

# The Torah and the Christian – Is God’s Law Still in Effect Today?

Just what is the relationship of the so-called “LAW” of God, known as the “TORAH,” to the people of God? How many “precepts” and instructions are there in the Torah? What about the 613 “laws”? What is the true relationship of the true Christian or Messianic believer to the “Torah of Moses”? Here is vital, LIFE-GIVING knowledge that YOU need to know and understand – for it is your very LIFE!

William F. Dankenbring

In the western world today, there seem to be two basic attitudes towards the “Law” of God, as revealed in the Bible, known as the “Torah” to the Jews. Most Christian churches teach that it is “abolished,” “done away with,” “abrogated,” “nailed to the cross,” and was “against us.” But if that is so, then why did the Lord Jesus Christ, Yeshua the Messiah, say, “IF you would enter into LIFE, *keep the commandments*” (Matt.19:17)?

The Jews on the other hand, reject Christ as the Messiah, but they ALSO in effect “did away” with the Law or Torah of God, although they PROFESS to obey it! They abolished it by CHANGING IT, and replacing its authority by the authority of each generation of rabbis, and their MAN-made “traditions”!

What a paradox!

What is the TRUTH about the “Torah” or “Law of God, anyway? What is its true relationship to mankind?

*The Torah Defined*

The Hebrew word translated “Law” in the Old Testament is *Torah*. The *Encyclopedia Judaica* says of this word, “Torah is derived from the root **יָרָה** which in the *hifil* conjugation means ‘to teach’ (cf. Lev.10:11). The meaning of the word is therefore ‘teaching,’ ‘doctrine,’ or ‘instruction’; the commonly accepted ‘law’ gives a wrong impression. The word is used in different ways but the underlying idea of ‘teaching’ is common to all” (“Torah”).

According to an ancient tradition, the Torah existed in heaven even before the world was created. The concept of the pre-existence of the Torah is shown in the works of Philo, a Jewish philosopher in Alexandria, Egypt, who lived during the time of the apostle Peter. He wrote of the pre-eminence of the Word of God (the Logos) and identified it with the Torah (*ibid.*). Similarly, the apostle John tells us, “In the beginning was the Word [Logos], and the Word [Logos] was with God, and the Word [Logos] was God. He was in the beginning with God” (John 1:1-2).

### ***What Is Torah?***

Says *Gesenius Hebrew Lexicon*, the word “Torah” means, “instruction, doctrine (Job 22:22) – (a) human, as that of parents, Prov.1:8 . . . (b) divine through prophets, Isa.1:10 . . .” In the Greek of the New Testament, the equivalent word is *nomos*. Says *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*, “anything established, anything received by usage, a custom, usage, law . . . In the NT, a command, law . . .”

Says *Vine’s Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, Torah is “law; direction; instruction” and occurs 220 times in the Hebrew Old Testament. It says further, “The ‘instruction’ given by God to Moses and the Israelites became known as ‘the law’ or ‘the direction’ (*ha torah*), and quite frequently as ‘the Law of the Lord’: ‘Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord’ (Psalm 119:1) . . .”

Vine’s continues, “The priests were charged with the study and teaching of, as well as the jurisprudence based upon, the ‘law’ (Jer.18:18).

“Because of rampant apostasy the last days of Judah were times when there were no teaching priests (II Chron.15:3). . . . The prophets called Israel to repent by returning to the *torah* (‘instruction’) of God (Isa.1:10). Jeremiah prophesied concerning God’s new dealing with His people in terms of the New Covenant, *in which God’s law is to be INTERNALIZED*, God’s people would willingly obey Him. . . . The last prophet of the Old Testament reminded the priests of their obligations (Mal.2) and challenged God’s people to remember the ‘law’ of Moses in preparation for the coming Messiah (Mal.4:4).”

Concerning the Greek word *nomos*, Vine’s says, “In the NT it is used (a) of ‘law’ in general, e.g. Rom.2:12, 13, ‘a law’ (RV) expressing a general principle relating to ‘law’; v.14 . . . (b) of a force or influence impelling to action, Rom.7:21, 23 . . . (c) of the Mosaic law, the ‘law’ of Sinai . . .”

### *Origin of the “Oral Law”*

*The Torah: A Modern Commentary*, edited by W. Gunther Plaut, published by Union of American Hebrew Congregations, tells us that in addition to the Five Books of Moses, the original part of the Scriptures known as “Torah,” there was also the need to “interpret” the teachings and instructions found in those books. He says, “A sacred text, and especially one containing laws and commandments, must be interpreted and applied to the concrete situations of life. Those who proposed to make the Torah the rule of their life found many provisions which required more exact definition. The Torah, for example, forbids work on Sabbath; but what precisely constitutes work, and what activities are permissible?”

Says the Commentary, “Such problems generated the concept of the oral Torah, in part explanation and elaboration of the written Torah, in part supplement to the latter. This oral Torah was not created consciously to meet the need of a certain time. Much of it was no doubt derived from established legal precedents and from popular custom and tradition. Once, however, the process of applying the law to new situations was undertaken in earnest, the material grew rapidly” (p.xxx).

It continues: “For most Jews, the written Torah was understood in accordance with the interpretation of the oral Torah, just as in modern law a written statute means what the courts interpret it to mean.” But, admits the Jewish Commentary, “the growth of the oral Torah, later written down in the Talmud, *obscured the plain sense of Scripture in many instances*” (xxx1).

The word *Torah* used in the Old Testament or Tanakh means, says the Gesenius Hebrew-English Lexicon, “1. instruction, doctrine; law. It is from the word *arah*, a primitive root meaning “to flow as water (i.e. to rain); to lay or throw (espec. an arrow), i.e. to shoot): to point out (as if by aiming a finger), to TEACH – archer, cast, direct, inform, instruct, lay, show, shoot, teach.” The Strong’s Complete Concordance says, “a precept, or statute – law.” The underlying meaning, therefore, is “Teaching,” although it is often translated “Law” in English.

*Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary* sums up the definition: “law; direction; instruction.” The noun occurs 220 times in the Old Testament. *Vine’s* adds, “In the wisdom literature, where the known does not appear with the definite article, *torah* signifies primarily ‘direction, teaching, instruction.’”

The “instruction” given by God to Moses and the Israelites became known as “the Law” or “the direction.” It was also called “the Law of the Lord.” As we read in Psalm 119:1, “Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord.”

The first five books of Moses, Genesis through Deuteronomy, are known as the “Torah.” Almighty God is the One who gave the “Torah” to Israel. He told the children of Israel how privileged they were, saying, “And what nation is there so great, that hath

statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?” (Deut.4:8).

But what is the Torah’s connection with us in this generation? Does it have any value? Was it abolished by the death of Christ on the cross? Is it still relevant in the computer, internet, space age?

### ***Rampant Apostasy***

The people of God were never faithful for very long to observing and obeying the Torah, the Laws of God. Generation after generation went astray. The hearts of men were never attuned to obedience to God’s Law, and it is the same today, in our end-time generation. The blood-soaked book of Judges is filled with historical data showing that repeatedly, time and time again, Israel forgot the laws of God, neglected observing the Torah, and turned to false gods, and were therefore punished and went into slavery and captivity, until they cried out to God once again, and He intervened, sent them a Saviour, and rescued them from their enemies. The “judges” in the book of Judges were such heroic men of God.

Because of rampant apostasy, the last days of the kingdom of Judah were times when there were no teaching priests, who taught the people God’s Torah, or Law. The prophet Azariah, during the reign of Asa, king of Judah, warned him, “The LORD is with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will forsake you. For a long time Israel has been without the true God, without a teaching priest, and without law; but when in their trouble they turned to the LORD God of Israel, and sought Him, He was found by them.

“And in those times there was no peace to the one who went out, nor to the one who came in, but great TURMOIL was on all the inhabitants of the lands. So nation was destroyed by nation, and city by city, for God troubled them with every adversity” (II Chron.15:2-6).

How much this sounds just like OUR DAY!

### ***The Purpose of the Prophets***

God sent His prophets to call Israel to repentance and to return to the Torah, His divine Laws, time and time again. In the days of Isaiah, the prophet was inspired by God to cry out, “Alas, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a brood of evildoers, children who are corrupters! They have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked to anger the Holy One of Israel, they have turned away backward.

“Why should you be stricken again? You will revolt more and more. The whole head [leadership in the nation] is sick, and the whole heart [churches, ministry] faints. From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds,

bruises and putrefying sores; they have not been closed or bound up [still hemorrhaging], or soothed with ointment” (Isaiah 1:4-6).

One of the times of greatest apostasy was the time of king Ahab and Jezebel, when God sent Elijah to “turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers,” to call Israel to repentance and to return to the Lord, and worship Him alone. Conditions were much like today, when the prophets of Baal were hundreds in Israel, but a prophet of the Lord was Elijah alone – all others had forsaken the truth, the right way, and compromised with and embraced paganism – or gone into hiding – or been massacred. (I Kings 18:4).

All Israel had forsaken the Torah, which in God’s sight was considered desertion, falling away, and apostasy. Very few Israelites remained true to God and His commandments. At this point in time He raised up Elijah to witness against them, and to call them back to God, who cried out to God at Mount Carmel, “Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that you are the LORD God, and that you have turned their hearts back to You again” (I Kings 18:37).

To return to God means to return to His Torah, His teaching, His Word. In fact, God says to us through His prophet Malachi, the last book in the Old Testament,

*“Remember the Law [Torah] of Moses, My servant, which I commanded him in Horeb [Mount Sinai] for ALL ISRAEL, with the statutes and the judgments”* (Malachi 4:4).

God added, “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse” (vs.5-6).

The Tanakh has this, “He shall reconcile parents with children and children with parents, so that, when I come, I do not strike the whole land with UTTER DESTRUCTION.”

The Tanakh then repeats, in small print, the words:

“Lo, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before the coming of the awesome, fearful day of the LORD.”

### ***END-TIME Apostasy***

Malachi, the last prophet of the Old Testament, reminded the priests, ministers and Israelites of their spiritual obligations, and warned them they were under a divine curse, because of their apostate actions and disobedience to the divine Torah, teachings, and instructions of God. God says to the end-time ministers and priests, “I will dung upon your faces, the DUNG of your festival sacrifices [there is something “filthy” about

the way they observe the Holy Days – they observe them on the wrong days, according to an apostate calendar!], and you shall be carried out to its [heap]” (Mal.2:3, Tanakh).

God declares to the end-time priests and ministers, alike, “You have made the many stumble through your rulings; you have corrupted the covenant of the Levites – said the LORD of Hosts. And I, in turn, have made you despicable and vile in the eyes of all the people, because you disregard My ways and show PARTIALITY in your rulings” (v.8-9). Or, as the NKJV has it, “You have caused many to stumble at THE LAW” and “have shown partiality in the LAW”.

Apostasy, therefore, has to do with FORSAKING GOD’S LAW, HIS INSTRUCTIONS, WRITTEN IN THE TORAH – THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE!

The apostle Paul warned that there would be great apostasy in the “end of days,” at the close of this world order. He wrote, “Let no one deceive you by any means, for that day [the day of the coming of Christ] will not come unless [or, until] the FALLING AWAY [Greek, “*apostasia*”] comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition” (II Thess.2:3).

“Falling away” or “apostasy” is the Greek word *apostasia* means “defection from truth.” Says Thayers Lexicon, “a falling away, defection, apostasy.” It is akin to spiritual “divorce,” “repudiation” of the former truth and relationship. An example is the Worldwide Church of God which repudiated the Biblical teachings of Herbert W. Armstrong and turned back into a worldly, pagan form or façade of Christianity.

But long before them, the whole Christian-professing world “fell away” from the truth and the Torah of God, rejecting it, calling it “obsolete,” “annulled,” “done away,” and “abrogated.” The whole Christian-professing world therefore APOSTATISED, and FELL AWAY!

They forsook the Torah of God! Yet Christ Himself declared, “If you want to enter into LIFE, *keep the commandments*” (Matt.19:17).

He told His true disciples, “Do not think I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will be no means pass from the Law till all is accomplished” (Matt.5:17-18).

The NIV has it, “I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will be any means disappear from the LAW until everything is accomplished.”

In a footnote to verse 17, the NIV says: “**5:17.** *the Law.* The first five books of the Jewish Scriptures (our OT). *the Prophets.* Not only the Latter Prophets – Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, which we call Major Prophets, and the 12 Minor Prophets . . . but

also the so-called Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings). Taken together, ‘the Law’ and ‘the Prophets’ designated the entire OT, including the Writings (Ps.78:2), with ‘what was spoken through the prophet.’ *fulfill*. Jesus fulfilled the Law in the sense that He gave it its full meaning. He emphasized its deep, underlying principles and total commitment to it rather than mere external acknowledgement and obedience.”

“**5:18-20.** Jesus is not speaking against observing all the requirements of the Law, but against hypocritical, Pharisaical *LEGALISM*. Such legalism was not the keeping of all details of the Law but *the hollow sham of keeping laws externally*, to gain merit before God, *while breaking them inwardly*. . . . Jesus repudiates the Pharisees’ *interpretation* of the Law and their view of righteousness by works.”

“**5:18.** *smallest letter.* One word in Greek (*iota*) which we use when we say, ‘It doesn’t make one iota of difference.’ It is the nearest Greek equivalent to the Hebrew *yodh*, the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet (see Psalm 119:73 title). *Least stroke of a pen.* The Greek word for this phrase means ‘horn’ and was used to designate the slight embellishment or extension of certain letters of the Hebrew alphabet (somewhat like the bottom of a ‘j’).”

The Moffatt translation gives us this passage as follows: “NEVER IMAGINE that I have come to destroy the Law or the prophets; I have not come to destroy but to fulfill. (I tell you truly, till heaven and earth pass away NOT AN *iota*, NOT A *comma*, will pass from the Law until it is ALL IN FORCE. Therefore, whoever relaxes a single one of these commands, were it even one of the least, and teaches men so, he will be ranked least in the Realm of heaven; but whoever obeys them and teaches them, he will be ranked great in the Realm of heaven.”

The Law of God stands eternal. Christ came to MAGNIFY it, and expound and explain it more fully. He knew the Pharisees had gone off the track, and stumbled into gross error. He came to give it NEW LIFE! Isaiah prophesied of the Messiah, “The LORD is well pleased for His righteousness’ sake; He will EXALT the law and make it HONORABLE” (Isa.42:21, NKJV). The NIV says, “It pleased the Lord for the sake of his righteousness to make HIS LAW *GREAT AND GLORIOUS*.” The KJV declares, “He will MAGNIFY the law and make it honorable.”

The Hebrew word here for “magnify,” “extol,” or “make great,” is *gadal*, and means, “to twist, i.e. to be (caus. *make*) *large* (in various senses, as in body, mind, estate or honor . . . ) – advance, boast, bring up, excellent, great, magnify, be much set by, nourish, promote.” *Gesenius Hebrew Lexicon* has the definition as “to twist together, to bind together . . . to wrestle, to contend . . . (2) to be or become great, to grow . . . (3) to be greatly valued, to be celebrated with praises . . . Hiphil – to make great . . . to make high, to lift up . . . magnitude, greatness, magnificence, majesty.”

Christ still MAGNIFIES the Law of God, the Torah, today! Paul declared in the book of Hebrews, “Jesus Christ the SAME, yesterday, today, and forever” (Heb.13:8).

The Law of God never changes, and He never changes! He is the very Personification of the Torah, the Law of God!

### *The Word of God*

When the Scriptures speak of the “Law” of God, the Torah, they refer to the written instructions and teachings that God gave His people through Moses, as well as all Scripture itself, because, as the apostle Paul wrote, “ALL SCRIPTURE is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (II Tim.3:16).

Christ the Messiah declared that we must “live by EVERY WORD of God’ (Luke 4:4).

Therefore, how could the Law – that is the very TEACHINGS of God – be bad, harsh, abolished, done away with? How could the commandments ever be considered “terrible,” or “monstrous,” and worthy of being “nailed to the cross”? It is CHRIST who was nailed to the cross – not the Law of God!

Concerning this immutable, inexorable, eternal Law, God said: “*You shall not ADD TO the word which I command you, NOR TAKE FROM IT, that you may KEEP the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you*” (Deut.4:2).

God has not abolished His Law. He intends that every one of us INTERNALIZE and ETERNALIZE His Torah into every fiber of our hearts, mind and soul.

### *The Major Sin of the Pharisees*

The Pharisees of Jesus’ day misinterpreted the Law of God, and added many stringent regulations and rules that over time became an incredible yoke of bondage and spiritual slavery to the people who followed them. Not only that, but they claimed to be God’s “one true authority,” or “one true church,” and claimed “ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY.”

Says Nehemia Gordon in his book *The Hebrew Yeshua vs. the Greek Jesus*, “Rabbinic/Pharisaic Judaism is the belief that the Rabbis have **absolute authority** [his emphasis!] to interpret Scripture, and what they say in religious matters is binding even if it is known to be factually untrue. This is best expressed by the Rabbinic doctrine that if the Rabbis say right is left or left is right you must obey them” (page 14).

As Nehemia grew up as a young Jewish boy in an Orthodox family, he had questions about places where the Talmud seemed to make statements that flew in the face of explicit words of Scripture. He says, “I was told time and time again that the Rabbis have interpreted it this way and we had no right to question it” (*ibid.*).



The Midrash states concerning Rabbinic authority, “*Even if they instruct you that right is left or left is right, you must obey them*” (*Sifri Deuteronomy S154 on Deuteronomy 17:11*).

Apparently, according to the Rabbis, Deuteronomy 30:12 says the Torah “is not in heaven.” The verse actually says that the Torah is not far off, so there is no excuse not to obey it! Nevertheless, the Rabbis interpret it differently. They claim the Torah is literally no longer to be found in heaven, and, Nehemia Gordon says, “therefore God has no say in interpreting it.” He goes on, “My rabbi’s conclusion from all this was that **the interpretation of the Rabbis even superceded a direct decree from God Himself**, so who was I to question them” (Gordon’s emphasis, not mine, p.16).

Another problem with the Pharisees and Rabbis was their often irrational explanations of Scripture. Let’s notice an example. Look at Exodus 23:2. We read, “You shall not go after the majority to do evil, neither shall you testify in a matter of strife to incline after the majority to pervert justice.” The verse seems clear – we should not testify or witness against a person just because every one else does, or the majority of people condemn him.

The rabbis, however, in their interpretation, cross out every word of the verse EXCEPT the words “**incline after the majority.**” In other words, they interpret the verse to say, “GO AFTER THE MAJORITY.” The verse actually says to go after what is TRUE, seek the TRUTH, but they reject that interpretation in favor of their own rabbinical “majority” decisions and decrees. Unless the majority of Rabbis teach something it is automatically rejected – whether it comes from a prophet, or heaven, or God Himself!

The Jewish sage Maimonides, in the Middle Ages, explains that if there is a debate on the interpretation of any law between 1001 rabbis and 1000 prophets, one is required to obey the teaching of the 1001 rabbis (Gordon, page 19). His words were:

“If there are 1000 prophets, all of them of the stature of Elijah and Elisha, giving a certain interpretation, you shall ‘incline after the majority’ (Exodus 23:2) and the law is according to the 1001 rabbis, not according to the 1000 venerable prophets. And thus our sages said, ‘By God, if we heard the matter directly from the mouth of Joshua the son of Nun, we would not obey him nor would we listen to him!’ The sages said further, ‘If Elijah comes and tells us, “The levirate obligation is cancelled through a shoe,” (see Deuteronomy 25:9), we will listen to him [because this is what the Oral Law teaches], but if he says it is cancelled through a sandal, we will not listen to him [because this is contrary to Oral Law].’ . . . And so if a prophet testifies that the Holy One, Blessed be He, told him that the law of a certain commandment is such and such, or [even] that the reasoning of a certain sage is correct, that prophet must be EXECUTED . . . as it is written, ‘it is not in heaven’ (Deuteronomy 30:12). *Thus God did not permit us to learn from the prophets, only from the Rabbis who are men of logic and reason*” (Maimonides, quoted by Gordon on page 84).

Maimonides went even further. He declared that if a prophet says anything contrary to the Oral Law, *even if Scripture agrees with the prophet*, that prophet must be executed! Thus the Jews superceded the written Torah in favor of decisions and rules added by generations of rabbis, thus rejecting God's written Word, the foundation of life, and instead of being anchored to it, they chose to follow opinions of men, and human traditions – the conflicting and contrary interpretations of rabbis – mere men who gang up against the Torah.

According to the sage Maimonides, the “Oral Law” is supreme – not the written and inspired, God-breathed words of the Bible and the Torah! He asserted::

“He who prophesies in the Name . . . if he changes anything in the Oral Law, *even if the plain meaning of Scripture supports what he says*, for example, if he says that when the Torah says ‘you shall cut off her hand; [show no pity]’ (Deuteronomy 25:12) that it literally means cutting off the hand and not a monetary fine as we are taught by the oral law, and that prophet attributes his statement to prophecy, saying, ‘The Holy One, Blessed be He, told me that the commandment that says, “you shall cut off her hand” is to be understood at face value,’ that prophet shall be executed through strangulation . . .” (Maimonides, pp. 16-17, page 84, Nehemia Gordon’s *The Hebrew Yeshua vs. the Greek Jesus*).

Such an opinion ranks as the sheerest form of blasphemy!

How important is the Torah – the written Laws and Teaching of God?

Notice!

### ***The Way of LIFE***

God’s LAW is the “way of life.” As Solomon wrote, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all” (Eccl.12:13). David wrote, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, a good understanding have all those who do His commandments” (Psalm111:10). Wisdom is to keep God’s LAW – and this is “a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who retain her” (Prov.3:18).

God’s words, His Law, “are life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh” (Prov.4:22).

God inspired Moses to declare to Israel, “Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess. Therefore BE CAREFUL to observe them, for this is your WISDOM and your UNDERSTANDING in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people” (Deut.4:5-6).

Moses warned Israel, “Therefore know this day, and consider it in your heart, that the LORD Himself is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other. You shall therefore keep His *statutes and His commandments* which I command you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time” (Deut.4:39-40, NKJV).

Obedying God’s Law and keeping His commandments is the WAY to prosperity and the abundant life of blessings! Don’t let anyone tell you otherwise!

### ***The MEANING of the Law***

Moses declared, “You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him . . . You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, His testimonies, and His statutes which He has commanded you. And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, that it may be well with you . . . . When your sons ask you in time to come, saying, ‘What is the meaning of the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments which the LORD our God has commanded you?’ then you shall say to your son, ‘We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand; and the LORD showed signs and wonders before our eyes, great and severe, against Egypt, Pharaoh, and all his household. Then He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in, to give us the land of which He swore to our fathers. And the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is this day. Then it will be OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR US, if we are careful to observe all these commandments before the LORD our God, as He has commanded us” (Deut.6:13-25).

Moses sums up the incredible relationship God promises to have with His people, if they keep His commandments and remain faithful to His Law. Listen carefully to this: “The LORD your God will make you ABOUND in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your land for good. For the LORD will again rejoice over you for good as He rejoiced over your fathers, IF YOU OBEY the voice of the LORD your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this Book of the Law, and if you *TURN TO the LORD your God with ALL your heart and with ALL your soul*. For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. . . But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it. See, I have set before you today LIFE AND GOOD, death and evil, in that I command you today to LOVE the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may *LIVE AND MULTIPLY; and the LORD your God may BLESS you . . . .*

*“I have set before you LIFE AND DEATH, BLESSING AND CURSING; therefore CHOOSE LIFE, that both you and your descendants may LIVE; that you may LOVE the LORD your God, that you may OBEY His voice, and that you may CLING to Him, for HE IS YOUR LIFE and the length of your days”* (Deut.30:9-20).

How could ANYONE possibly think or believe that such a wonderful, perfect, good Law would EVER be abolished or done away with by God?

Why king David wrote: “The Law [Torah] of the LORD is *PERFECT*, *converting [restoring] the soul*; the testimony of the LORD is *sure*, making wise the simple; the statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is *pure*, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, *enduring forever*; the judgments of the LORD are *true and righteous*, altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is WARNED [thereby kept back from horrible danger and harm], and in keeping them there is GREAT REWARD” (Psalm 19:7-11).

Would God Almighty “do away” with something that is PERFECT IN EVERY WAY? Something that is absolutely TRUE? Something that is “true and righteous altogether”? Something that is “right,” rejoicing the heart, and brings JOY to human beings? Something that is “pure” and “clean,” and “sure”?

The Hebrew word for “sure” in this verse is *aman* and means “to build up, or support, to foster, to be PERMANENT, TO BE TRUE OR CERTAIN – hence to establish, be faithful, steadfast, trusty, verified,” etc.

Who could possibly believe that such a perfect Torah could be abolished, done away, or destroyed” by God Himself? Why, it is obvious that it is the DEVIL or SATAN who wants and seeks to destroy and abolish God’s wonderful, glorious LAW! And he has done a marvelous job in convincing most of the world that God’s Law or Torah is “abolished,” “evil,” “contrary,” obsolete, and dispensed with at the cross of Christ!

What unbelievable falderal and nonsense!

### *The Law of God*

The apostle John wrote, in the New Testament, “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we *keep His commandments*, and His commandments are not burdensome [or “grievous” as the KJV has it]” (I John 5:3-4).

Moses Luzatto (1707-1747 was a Jewish Italian poet of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In *Mesillat Yesharim* (“Way of Uprightness”), he wrote:

“A major principle in the service of God is joy. David declares, ‘Serve the Lord with gladness; come into His Presence with singing’ [Psa.100:2]. ‘Let the righteous be joyful; let them exult before God; let them be jubilant with joy’ [Psa.68:4]. Our sages said, ‘The *Shekhinah* [Spirit of God] rests only upon one who performs a commandment in a joyous spirit’ (*Shabbat 30b*).

“There are three elements in the love of God: joy, devotion and zeal. To love God is to passionately desire His nearness, praised be He, and to pursue His holiness, as one pursues something he strongly desires, until mentioning His name, praised be He, or speaking His praise, or studying His Torah or His divine nature, becomes a source of pleasure and delight as real as that of one who strongly loves the wife of his youth, or his only son. In the latter case, even speaking of them is a delight. And Scripture states, ‘As often as I speak of Him, I remember Him still; therefore, my heart yearns for Him . . .’ [Jer.31:19]. Surely whoever truly loves his Creator will not neglect serving Him for any reason in the world, unless he is physically prevented from doing so. He will not need to be coaxed or enticed into serving Him. On the contrary, unless prevented by some great obstacle, his heart itself will lift him. This is the desirous quality which the early saints, the holy ones of the Highest, were privileged to attain . . . .

“Surely there must be no ulterior motive in such love. One should love the Creator, praised be He, not because He is good to him, or grants him wealth or success, but one should love Him as naturally and obligingly as a son loves his father. Indeed, Scripture states, ‘Is He not your father, who created you?’ [Deut.32:6]. The test of this love is during a time of hardship and trouble. . . . ‘Whatever Heaven does is for the best’ (*Berakhot* 60b). This means that even hardship and trouble are apparent evils which in reality are good. . . . Thus one should realize that whatever the Holy One praised be He does to him, whether it affect his body or his property, is for his own good. Thus neither hardship nor suffering would lessen his love for God” (Moses Luzatto, *Mesillat Yesharim*, chapter 19).

### ***The 613 Commandments***

Writing about the importance of Torah, rabbi Louis Finkelstein declared: “A casual conversation or a thoughtless remark may, for instance, be considered a grave violation of Jewish Law. It is forbidden, as a matter not merely of good form but of religious law, to use obscene language, to rouse a person to anger or to display unusual ability in the presence of the handicapped. . . . The ceremonial observances are equally detailed. The ceremonial law expects each Jew to pray thrice every day, if possible at the synagogue; to recite a blessing before and after each meal; to thank God for any special pleasure, such as a curious sight, the perfume of a flower, or the receipt of good news; to wear a fringed garment about his body; to recite certain passages of Scripture each day . . .” (*Judaism*, Arthur Hertzberg, p.87-88).

One such Scripture is, “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength,” known as the Shema (Deut.6:4-5).

In studying the Torah, the Five Books of Moses, intensely, the Jewish Rabbis have found a total of 613 laws and commandments given to Israel. We read in the Talmud, the compendium of ancient Jewish religious knowledge and history:

Says Rabbi Simlai: “Six hundred and thirteen commandments were transmitted to Moses on Mount Sinai. Three hundred and sixty five of them are negative commandments [prohibitions], corresponding to the number of days in the solar year. The remaining two hundred and forty eight and positive commandments [i.e.. injunctions], corresponding to the number of limbs in the human body” (Makkot 23, *Judaism*, Arthur Hertzberg, page 86).

In *Celebrate! The Complete Jewish Holidays Handbook*, by Lesli Koppelman Ross, we read that at Mt. Sinai the Ten Commandments were followed up by 603 other laws, both ethical and ritual, that encompassed a total of 613 *mitzvot* and commands. The author states, “The 248 positive *mitzvot* were said to correspond to what the rabbis believed were the number of bones in the body, and the 365 negative *mitzvot* were said to correspond to the days of the year. Together they suggest that we devote every part of our bodies, every day of our lives, to following God’s Word” (page 115).

Solomon Schechter (1847-1915) was the greatest figure in conservative Judaism, a highly respected authority. Discussing the 613 laws of the Torah, he explained: “It is an illusion to speak of the burden which a scrupulous care to observe six hundred and thirteen commandments must have laid upon the Jew. Even a superficial analysis will discover that in the time of Christ many of these commandments were already obsolete (as for instance those relating to the tabernacle and to the conquest of Palestine), while others concerned only certain classes, as the priests, the judges, the soldiers, the Nazirites, or the representatives of the community, or even only two or three individuals among the whole population, as the King and the High Priest. Others, again, provided for contingencies which could occur only to a few, as for instance the laws concerning divorce or levirate marriages, whilst many – such as those concerning idolatry, and incest, and the sacrifice of children to Molech – could scarcely have been considered as a practical prohibition by the pre-Christian Jew, just as little as we can speak of Englishmen as lying under the burden of a law preventing them from burning widows or marrying their grandmothers, though such acts would certainly be considered as crimes.

“Thus it will be found by careful enumeration that barely a hundred laws remain which really concerned the life of the bulk of the people. If we remember that even these include such laws as belief in the unity of God, the necessity of loving and fearing Him, and of sanctifying His name, of loving one’s neighbor and the stranger, of providing for the poor, exhorting the sinner, honoring one’s parents and many more of a similar character, it will hardly be said that the ceremonial side of the people’s religion was not well balanced by a fair amount of spiritual and social elements. Besides, it would seem that the line between the ceremonial and the spiritual is too often only arbitrarily drawn” (Hertzberg, *ibid.*, p.95).

The greatest of modern Hebrew poets, Hayyim Nahman Bialik (1873-1934), speaks of the exalted nature of the Torah of God within the Jewish heritage. He wrote:

“The concept of ‘Torah’ attained in the esteem of the [Jewish] people an infinite exaltation. For them the Torah was almost another existence, a more spiritual and loftier state, added to or even taking the place of secular existence. The Torah became the center of the nation’s secret and avowed aspirations and desires in its exile. The dictum ‘Israel and the Torah are one’ was no mere phrase; the non-Jew cannot appreciate it, because the concept of ‘Torah,’ in its full national significance, cannot be rendered adequately in any other tongue. Its content and connotations embrace more than ‘religion’ or ‘creed’ alone, or ‘ethics’ or ‘commandments’ or ‘learning’ alone, and it is not even just a combination of these, but something far transcending all of them.

“It is a mystic, almost cosmic conception. The Torah is the tool of the Creator; with it and for it He created the universe. The Torah is older than creation. It is the highest idea and the living soul of the world. Without it the world could not exist and would have no right to exist. ‘The study of the Torah is more important than the building of the Temple.’ ‘Knowledge of the Torah ranks higher than priesthood or kingship.’ ‘Only he is free who engages in the study of the Torah.’ ‘It is the Torah that magnifies and exalts man above all creatures.’ ‘Even a heathen who engages in the study of the Torah is as good as a High Priest.’ ‘A bastard learned in the Torah takes precedence over an ignorant High Priest’” (quoted in *Judaism*, p.97-98).

God commands His people, in this end-time generation prior to the coming of Yeshua the Messiah, “*Remember the LAW [Torah] of Moses, My servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.*” And in connection with this God thundered, “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD” (Mal.4:4-5).

Elijah’s message is the message of REPENTANCE! It is high time to REPENT of rejecting God’s Torah, and RETURN to Him and SEEK His Laws and Commandments, lest He smite the earth with “*total destruction*” (Malachi 4:6).

For a more complete understanding of this subject of God’s Torah, write for:

“What Is the Truth about ‘Law and Grace’?”

“Is the Law Nailed to the Cross?”

“A New Look at the book of Galatians”

“The Mystery of Galatians – Just What Do You Mean, ‘The Works of the Law’?”

“Is Obedience to God Required for Salvation”?

“What’s All This about the ‘New Covenant’?”

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