emphasises centralisation of worship and governance in Jerusalem, as would be expected from political events that followed the defeat of Israel. Writing during the seventh-century-BCE reign of King Josiah, the Deuteronomist uses a more modern form of Hebrew.
- The P (Priestly) source uses both Elohim and El Shaddai as names of God and focusses on the formal relations between God and society. Writing during the Babylonian Exile, the Priestly Source also uses a late form of Hebrew, with a rather turgid style.
- The Redactor ('R Source') finalised the Pentateuch in more or less the form we know today, shortly after the Babylonian Exile.

## Reading of the Torah

The word "Torah" in Hebrew is derived from the root **היה**, which in the hifil conjugation means "to guide/teach" (cf. Lev. 10:11). The meaning of the word is therefore "teaching", "doctrine", or "instruction"; the commonly



accepted "law" gives a wrong impression.[6] Other translational contexts in the English language include custom, theory, guidance,[7] or system.[8]

The term "Torah" is used in the general sense to include both Rabbinic Judaism's written law and oral law, serving to encompass the entire spectrum of authoritative Jewish religious teachings throughout history, including the Mishnah, the Talmud, the Midrash and more, and the inaccurate rendering of "Torah" as "Law"[9] may be an obstacle to understanding the ideal that is summed up in the term *talmud torah* (תלמוד תורה, "study of Torah").[2]

The earliest name for the first part of the Bible seems to have been "The Torah of Moses". This title, however, is found neither in the Torah itself, nor in the works of the pre-Exilic literary prophets. It appears in Joshua (8:31–32; 23:6) and Kings (I Kings 2:3; II Kings 14:6; 23:25), but it cannot be said to refer there to the entire corpus. In contrast, there is every likelihood that its use in the post-Exilic works (Mal. 3:22; Dan. 9:11, 13; Ezra 3:2; 7:6; Neh. 8:1; II Chron. 23:18; 30:16) was intended to be comprehensive. Other early titles were "The Book of Moses" (Ezra 6:18; Neh. 13:1; II Chron. 35:12; 25:4; cf. II Kings 14:6) and "The Book of the Torah" (Neh. 8:3), which seems to be a contraction of a fuller name, "The Book of the Torah of God" (Neh. 8:8, 18; 10:29–30; cf. 9:3).[10]

Scholars usually refer to the first five books of the Hebrew Bible as the Pentateuch, a term first used in the Hellenistic Judaism of Alexandria,[11] meaning five books, or as the Law, or Law of Moses. Muslims refer to the Torah as *Tawrat* (توراة, "Law"), an Arabic word for the revelations given to the Islamic prophet Musa (موسى, Moses in Arabic).

According to Jewish tradition (later adopted by Christianity) the Torah was dictated to Moses by God, with the exception of the last eight verses of

Deuteronomy, which describe the death and burial of Moses.[12][13] This belief is based on a narrative first recorded in the Mishnah,[14] (100 BCE – 100 CE) the Mishnah being the first time that orally transmitted traditions were put in writing.[15] Many Jews, including 55% of Israeli Jews,[16] believe that the Torah was revealed to Moses by God. The 8th principle of the 13 Principles of Faith that were established by Maimonides states "The Torah that we have today is the one dictated to Moses by God".[17]

It is also based on the Hebrew Torah, which states in Deuteronomy 31:24–26,

Moshe[18] kept writing the words of this Torah in a book until he was done. When he had finished, Moshe gave these orders to the L'vi'im who carried the ark with the covenant of Adonai: "Take this book of the Torah and put it next to the ark with the covenant of Adonai your God, so that it can be there to witness against you."

Today the majority of academic scholars accept the theory that the Torah does not have a single author, and that its composition took place over centuries.[19] From the late 19th century there was a general consensus around the documentary hypothesis, which suggests that the five books were created c. 450 BCE by combining four originally independent sources, known as the Jahwist, or J (c. 900 BCE), the Elohist, or E (c. 800 BCE), the Deuteronomist, or D, (c. 600 BCE), and the Priestly source, or P (c. 500 BCE).[20]

This general agreement began to break down in the late 1970s, and today there are many theories but no consensus, or even majority viewpoint.[21] Variations of the documentary hypothesis remain popular, especially in America and Israel, and the identification of distinctive Deuteronomistic and Priestly theologies and vocabularies remains widespread, but they are used to form new approaches suggesting that the books were combined gradually over time by the slow accumulation of "fragments" of text, or that a basic text was "supplemented" by later authors/editors.[22] At the same

time there has been a tendency to bring the origins of the Pentateuch further forward in time, and the most recent proposals place it in 5th century Judah under the Persian empire.[23][24]

Deuteronomy is often treated separately from Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. The process of its formation probably took several hundred years, from the 8th century to the 6th,[25] and its authors have been variously identified as prophetic circles (because the concerns of Deuteronomy mirror those of the prophets, especially Hosea), Levitical priestly circles (because it stresses the role of the Levites), and wisdom and scribal circles (because it esteems wisdom, and because the treaty-form in which it is written would be best known to scribes).[26] According to the Deuteronomistic history proposed by Martin Noth and widely accepted, Deuteronomy was a product of the court of Josiah [27] (late 7th century) before being used as the introduction to a comprehensive history of Israel written in the early part of the 6th century; later still it was detached from the history and used to round off the Pentateuch.[28]

## Structure

The five books of the Torah are known in Judaism by their incipits, the initial words of the first verse of each book. For example, the Hebrew name of the first book, Bereshit, is the first word of Genesis 1:1:

1. Bereshit (בְּרֵאשִׁית, literally "In the beginning")
2. Shemot (שְׁמוֹת, literally "Names")
3. Vayikra (וַיִּקְרָא, literally "And He called")
4. Bəmidbar (בְּמִדְבָּר, literally "In the desert [of]")
5. Devarim (דְּבָרִים, literally "Things" or "Words")

The Christian names for the books are derived from the Greek Septuagint and reflect the essential theme of each book:

- 1.Genesis: "origin"
- 2.Exodus: Exodos, "going out"
- 3.Leviticus: Leuitikos, "relating to the Levites"
- 4.Numbers: Arithmoi, contains a record of the numbering of the Israelites in the wilderness of Sinai and later on the plain of Moab.
- 5.Deuteronomy: Deuteronomion, "second law""second law", refers to the fifth book's recapitulation of the commandments reviewed by Moses before his death.

The form of Torah is that of a narrative, from the beginning of God's creating the world, through the beginnings of the people of Israel, their descent into Egypt, the giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai, and ends with the death of Moses, just before the people of Israel cross to the promised land of Canaan. Interspersed in the narrative are the specific teachings (religious obligations and civil laws) given explicitly (i.e. Ten Commandments) or implicitly embedded in the narrative (as in Exodus 12 and 13 laws of the celebration of Pesach (passover)).

This combination is noteworthy, making Torah not just a narrative document like Homer's Odyssey, nor solely a legal document like the United States Constitution. This complexity of Torah is related to the complexity of the Jewish tradition, it cannot be understood solely within the Western concept of a religion. At the same time, the fact that the teachings are embedded in story, influences the flexible attitude that Jews take towards their code of life.

The narrative is in Biblical Hebrew prose. Interspersed are poetic fragments, from a single sentence (Genesis 1:27 creation of mankind) to expansive (Deuteronomy 32:1-43 Moses' song to the people). The poetic forms are flexible. In general a series of two or more phrases parallel each other at least in meaning ("Listen, skies, so I may speak/and let the earth hear what my mouth says" Deuteronomy 32:1 Richard Elliot Friedman tr.[29]) but they may also share the same number of stresses or even syllables. They may also parallel each other with alliteration. There are no strict meters and phrases almost never rhyme in the sense of western poetry.[30]

The stories in the narrative are linked together by a system of resonating word roots that can often only be appreciated in the original Hebrew. For example, within a story, (Genesis 2:25) after Eve's creation: "And the two of them were naked, the human and his woman and they were not embarrassed" (Hebrew word for naked is 'arum'). The very next line in Genesis 3:1 is: "And the snake was slier than any animal of the field" (Hebrew word for sly: 'arum).

An example linking different stories: The story of Joseph; his being favored by his father Jacob, tattling on his brothers, being sold into slavery, finally achieving success in Egypt. (Genesis 37–50) seems to be interrupted by an unrelated story about Judah and Tamar (38:1–30). Yet, both stories are linked together by the key word "to recognize". These linkages play a role in the traditional interpretation of Torah.[31]

According to the Oral tradition, the prose in the Torah is not always in chronological order. Sometimes it is ordered by concept according to the rule: "There is not 'earlier' and 'later' in the Torah" (בתורה ומאוזר מוקדם אין), Ein mukdam u'meuchar baTorah).[32] Some scholars understand confusions in chronology as a sign that the current text of the Torah was redacted from earlier sources.

## Contents

Bereshit (Genesis) begins with the so-called "primeval history" (Genesis 1–11), the story of the world's beginnings and the descent of Abraham. This is followed by the story of the three patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob), Joseph (Genesis 12–50) and the four matriarchs (Sarah, Rebekah, Leah and Rachel). God gives to the patriarchs a promise of the land of Canaan, but at the end of Genesis the sons of Jacob end up leaving Canaan for Egypt due to a regional famine. They had heard that there was a grain storage and distribution facility in Egypt.

Shemot (Exodus) begins the story of God's revelation to his people Israel through Moses, who leads them out of Egypt (Exodus 1–18) to Mount Sinai. There the people accept a covenant with God, agreeing to be his people in return for agreeing to abide by his Law. Moses receives the Torah from God, and mediates His laws and Covenant (Exodus 19–24) to the people of Israel. Exodus also deals with the first violation of the covenant when the Golden Calf was constructed (Exodus 32–34). Exodus concludes with the instructions on building the Tabernacle (Exodus 25–31; 35–40).

Vayikra (Leviticus) begins with instructions to the Israelites on how to use the Tabernacle, which they had just built (Leviticus 1–10). This is followed by rules of clean and unclean (Leviticus 11–15), which includes the laws of slaughter and animals permissible to eat (see also: Kashrut), the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16), and various moral and ritual laws sometimes called the Holiness Code (Leviticus 17–26).

Bamidbar (Numbers) tells how Israel consolidated itself as a community at Sinai (Numbers 1–9), set out from Sinai to move towards Canaan and spied

out the land (Numbers 10–13). Because of unbelief at various points, but especially at Kadesh Barnea (Numbers 14), the Israelites were condemned to wander for forty years in the desert in the vicinity of Kadesh instead of immediately entering the Promised Land. Even Moses sins and is told he would not live to enter the land (Numbers 20). At the end of Numbers (Numbers 26–35) Israel moves from Kadesh to the plains of Moab opposite Jericho, ready to enter the Promised Land.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) is a series of speeches by Moses on the plains of Moab opposite Jericho. Moses proclaims the Law (Deuteronomy 12–26), gives instruction concerning covenant renewal at Shechem (Deuteronomy 27–28) and gives Israel new laws (the "Deuteronomic Code").<sup>[33]</sup> At the end of the book (Deuteronomy 34) Moses is allowed to see the promised land from a mountain, but it is not known what happened to Moses on the mountain. He was never seen again. Knowing that he is nearing the end of his life, Moses appoints Joshua his successor, bequeathing to him the mantle of leadership. Soon afterwards Israel begins the conquest of Canaan.

Law

Beth midrash

Mikveh

Sukkah

Chevra kadisha

Holy Temple

Tabernacle

## Important figures

Abraham

Isaac

Jacob

Moses

Aaron

David

Solomon

Sarah

Rebecca

Rachel

Leah

## Rabbinic Sages

Chazal Tannaim

Amoraim

Savoraim

Geonim

Rishonim

Acharonim



## Religious roles

Rabbi

Rebbe

Posek

Hazzan/Cantor

Dayan

Rosh yeshiva

Mohel

Kohen/Priest

## Ritual objects

Sefer Torah

Tallit

Tefillin

Tzitzit

Kippah

Mezuzah

Menorah (Hanukkah)

Shofar

Four Species

Kittel

Gartel

Prayers  
Shema  
Amidah  
Aleinu  
Kaddish  
Minyan  
Birkat Hamazon  
Shehecheyanu  
Hallel  
Havdalah  
Tachanun  
Kol Nidre  
Selichot

Rabbinic writings offer various ideas on when the Torah was composed. The revelation to Moses at Mount Sinai is considered by most to be the revelatory event. According to dating of the text by Orthodox rabbis, this occurred in 1312 BCE;[34] another date given for this event is 1280 BCE.[35]

The Talmud (Gittin 60a), brings two opinions as to when the Torah was written by Moses. One opinion holds that it was written by Moses gradually over many years as it was dictated to him, and finished close to his death, and the other opinion holds that Moses wrote the complete Torah in one writing close to his death, based on what was dictated to him over the years.

The Talmud (Minachot 30a) says that the last eight verses of the Torah that discuss the death and burial of Moses could not have been written by Moses, as writing it would have been a lie, and that they were written after his death by Joshua. Abraham ibn Ezra and Joseph Bonfils observed[citation needed] that phrases in those verses present information that people should only have known after the time of Moses. Ibn Ezra hinted,[36] and Bonfils explicitly stated, that Joshua wrote these verses many years after the death of Moses. Other commentators[37] do not accept this position and maintain that although Moses did not write those eight verses it was nonetheless dictated to him and that Joshua wrote it based on instructions left by Moses, and that the Torah often describes future events, some of which have yet to occur.

The Talmud (tractate Sabb. 115b) states that a peculiar section in the Book of Numbers (10:35–36, surrounded by inverted Hebrew letter nuns) in fact forms a separate book. On this verse a midrash on the book of Mishle (English Proverbs) states that "These two verses stem from an independent book which existed, but was suppressed!" Another (possibly earlier) midrash, Ta'ame Haserot Viyterot, states that this section actually comes from the book of prophecy of Eldad and Medad. The Talmud says that God dictated four books of the Torah, but that Moses wrote Deuteronomy in his own words (Talmud Bavli, Meg. 31b).

All classical rabbinic views hold that the Torah was entirely or almost entirely Mosaic and of divine origin.[38]

Ritual use

Torahs in Ashkenazi Synagogue (Istanbul, Turkey)

Main article: Torah reading

Torah reading (Hebrew: קריאת התורה, K'riat HaTorah ; "Reading [of] the Torah") is a Jewish religious ritual that involves the public reading of a set of passages from a Torah scroll. The term often refers to the entire ceremony of removing the Torah scroll (or scrolls) from the ark, chanting the appropriate excerpt with special cantillation, and returning the scroll(s) to the ark. It is distinct from academic Torah study.

Regular public reading of the Torah was introduced by Ezra the Scribe after the return of the Jewish people from the Babylonian captivity (c. 537 BCE), as described in the Book of Nehemiah.[39] In the modern era, adherents of Orthodox Judaism practice Torah reading according to a set procedure they believe has remained unchanged in the two thousand years since the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem (70 CE). In the 19th and 20th centuries CE, new movements such as Reform Judaism and Conservative Judaism have made adaptations to the practice of Torah reading, but the basic pattern of Torah reading has usually remained the same:

As a part of the morning or afternoon prayer services on certain days of the week or holidays, a section of the Pentateuch is read from a Torah scroll. On Shabbat (Saturday) mornings, a weekly section ("parasha") is read, selected so that the entire Pentateuch is read consecutively each year.[40][41] On Saturday afternoons, Mondays, and Thursdays, the beginning of the following Saturday's portion is read. On Jewish holidays, the beginnings of each month, and fast days, special sections connected to the day are read.

Jews observe an annual holiday, Simchat Torah, to celebrate the completion and new start of the year's cycle of readings.

Torah scrolls are often dressed with a sash, a special Torah cover, various ornaments and a Keter (crown), although such customs vary among

synagogues. Congregants traditionally stand when the Torah is brought out of the ark to be read, while it is being carried, and lifted, and likewise while it is returned to the ark, although they sit during the reading itself.

## Biblical law

The Torah contains narratives, statements of law, and statements of ethics. Collectively these laws, usually called biblical law or commandments, are sometimes referred to as the Law of Moses (Torat Moshe תּוֹרַת־מֹשֶׁה), Mosaic Law, or Sinaitic Law.



## The Oral Torah

Rabbinic tradition holds that Moses learned the whole Torah while he lived on Mount Sinai for 40 days and nights and both the oral and the written Torah were transmitted in parallel with each other. Where the Torah leaves words and concepts undefined, and mentions procedures without explanation or instructions, the reader is required to seek out the missing details from supplemental sources known as the oral law or oral Torah.[42] Some of the Torah's most prominent commandments needing further explanation are:

Tefillin: As indicated in Deuteronomy 6:8 among other places, tefillin are to be placed on the arm and on the head between the eyes. However, there are no details provided regarding what tefillin are or how they are to be constructed.

Kashrut: As indicated in Exodus 23:19 among other places, a kid may not be boiled in its mother's milk. [A kid being a young goat.] In addition to numerous other problems with understanding the ambiguous nature of this law, there are no vowelization characters in the Torah; they are provided by the oral tradition. This is particularly relevant to this law, as the Hebrew word for milk (חלב) is identical to the word for animal fat when vowels are absent. Without the oral tradition, it is not known whether the violation is in mixing meat with milk or with fat.

Shabbat laws: With the severity of Sabbath violation, namely the death penalty, one would assume that direction would be provided as to how exactly such a serious and core commandment should be upheld. However, most information regarding the rules and traditions of Shabbat are dictated in the Talmud and other books deriving from Jewish oral law.

According to classical rabbinic texts this parallel set of material was originally transmitted to Moses at Sinai, and then from Moses to Israel. At that time it was forbidden to write and publish the oral law, as any writing would be incomplete and subject to misinterpretation and abuse.[43]

However, after exile, dispersion and persecution, this tradition was lifted when it became apparent that in writing was the only way to ensure that the Oral Law could be preserved. After many years of effort by a great number of tannaim, the oral tradition was written down around 200 CE by Rabbi Judah haNasi, who took up the compilation of a nominally written version of the Oral Law, the Mishnah (Hebrew: משנה). Other oral traditions from the same time period not entered into the Mishnah were recorded as "Baraitot" (external teaching), and the Tosefta. Other traditions were written down as Midrashim.

After continued persecution more of the oral law was committed to writing. A great many more lessons, lectures and traditions only alluded to in the few hundred pages of Mishnah, became the thousands of pages now called the Gemara. Gemara is written in Aramaic, having been compiled in Babylon. The Mishnah and Gemara together are called the Talmud. The Rabbis in Israel also collected their traditions and compiled them into the Jerusalem Talmud. Since the greater number of Rabbis lived in Babylon, the Babylonian Talmud has precedence should the two be in conflict.

Orthodox and Conservative branches of Judaism accept these texts as the basis for all subsequent halakha and codes of Jewish law, which are held to be normative. Reform and Reconstructionist Judaism deny that these texts may be used for determining normative law (laws accepted as binding) but accept them as the authentic and only Jewish version for understanding the Torah and its development throughout history.[citation needed]

Humanistic Judaism holds that the Torah is a historical, political, and sociological text, but does not believe that every word of the Torah is true, or even morally correct. Humanistic Judaism is willing to question the Torah and to disagree with it, believing that the entire Jewish experience, not just the Torah, should be the source for Jewish behavior and ethics.[44]

### Divine significance of letters, Jewish mysticism

Kabbalists hold that not only are the words giving a divine message, but indicate a far greater message that extends beyond them. Thus they hold that even as small a mark as a kotzo shel yod (יוד של קוצו), the serif of the Hebrew letter yod (י), the smallest letter, or decorative markings, or repeated words, were put there by God to teach scores of lessons. This is regardless of whether that yod appears in the phrase "I am the Lord thy God" (אֲלֹהֵי יְהוָה נְכִיחַ, Exodus 20:2) or whether it appears in "And God spoke

unto Moses saying" (אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר; מִלְּפָנֶיךָ אֱלֹהִים וַיְדַבֵּר). Exodus 6:2). In a similar vein, Rabbi Akiva (c. 50 – c. 135 CE), is said to have learned a new law from every et (אֵת) in the Torah (Talmud, tractate Pesachim 22b); the word et is meaningless by itself, and serves only to mark the direct object. In other words, the Orthodox belief is that even apparently contextual text "And God spoke unto Moses saying ..." is no less important than the actual statement.

One kabbalistic interpretation is that the Torah constitutes one long name of God, and that it was broken up into words so that human minds can understand it. While this is effective since it accords with our human reason, it is not the only way that the text can be broken up.

### Production and use of a Torah scroll



Manuscript Torah scrolls are still used, and still scribed, for ritual purposes (i.e., religious services); this is called a Sefer Torah ("Book [of] Torah"). They are written using a painstakingly careful methodology by highly qualified scribes. This has resulted in modern copies of the text that are unchanged from millennia-old copies. It is believed that every word, or marking, has divine meaning, and that not one part may be inadvertently changed lest it lead to error. The fidelity of the Hebrew text of the Tanakh, and the Torah in particular, is considered paramount, down to the last



letter: translations or transcriptions are frowned upon for formal service use, and transcribing is done with painstaking care. An error of a single letter, ornamentation, or symbol of the 304,805 stylized letters that make up the Hebrew Torah text renders a Torah scroll unfit for use, hence a special skill is required and a scroll takes considerable time to write and check.

According to Jewish law, a sefer Torah (plural: Sifrei Torah) is a copy of the formal Hebrew text handwritten on gevil or qlaf (forms of parchment) by using a quill (or other permitted writing utensil) dipped in ink. Written entirely in Hebrew, a sefer Torah contains 304,805 letters, all of which must be duplicated precisely by a trained sofer ("scribe"), an effort that may take as long as approximately one and a half years. Most modern Sifrei Torah are written with forty-two lines of text per column (Yemenite Jews use fifty), and very strict rules about the position and appearance of the Hebrew letters are observed. See for example the Mishna Berura on the subject.[45] Any of several Hebrew scripts may be used, most of which are fairly ornate and exacting.

The completion of the sefer Torah is a cause for great celebration, and it is a Mitzvah for every Jew to either write or have written for him a Sefer Torah. Torah scrolls are stored in the holiest part of the synagogue in the Ark known as the "Holy Ark" (ארון הקודש aron hakodesh in Hebrew.) Aron in Hebrew means "cupboard" or "closet", and kodesh is derived from "kadosh", or "holy".

### Who Wrote The Torah?

The Torah was written by Moses. He was God's servant who led the Israelites from captivity in Egypt. However, there has been conflicting evidence disputing this by scholars of the early centuries like Ibn Ezra of

the 12th century, who based his findings on language tenses some which refer to Moses in the third person.

### Law and Lawlessness

Nomos (Strong's 3551) is the Greek word translated "law" in the Brit Chadasha (new testament). Nomos has many definitions -- it can mean law of the land, any codified law/set of laws, a basic principle, and of course, it can mean Torah. There was no specific Greek word for "legalism" and often nomos is used when Sha'ul is referring to legalism -- since legalism itself is also a set of laws, nomos fits well there too.

Having defined law, it's time to define 'lawlessness.' In Greek, it is anomos - that is, anti-law. Christians tend to assume that every single instance of 'law' in the Scriptures can only mean Torah (I've shown above that is not true in all cases -- it's a broad word); yet few stop to think of the ramifications. If 'law' can only mean Torah --- then what does "lawless" mean? Anti-Torah? In the case of lawlessness, I happen to agree that Torah is indeed meant -- that the sign of the end times would be "Torah-lessness." Christians often brag that they are "free from law" not realizing that's just a seemingly nice way of saying "without law" or "having no law."

The argument is made by Christians (with straight faces no less!) that Torah was only given to show man how sinful he was, to show he could not keep Torah and that he needed a Savior. A few problems here. In the first place, Torah wasn't given to show us how sinful we were but how Holy God is. God said He gave Torah to show man how to live as a mikra 'called out' people (note, "church" is modern english translation of Greek word ekklesia-- which also means mikra, that is, "called out ones"). Torah was a lifestyle document. Christians would have you believe God gave Torah to His Chosen People so that He could later introduce "Grace" and then

condemn His original Chosen People in favour of other nations. What? If that was how God treated His Chosen Ones -- how much better will He treat His non-Chosen Ones? Would a G-d of love deliberately give people a document they could not obey, and then condemn for their expected failure? Yeshua came 1500 years after Torah was given --- that's 1500 years of fruitless efforts to obey? No way!

When YHVH gave Torah, He promised blessings for obedience, punishments for disobedience. Israel did stray from Torah and received many punishments -- right up to being taken into captivity. If Torah wasn't keepable, if it was given only as a trick to show it couldn't be kept -- that would make God a sadist for punishing people for failing to do an impossible task He set for them!

Torah was not given to show man couldn't keep it. To the contrary, God Himself declared the Torah was keepable! God says in Deuteronomy 30:11-14:

"For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not too hard for thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say: 'Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, and make us to hear it, that we may do it?' Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say: 'Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, and make us to hear it, that we may do it?' But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it."

Torah is keepable --- and there is no other. He has given it all here --- there is no other Torah up in heaven or in the sea --- this is it! And it is keepable - it is "not too hard for thee." Now if God says it is keepable, no man-made doctrine to the contrary should be accepted. There is not a single command given in Torah that was impossible to keep. Man chooses to disobey -- but the fault lies within man, not Torah.

Was Torah a temporary document until Messiah came?

Torah NEVER states that its end will come or that it will be changed later. Did God not foresee He would send Messiah? Indeed He did -- and realizing the lawless beliefs that would later come, God added a special clause to Torah:

Deuteronomy 4:2 "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you."

Also:

Deuteronomy 12:32 "32 What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it."

Following this passage to not add to or take away from Torah, is a warning against false prophets (Deuteronomy 13). A false prophet is \*anyone\* who comes teaching the people to disregard G-d's Torah! G-d warns these false prophets will test the people's faithfulness to G-d -- His people will instead "walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him." (Deuteronomy 13:4) At the time of Yeshua, the only way to test those who claimed to be prophets of God was to compare what they taught to the teachings of Torah. Period. There was no other test. So when Torah is cast aside as irrelevant -- so is the foundation that proved Yeshua \*was\* Messiah.

Yeshua never taught against Torah --- if he had, he would be considered a false prophet! Yeshua and Torah cannot be contrary to each other -- each must validate the other. Be wary of manmade church doctrines espousing a "Jesus" loosely based on life of Yeshua HaMashiach -- a "Jesus" who is credited with turning the people away from Torah. The real Yeshua came

"\*not\* to destroy the law, or the prophets: but to fulfil." (Matthew 5:17)  
Fulfill means to do exactly as written -- not to abolish or change! Anyone teaching to 'take away' from Torah is a false teacher and anyone adding to Torah is a false teacher. Think about the arguments between Christianity and Judaism.... Ironically, for two-thousand years now, God has had these two sets of people: Torah rejecting believers; and Yeshua-rejectors who add manmade writings to Torah. Does either group please God?

Is Torah Forever?

Deuteronomy 7:9 "Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations."

Torah declares itself to be everlasting -- forever. It's Yom Kippur for atonement; its priesthood, it's Shabbat, its Passover/unleavened bread --- all were appointed forever -- NOT just until Messiah came!

Leviticus 16:34 "And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year. And he did as the LORD commanded Moses."

Exodus 31:16 "Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant."

Leviticus 24:8 "Every sabbath he shall set it in order before the LORD continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant."

Numbers 25:13 "And he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel."

Exodus 12:17 "And ye shall observe the feast of unleavened bread; for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an ordinance forever. "

What I hope readers of this article will do is study the Brit Chadasha differently. All Scripture must be tested against Torah for accuracy. If you hold a doctrine that contradicts Torah --- your doctrine is wrong --- and you are guilty of lawlessness. Torah is the foundation. Misunderstanding this fact will lead to incorrect doctrines and a skewed mistaken view of Scripture. As Sha'ul says "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." Romans 7:12

The sign of the end times is lawlessness ... are you a part of the apostasy or the Truth? Don't be lawless.

But Doesn't "Law of Christ" replace Torah?

Oddly, In the same breath Christians claim Yeshua \*was\* God, they manage to say the "Law of Christ" is not the same as "Law of God" (that is, Torah). Many Christians claim the "Law of Christ" is "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. Mark 12:30,31.

However, these commands are not new, they are found in Torah:

Deuteronomy 6:5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might"

Leviticus 19:18 "Do not make attempts to get equal with one who has done you wrong, or keep hard feelings against the children of your people, but have love for your neighbour as for yourself: I am the Lord."

Further, Yeshua quoted these \*after\* quoting the Shema, a quintessential text of Judaism from Deuteronomy 6:4, "HEAR, O ISRAEL: THE LORD OUR GOD, THE LORD IS ONE."

Yeshua's Law \*is\* God's Law. Where the Law of Messiah differs isn't in regard to God's Law, but man's. Yeshua came to correctly interpret Torah. Man had added to God's Law in an attempt to fence and protect God's Law, and in the process, parts of God's Law had been misunderstood. Yeshua helped define what the Law was really teaching (Matthew 5's "Sermon on the Mount" is an excellent example of Yeshua clarifying Torah). When Yeshua summed up the Law into these two commands, he was conveying essential principles -- love God and love your neighbour. But how does God want us to love Him? How does He want us to love our neighbor? We're back to Torah -- we need Torah to define "how" to love God and our neighbor.

Pro-Torah Observant Verses In Brit Chadasha (New Testament):

Luke 16:16,17 "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail."

Luke 1:6 "And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless."

Acts 24:14 "But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets."

Romans 2:13 "(For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified)."

Romans 3:31 "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law."

Romans 7:12 "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good."

Romans 7:14 "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin."

Romans 7:22 "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man."

Revelation 12:17 "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Yeshua Messiah."



Revelation 14:12 "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Yeshua."

1 Yochanan 2:3-6 "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."

Should Gentiles Follow Torah?

Acts 15:19-22 "Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day. Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren."

Hmmm. This passage seems to show there are only four rules given to Gentiles coming into the faith. While the Torah wasn't forced on Gentiles all at once, it was understood they would learn it gradually over time, hearing it each week in the synagogues. For that matter, Torah wasn't forced on Israel in a day either -- they too received it over time.

Acts 15:21 "For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day."

Christians generally ignore this verse in the passage because the ramifications are obvious: What has Torah being taught each week in

synagogues have to do with Gentile believers? Why is it being mentioned here along with the 'four laws'? Because the Gentiles were to \*learn Torah\* each week in the synagogues! They are being started off on these four laws so they would have the bare basics to begin fellowshiping with their Jewish brethren and they would learn the rest of Torah each shabbat at synagogue. Only after pointing out the Gentiles would learn Torah weekly "did it please the apostles and elders" (vs 22) to send this letter out to the various churches.

Acts 15:5-11 "But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"

Rather than isolate one verse alone and build on that, one must look at the whole chapter. Only in proper context will the meaning become clear. 1) What group was demanding conversion by circumcision and Torah observance? 2) How was the "Torah of Moshe" defined by the group demanding it? 3) What was the apostle's response to \*this particular group\*'s demand and why? 4) What does other scripture teach regarding observance for believers (Gentile and Jewish)? Only after answering these questions can one arrive at what this passage is really teaching.

It was understood by all the apostles that God's Torah never changed or was replaced. We know this from the teachings of Yeshua -- heaven and

earth will pass away before one yod or stroke from written Torah will (Matt 5:17,18). We also know that Yeshua considered the "traditions of man" not equal to written Torah, in fact, sometimes the oral tradition violated the written Torah (Mark 7:9). The apostles upheld written Torah but frowned on the legalism of oral law. So who is making the demands in Acts 15:5? The \*Pharisees\* are. So, Acts 15 is basically dealing with whether Gentiles needed to convert according to Pharisaic tradition; that is, become proselytes to Pharisaic Judaism.

We know Gentiles could be saved without becoming proselytes --- the believing of Cornelius and his family proves this. Cornelius was a God-fearer, a 'ger'/righteous Gentile, one who had believed in the God of Israel but had not actually undergone the conversion rituals to become a proselyte. Now, from a 20th century perspective, circumcision may seem to some as only one law out of many in Torah. But from the 1st century perspective, circumcision was the means of making a proselyte. That is why circumcision is being singled out as a demand apart from its inclusion in the Torah. Torah-observance in general isn't the issue -- conversion is. Notice the Pharisaic complaint wasn't "we demand they eat kosher and keep the Law of Moses" or "we demand they observe the Sabbath and keep the Law of Moses." Both these would be ridiculously redundant since Law of Moses already included both of these individual laws. No, circumcision is singled out not as merely '1 of the 613 laws' but instead as the means of making a proselyte to Pharisaic Judaism.

Circumcision had become a conversion ritual by the Pharisees just as baptism is often misused today as a means of "joining a particular church." If I refuse to be baptised in the Mormon church, surely you'd see mine is a rejection of Mormonism -- NOT baptism itself! So the apostles reject this Pharisaic demand that Gentiles undergo the Pharisaic circumcision. Theirs was \*not\* a rejection of circumcision or Torah, but a rejection instead of Pharisaic conversion rituals. The gospel was being received by Gentiles \*without\* them becoming proselytes -- so this conversion by circumcision

wasn't required. Note that God "made no distinction between us and them" (Acts 15:9) to show God was accepting Gentiles \*without\* them converting first.

"Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" Acts 15:7-11

Now Kefa argued against this attempt of the Pharisees to put a yoke on the new believers, a yoke neither they nor their fathers could bear; this yoke is the Pharisaic oral tradition. Yeshua taught:

"The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers." Matt 23:2-4

Note the warning a few verses later:

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves." Matt 23:15

Note that oral tradition is a burden -- man attempts to enslave others; but God's Way is freedom. Yeshua proclaimed:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach freedom to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Luke 4:18,19 (Isaiah 61:1)

Liberty is already defined in Ps 119:

"So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever. And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts." Ps 119:44,45



Note What God says to His redeemed Israelites:

"I am the LORD your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, that ye should not be their bondmen; and I have broken the bands of your yoke, and made you go upright." Leviticus 26:13

God didn't give His Torah only to re-enslave Israel. Torah is freedom. Torah is never a yoke. It is man's additions to G-d's laws that are the yoke.

Now let's look at the Pharisaic demand that Gentiles keep the Torah of Moshe. To the Pharisees, the "Torah of Moshe" meant both the oral and written law -- they consider both parts 'inspired.' Pharisees would never word that as "We demand they keep Torah of Moshe and \*also our man-made additions to it\*." What group, believing their traditions to be equal to Torah, would disparage their own teachings in this way? So, when the Pharisees say "keep Torah of Moshe" they mean written \*and\* oral parts -- they make no distinction between the two. Yet some argue that because Kefa and James didn't point out, case by case, why they were rejecting the demands of the Pharisees, that somehow by their silence they were also discounting written Torah. May it never be! It's far better to realize that Kefa and James were rejecting a religious system of the day (Pharisaic Judaism), a belief system that included some things they agreed with (written Torah) and some things they didn't (making proselytes - enforcing oral torah). As a more modern example, I reject the teachings of certain Christian denominations -- but that doesn't mean I reject the Holy Bible too just because these denominations also use it in their teachings. The apostolic rejection of Pharisaic Judaism is NOT a rejection of written Torah.

Acts 15 shows that the early Gentile believers were given four starter laws, and were to learn the rest of Torah each week in the synagogues. Gentile believers were NOT required to formally convert to Pharisaic Judaism because G-d had already accepted them without them becoming proselytes.

### The Four Rules

"But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood."

"Abstain From Pollution Of Idols And From Fornication"

I tie these two prohibitions together, since Revelation does:

"But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication." Revelation 2:14

"Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols." Revelation 2:20

Let's start with "pollution from idols":

'Pollution' is from the Greek *alisgema* (from the verb) *alisgeo*, meaning "to pollute" and denotes "a pollution, contamination." and "all the containing associations connected with idolatry including meats from sacrifices offered to idols." (Vines) But why is such a prohibition necessary, after all, believers worship God -- not idols! Sha'ul writes: "So, then, as to the question of taking food offered to images, we are certain that an image is nothing in the world, and that there is no God but one." 1 Corinthians 8:4. Sha'ul is establishing here that the prohibition against meats offered to idols is NOT because an idol has any power -- an idol is nothing. It's because in eating such meats, we witness to others that the idol \*does\* have some meaning, we basically empower an 'idol.' For this reason, believers don't have to ask if meat being purchased had been offered to an idol - for the question itself would indicate an idol was \*something\* and could somehow affect the meat being bought. Again, an idol is \*nothing\*. Sha'ul wasn't incorporating a "don't ask, don't tell" policy as some teach. Sha'ul was really arguing that unless someone else's words condemn the meat, believers should proceed clean-heartedly knowing all things come from G-d alone. Sha'ul concludes with "For this reason, if food is a cause of trouble to my brother, I will give up taking meat for ever, so that I may not be a cause of trouble to my

brother." Always remember that the problem with meats offered to idols was that it gave validation to pagan rituals and undermined the fact that G-d alone is sovereign. We should engage in NO activity that sends out a message to the contrary. For example, If I light a candle because my power goes out, fine. If I light a candle and say "Blessed be Ba'al" I have committed idol worship. Let's suppose I lived in a city where a certain color candle was associated with pagan worship -- then I wouldn't purchase or use that color candle even though I know a candle is nothing in and of itself. Candles and meats (or anything) take on the meanings assigned to them, so we should avoid being polluted by idols by not partaking of things given a pagan meaning. In the 1st century that may have meant meats offered to idols, but we can apply this rule to many things. We worship G-d alone and should "Abstain from all appearance of evil." 1 Thessalonians 5:22

"And from fornication"

Fornication is from the Greek word porneia (Strong's 4202). Many assume sexual fornication is meant, but since it's coupled here with idol pollution, I suggest its second meaning was intended, "association of pagan idolatry with doctrines of, professed adherence to, the Christian Faith" (Vines). This definition fits this passage (and others) better and was a known problem among Gentile believers. Sha'ul wrote: "But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain." Gal 4:9-11. Clearly this 'mixing of idols with G-d's Truth' was a problem among early Gentile believers just as it is today. Many modern church 'holidays' are still tied into idolatry -- Saturnalia/Christmas; Goddess Eastros/Easter; Sun-god/Sunday worship, etc.. Like the 'pollution from idols,' this mixing is validating pagan days, putting them on par with the things of G-d.

"And From Things Strangled, And From Blood"



'Strangled' comes the Greek *pniktos* (Strong's 4156) and means an improperly killed animal -- "animals killed by strangling, without shedding their blood" (Vines). These animals aren't 'clean/kosher' because they still contain blood. "Only thou shalt not eat the blood thereof; thou shalt pour it upon the ground as water." Deut 15:23 "And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people. Leviticus 17:10 Note this prohibition \*includes\* Gentiles (strangers). Yet the modern church ignores these rules and doesn't avoid blood -- bloody beef is readily consumed. Think of those rare-done steaks sitting in a pool of blood -- Yuck. (Not that cooking the meat thoroughly so that the blood is less obvious is any better). Meats should be kashered, completely drained of their blood before consuming.

Notice these four prohibitions don't forbid murder, theft, adultery, lying, etc... that's further proof these four rules were never intended to replace the Torah. These four prohibitions specifically address offensive pagan practices the new believers will have to resist. Without immediate adoption of these four rules, the Jewish believers would be forced to not take meals or socialize with their Gentile brethren. I'd call these four rules 'Torah-lite,' or a 'crash course' in learning their new lifestyle. By observing these four laws, the Gentiles could associate with their Jewish brethren \*without\* undergoing any conversion, yet still have reached an adequate beginner level of cleanliness and observance in G-d's eyes. And, of course, Gentiles would learn the rest of Torah each week in the synagogue and their spiritual growth would gradually increase.

For a long time I used to think that when we came to Jesus Christ and accepted Him as our Lord and Savior that was it, I knew of the Old Testament and the many little stories I heard as a child in Sunday School and yet just these past few years I see there is way more to living for Christ than what I had imagined. There is such a better way to live if we follow the whole Bible instead of just bits and pieces of it. I honestly believe I was

taught wrong and the more I read and study the Word of God I see that the Old Testament and his laws are for us to obey and by doing that we will experience a greater meaning to our walk with the Lord. The Old Testament compliments the New Testament. Yes, Jesus Christ when He died on the cross became the Lamb that was slain and His blood was the sacrifice that was made to give us fellowship with the Lord and that is what it is all about, but if we follow all the words in the Bible we will have a greater experience. Denominations are just not what it is about. We must join together as ONE and reach the world with the Word of God and let others know that there is HOPE through Jesus Christ and His Word.

I hope this book has given you a little insight into the TORAH. I know that I have benefited from doing the research for this book. We have many books coming out that will address the many questions that you may have concerning the Word of God.



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