

# A New Look at the Torah and the LAW of God

Why is there so much visible and invisible anti-Semitism in the so-called Christian world today? Why do even some churches which observe the Sabbath, and even the holy days, still attack the religion of the Jews as being "as bad as going to the Catholic Church"? What is the real meaning of the LAW of God? In this chapter the roots of true Christianity are explored, and the Torah of God explained. Here is vital knowledge for your own spiritual growth. May it be a blessing to your understanding and devotion to God!

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I would like to take this opportunity to share with you a few of the technical aspects about how to prove the Law which are not readily accessible to the English reader. If we could all somehow be transported in time back into the Hebrew-and-Aramaic-speaking Jewish civilization of the First Century A.D. period, we would be very awe-struck about how the tenets of the Jewish religion were eloquently expressed by Jesus and His original apostles and disciples before their words became penned into the Greek language. Sometimes Greek preserves the Jewish meanings, while at other times we must translated the Greek back into Hebrew in order to obtain the Jewish thinking intended.

## *The Early Church Was Zealous of the Law*

That the original early Church of God was fully dominated by Jewish brethren, and subsequently Jewish thought, beliefs, and practices, is very evidenced and superfluously implied from the statement recorded in Acts 21:20. In this verse, the KJV word "thousands" is rendered from the N.T. Greek word "myriades" which the Greek scholar W. E. Vine explains means literally "10,000" (*Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, entry: "Thousands"). Hence, the correct rendering of this verse, including the Judaic historical background, should be: "And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, *how*

*many ten thousands of Jews there are which believe* ; and they are all being zealous of the Torah." The present tense word "being" (Greek: *uparkhousi* ) is neglected and simply not rendered into English in the KJV (another anti-Semitic indication on the part of the King James Translation Committee). The *Emphatic Dioglott*, the Aland/Black/Metzger/Wikgren Greek New Testament Text, and others, present in consistency this same Greek wording. Also, where the KJV reads "which believe" the Greek Texts read "of those having believed" (Greek: *ton pepisteukoton* ). Thus, a more specific rendering of Acts 21:20 is: ". . . Thou seest, brother, how many ten thousands of Jews of those having believed; and they are all being zealous of the Torah."

Another way to prove the Law is by using the Epistle of I John. The apostle John was an "apostle to the Circumcision" -- his mission was strictly to Jews in the ancient world. The wording and expressions used in I John are *very* Kabbalistic! Such terms as "fellowship" = Greek: "union" are properly defined in Jewish Kabbalah. The terms "light," "darkness," and "anointing" are all specifically defined in Mystic Kabbalah. However, there are also many things in I John which can be easily identified with Rabbinic Judaism. For instance, the original meaning of I John 2:3 is: "And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His mitzvot (613 Commandments contained in Torah with the Expansions which Jesus taught)." Also, if we convert the Greek word for "know" back into Hebrew, we have the Hebrew word *yada'* which is the Hebrew word used for "lay" as in the act of sexual union. *Yada'* denotes the most intimate familiarity with something or someone. Hence, I John 2:3 can be more appropriately rendered: "And hereby we do intimately know that we intimately know Him, if we *keep* (Greek: *tereo* = "preserve," "to guard from loss or injury") His mitzvot."

It was the responsibility of the original Jewish believers in Jesus as Messiah to "keep the commandments," i.e., to fulfill the Judaic obligation specified by Paul in Romans 3:1-2. To "preserve" and "obey" are both indicated by the Greek word *tereo*, and clearly expresses the traditional responsibility(s) of every devout practicing Jew.

Remember, the early Jewish Church used only the Hebrew Scriptures in their worship services! Thus, we find John asserting in I John 2:4 just as any practicing Chassidic Jew of today would claim: "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His (613) mitzvot, is a liar, and the *truth* (the Hebrew-Jewish word here would be *emet* meaning the stability of Torah) is not in him."

III John 11 provides another example: ". . . He that *doeth good* is of God . . ." With Judaism, to "doeth good" (*asah tov* ) indicates the same thing as to "perform mitzvot" (*asah mitzvot* ). Thus, John was saying: ". . . He that performs mitzvot is of God . . ."

Likewise, the apostle James uses this same expression -- "doeth good" -- in James 4:17 with the same Judaic meaning intended: "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good (to perform mitzvot) and doeth (performs) it not, to him it is sin." That is, the mitzvot becomes sin to the person who intimately knows how to perform it and that he should perform it, but refuses to perform it when the opportunity and need arises. To

the righteous person, the mitzvot is a source for increased righteousness through obedience; but, to the disobedient person the mitzvot becomes a source of increasing sin as the disobedient person continues to refuse to obey the mitzvot. The mitzvot is a great blessing to the obedient, but the mitzvot is a curse to those who persist in disobedience.

Also, James mentions the expression "law of liberty" in James 1:25 and 2:12. The Greek word for "liberty" is *eleutherias* which means "freedom." James Judaic thought would be "the Torah of Freedom" which directly associates with the Festival of Freedom (i.e., Shavuot) on which the Torah was given to Israel at Mount Sinai. Jewish history explains that the Jewish people were not completely free from their Egyptian slavers until they had received the Torah from God at Mount Sinai during Shavuot! Thus, the "Torah of Freedom" expressly implies the observance of Shavuot by those to whom James is directing his epistle! It was at Mount Sinai that the Ten Major Categories of Law were given to Israel, to which the remaining of the 613 Commandments along with the Oral Torah were subservient and supplemental.

### ***The Importance of the Hebrew Language***

While we were in the WCG, we were subjected to some of the mainstream Protestant propaganda which has been the cause of the rift between Judaism and Christianity for many centuries. One of the first actions which the early Catholic Church initiated was to purge the Hebrew language from the Christian religion and transfer the Jewish Scriptures into Latin in order to attempt to re-orientate the Biblical Scriptures into a Roman atmosphere, and thereby causing people to forget about the Jewish culture

*when reading the Bible! The early Catholics (both Romans and Byzantines) sought to interpret the Holy Scriptures using their Gentile cultural backgrounds imposed upon the Scriptures -- attempting to make it completely unnecessary for Christians to go to the Jews and explore the Jewish culture for a better Biblical understanding! Thus, the early Roman and Byzantine "Christians" deprived the Western world of realizing the value inherent within Judaism and Jewish culture to properly understand and practice the laws and instructions God presents to mankind in the Holy Scriptures!*

Author Alan Mintz explains: "Jewish experience (understanding the intended divine meaning of Scriptural laws and instructions and terminology) can be adequately understood only through Jewish language. In this conception, the relation of Hebrew to Jewish culture is not merely that of a key or a gateway or a path -- or any other instrumental image one might suggest. Rather, Jewish culture (especially ancient Israelite culture) is embodied *by* Hebrew and imbedded *in* it. This is not just a semantic point but a point about semantics, and it can best be conveyed through several very common examples" ("Hebrew in America," by Alan Mintz, in the periodical *Commentary*, p.46, July, 1993, published by the American Jewish Committee). Alan Mintz proceeds to explain how the entire Hebrew language is an *idiomatic language*, and virtually *every* Hebrew vocabulary word must be understood within the context of its cultural idiom!

The English word "charity" denotes giving to the poor, whereas the Hebrew *chesed* denotes "love" and "mercy." The person showing *chesed* does so because of his love and mercy toward those he seeks to help, while "charity" does not necessarily convey the impact of a deep emotional love and attachment for the one being helped. Also, "charity" may be done in order to get income tax exemptions, whereas *chesed* unites and bonds together the giver and the receiver.

In the English language, a person who performs "righteousness" may be any person who does deeds which appear ethical and beneficial according to the standards within a Gentile culture. However, when a person performs *tzedakah*, his righteous deeds are *always* expressed by performing any of the 613 Commandments revealed in the Torah which God gave to Israel.

In Gentile culture, a "law" is usually viewed as a constraint or restriction to keep a person from committing illegal and criminal behavior. However, in Judaism, *halakhah* (Jewish law) means a "path" to walk in, and a "path" of life. To the Jewish believer, the mental attitude toward law is that of a path of light and a path of life.

The English word "peace" as used on the international scene is one of the most indefinite words in the English vocabulary. However, the Hebrew word *shalom* comes from the adjective meaning whole or hale, and designates a condition which is not merely the cessation of hostilities but a state of harmony and connectedness, according to Alan Mintz. The Hebrew verb from which *shalom* originates is *shalam* meaning "to be safe." When a person is "safe," the blessings of "prosperity," "health," "unity," "peace" and individual internal harmony and outward social harmony are manifested -- other meanings inherent within the vocabulary domain of *shalom*. Many times when Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and other Scriptural writers penned the word *shalom*, their intended meaning was not "peace" (as with the KJV), but rather in the spectrum of the other meanings associated with *shalom*. A fresh reading of Isaiah, for example, will demonstrate this cultural idiom about *shalom*.

What really motivated me into educating myself in this subject was an incident which occurred back around 1970. During a weekly Sabbath service of the WCG in Oklahoma City, pastor Dale Hampton asked for everyone to raise their hand who believed that Hebrew would be the language spoken in the Kingdom of God after Jesus' return. Out of the entire Oklahoma City congregation, I was the only person who raised his hand. This absolutely astonished me! Dale Hampton then proceeded to make fun of the Hebrew language, and to make fun of anyone who thought Hebrew to be any different than any other language. Dale Hampton never made any distinction between Jewish and Gentile usages and cultures. He said all languages are the same -- a language is only a language. I instantly recognized that the WCG ministry in Pasadena had never happened to come into contact with the God who inspired the Biblical Scriptures, but I didn't know what to do about it at that time. It was 4 years still down the road of life before I found my way into a Synagogue.

The passage usually referred to about Hebrew being spoken in the Kingdom is found in Isaiah 19:18: "In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the LORD of hosts . . ." The "language of Canaan" was Hebrew, and the Canaanite's perverting of the Hebrew language, and using Hebrew for pagan forms of worship, was one of the unwritten primary reasons *why* God had the Israelites destroy the Canaanites and leave no survivors. Hebrew was viewed as the "Holy Language" -- *Lashon Ha-Kodesh* ("The Sacred Tongue") -- which God spoke to bring Creation into being. Zephaniah 3:9 says: "For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve Him with one consent."

This "pure language" will enable people to do two things: (1) to call upon God's name in a certain manner; and, (2) to provide absolute unity and harmony in worship and knowledge pertaining to obedience. The words "pure language" in Hebrew are *safat b'rurh*, literally "language being pure." The Hebrew word for "pure" is *barar* which is directly associated with *bara* ("created") in Genesis 1:1. This *pure language* is the same language which God used in speaking physical matter into existence! This *safat b'rurh* is the language used by the Logos in John 1:1-3, and after His death and ascension He continued to speak this same language -- Greek: *Hebrais* -- from Heaven: see Acts 26:14 (Strong's Concordance -- Greek Dictionary #1446).

The fact that Jesus and the original apostles spoke Hebrew instead of Aramaic in matters pertaining to religion is mentioned by Rabbi Dan Cohn-Sherbok: "Mishnaic Hebrew, an altered form of Biblical Hebrew, was used by the tannaim (teachers of Jewish religion) from the 2nd century BCE (B.C.) to the 2nd century CE (A.D.)" (*The Blackwell Dictionary of Judaica*, p.214). This means the underlying language to the Gospels, Acts, and the writings of the apostles is Mishnaic Hebrew rather than Classical Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, or some other language or dialect. Jesus and the apostles would have spoken the form of Hebrew language which became commonplace for the text language of the early scribing of the Talmud and various commentaries.

Rabbi Alan Unterman asserts boldly: "In the days of the Messiah, all nations will once again speak Hebrew" (*Dictionary of Jewish Lore and Legend*, p.92). The fact that the Jewish Publication Society of America followed the basic text of the King James Version in their c1917, c1945, and c1955 editions of *The Holy Scriptures according to the Massoretic Text* was done so in an attempt to get English-speaking Jewish people interested in Biblical study, hoping that putting the Scriptures into English would serve to encourage Jewish people in America to eventually seek a better understanding by studying their own Hebrew language. This is also covered in Alan Mintz's article "Hebrew in America," in the afore-mentioned issue of *Commentary* magazine. This subject is *very important*, especially since the WCG ministry chose to "close the door" upon those few people who were sincerely seeking the "Key of Knowledge" (Luke 11:52).

### *The Roots of Christianity*

Rabbi Dr. Chaim Pearl writes: "For the Christian student it is of great importance for him to know and understand that the roots of Christianity are in Judaism. Jesus and the apostles were Jews, and the early Church practiced much of rabbinic Judaism. It is impossible to fully understand the historic nature and development of Christianity without an examination of rabbinic Judaism as it was taught and practiced at the time of Jesus" (from an article titled "Prejudice Based on Ignorance," *Inside Israel Newsletter*, vol.13, no.8, p.3).

I am neither a "scholar" nor a "pseudo-scholar." After graduating from high school, I attended business college for two years. Afterward, I attended one year at Oklahoma City University where I received the one year's education in Classical Piano and Voice in the OCU School of Music. I have never had any training in journalistic writing. Besides, when I write, I do not write for the general public. I seek to address subject and the more technical information which are usually ignored by journalistic authors. I believe that, many times, matters involving exegesis are more critical than journalistic style. This is because the vast majority of theological books and reference works, including major commentaries, are written from the traditional bias of Christian Anti-Semitism, and refuse to give credit to the rabbis for possessing valid information about the Scriptures! The Jewish rabbis are the "scholars" in my letters -- they provide the books from which I quote and derive information and learning. I am simply in the same position as the woman from Canaan who was willing to truthfully and honestly acknowledge to Jesus that Gentiles are like bystanders who learn from the crumbs of knowledge which fall from the spiritual Table of the Jewish people (Matt.15:22-27). I, like all others, am only a disciple -- one who seeks to follow the Master -- our Rabbi -- Who is in Heaven.

"Great peace have they which love Thy Torah (both the written and oral Torah), and nothing shall offend them" (Psalm 119:165). The Hebrew word for "love" used here is *ahavah* which means "marital love." To "love" the Torah is to be married to the Torah as our helper in living our lives. The Torah, as a loving wife, lovingly shares with us our most intimate and private moments, cares for us, provides for us by keeping us out of the companionship of the wicked, and caresses our spirit with her loving divine knowledge. The Torah is our Number One Wife in life!

### *Understanding the Intent of the Torah*

When I was attending Emmanuel Synagogue around 1975, Rabbi Lifshen happened to refer to the statement of the law found in Exodus 21:24: "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot."

Rabbi Lifshen proceeded to explain how all the Christian churches totally misrepresent the Jewish people and Jewish practice with regard to this passage of Scripture. He mentioned the ancient Israelites never applied this Scripture in a literal manner, for to have done so would have made the courts of law inhuman and

unnecessarily cruel. Rabbi Lifshen explained that the ancient application always called for a settlement between parties which would prevent the literal stipulation of the law. The majority of the time, money, goods, or services in an amount or amounts set by a court would serve to fulfill the requirement of this particular law. The practice of modern insurance companies of attaching specific dollar amounts to loss of limbs, loss of eyesight, and loss of hearing from accident was directly borrowed from the Jewish application of Exodus 21:24.

The *intent* of the law was to encourage people to change their way of life -- not to disadvantage or cripple people. In John 8:3-7, Jesus applied the legal penalty of stoning as a rebuttal against adultery instead of upholding the strict written death penalty for adultery.

The written penalty for sin contained in the Torah was administered only as a last result penalty when it was common knowledge the sinner was (1) a "transgressor" -- i.e., openly rebellious, and, (2) an evil-doer -- i.e., an incorrigible person who committed deliberate and persistent premeditated acts of disobedience. The Bible does not attempt to record the personal behavioral history of the few people upon which the death penalty had to be administered -- these people had a long history of disobedience prior to the final crime which necessitated their being put to death. There was also a history of personal disobedience underlying the final act of negligence which took the life of Uzzah as recorded in II Samuel 6:3-8.

The *baseline* of the law was viewed as the mechanical penalty -- however, mercy, compassion, and understanding were always used in the law courts to temper the law in order to derive justice and fairness.

Non-adjudicated sentences of indiscriminate stonings -- such as are indicated in John 8:59, John 10:33, etc. -- were never authorized by Rabbinic law. The stoning of Stephen in Acts 7 serves to describe the apostasy from normal Jewish legal procedure of the particular council and high priest involved!

Modern Protestants, and other non-Jewish "Christians," do not know *how* the ancient Israelites lived or viewed God. In ancient Israel, God was viewed as All-Wise, All-Knowing, All-Loving, and, All-Present. God loved, cared for, and nourished His wife -- the Israelite nation. Unlike many human husbands, God was very loving and protective over His chosen people Israel -- His wife -- whom He married at Mount Sinai.

### ***The "Ten Commandments"***

Having come from non-Jewish families, most of us were not exposed in our religious education to many Biblical facts which many Jews know so well. It requires time and experience for us to overcome this severe handicap and Scriptural deficiency. The many Jewish people who possess an everyday working knowledge of Biblical and

liturgical Hebrew know many cultural specifics about the Bible which totally escape the English reader who must rely on the occasional inadequacies contained in the many English-language Bible translations.

*The "Ten Commandments":* As has been mentioned correctly, the expression, "Ten Commandments," appears nowhere in the Hebrew Text of the Bible. The Hebrew reads *aseret ha-d'variym* which literally translates as "the ten words." *D'variym* is occasionally spelled as *d'barim*, with the Hebrew letter "bet" being rendered as either "v" or "b" depending on the presence or absence of a dagesh in the consonant.

The "ten words" (*asseret ha-d'variym* -- *d'bar* is "word" in the singular) are referred to as "torah" ("law") and "mitzvah" ("command") in Exodus 24:12, when Moses was ascending Mount Sinai to receive the second set of torah tables: "And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to Me into the mount, and be there; and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law ("torah"), and commandments ("mitzvah" here is singular, not plural) which I have written; that thou mayest teach them." Here, the "ten words" of Exodus 20 are called a singular "mitzvah" ("commandment"). There is a reason for this: there were yet many mitzvot (commandments) to be revealed to Israel after the Mount Sinai event as God's ongoing revelation to His people. God *never* tells humans everything they need to know at one time or in one incident of revelation. The "ten words" were the first mitzvah (singular) in the beginning of a series of revelations to Moses providing many mitzvot (commandments -- plural).

According to the Israelite culture, whenever the term "mitzvot" occurs in relation to Torah, it indicates the many "commandments" contained in the Law of Moses, i.e., the 613 Commandments. However, whenever the singular term "mitzvah" occurs, it may indicate the "ten words" or a single commandment. For instance, Paul used the singular form "commandment" in regard to the Ten Words in Romans 7:9. However, when Jesus used to term in the plural -- "commandments" -- as mentioned in Luke 18:20, He was including all the many mitzvot categorized under the "Aseret Ha-D'variym," i.e., all the many mitzvot (commandments) within the categories of "Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother." The "Ten Words" are like an outline into which all the many Commandments are to be fitted into their proper place. I John 5:3 should be read in the same way with all the 613 Mitzvot in mind!

*"The Tree of Life":* This symbol can represent either the Holy Spirit, the Messiah, or the Torah. We read concerning the Tree of Life:

"Apocalyptic sources claim it was an olive tree, hence the tradition that anointment ('messiah' in Hebrew) conveys immortality" (*The Encyclopedia of Jewish Symbols*, by Ellen Frankel and Betsy Platkin Teutsch, p.181; c1992, Jason Aronson, Inc.).

Additionally, about the Olive Tree, we read:

"Because of its potential to live over 1,000 years and still bear fruit, the olive tree has long symbolized longevity and immortality . . .



The Psalms compare children to 'olive shoots around your table,' a symbol of continuity through offspring" (*ibid.*, p.123).

The expression "Tree of Life" in Hebrew is "Etz Hayyim." In Jewish Kabbalah, "hayyim" is used to mean the "spiritual life" of immortality in the World to Come. On the advanced spiritual level, "hayyim" is very closely associated with the Shekinah which is the feminine Holy Spirit which expresses love and mercy toward man. Additionally:

"Tradition associates the Tree of Life with the Torah. The (Synagogue) liturgy proclaims that the Torah is 'a Tree of Life -- Etz Hayyim -- to all who hold fast to it,' and that it represents 'eternal life planted in our midst.' The wooden rods around which the Torah parchment is rolled are called *atzei hayyim* (trees of life), which are topped with *rimmonim*, pomegranates. The image of the Tree of Life, both as a symbol of Torah as well as of immortality in the World to Come, has long been a favorite decorative motif in synagogues. It is possible that the menorah (seven branch candlestick) is a stylized representation of the Tree of Life. In ancient religious architecture, trees were prototypes for temple pillars. The Holy Temple in Jerusalem had two such supporting pillars . . ." (*The Encyclopedia of Jewish Symbols*, p.181).

"It is a tree of life to them that grasp it (Proverbs 3:18). Rabbi Banaah used to say: Whoever busies himself in the Torah for its own sake, his Torah becomes for him an elixir of life" (Ta'anit 7a).

"The benediction recited after reading of the Torah is: 'Who has given us a Torah of truth' -- this refers to the Written Torah -- 'and has planted eternal life in our midst' -- this is the Oral Torah" (Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim 139:10).

It was always the Oral Torah which enabled the Written Torah to function as a "Living Law" among the Jewish Israelite people down through history. Jesus taught His Oral Torah to accompany the Written Torah (see Matthew 5, etc.).

The Study of Torah ("Talmud Torah") is considered one of the greatest acts by which man can worship God. Judaism teaches a love for study and learning:

"Abraham Gumbiner rules that it is right and proper to run from a synagogue, the house of prayer, to attend the Bet ha-Midrash, the house of study, because the study of the Torah is of a higher order even than prayer' (Magen Avraham to SA, OH 90, note 26. Cf. for the primacy of Torah study over prayer SHABBAT 10a). See pages 35-36 in *A Tree of Life: Diversity, Flexibility, and Creativity in Jewish Law*, by Rabbi Louis Jacobs; c1984, The Oxford University Press.

While modern "Christians" are trying to develop their own answers to important theological questions and problems, most of the time we discover the rabbis have already researched and established workable answers.

### ***The Oral Torah***

What is the role of the "Oral Torah" in Judaism? Totally unknown to most Christians today, ancient Israel possessed a "bi-literate culture," i.e., their legal and religious knowledge was contained in two primary manners: written and oral. Their written knowledge is what we know as the Holy Bible. However, the early anti-Semitic Catholic Church with headquarters in Rome and Byzantium deliberately prevented the vast Jewish "oral culture" from accompanying the Holy Scriptures into the Gentile Christian Church. As a result, churchmen and theologians have developed many differing ideas over the centuries about how to practice the many laws found in the Holy Scriptures, or whether the law should be practiced at all. When the early Catholic Church threw out the Jewish Oral Culture which included the Oral Torah, spiritual anarchy was the automatic result, and this serves to help explain *WHY* hundreds of differing denominations and sects exist within modern Christian religion.

Since most people within our American religious culture have never heard about the Oral Torah, let's briefly explain what it is and where it came from.

According to history, the Jewish religion began with the revelation of the Torah (Law) by God to Israel on Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:5-6). God appeared to Moses on the mountaintop, and there He revealed the laws and doctrines the children of Israel were to follow so that they might become a "holy nation." What was it that was revealed to Moses? Much more than the Ten Commandments! The reason *why* Moses spent "forty days and forty nights" before God on Mount Sinai was because Moses was receiving an extensive education in Divine Law and exactly how to apply that Divine law on the Earthly level for the Israelite people. Moses had to be able to give all the laws to the Levitical Priesthood, and explain to them exactly how to transform the Laws into actual physical application and practice. Also, Moses had to know exactly how to transform all the Laws for the entire Israelite nation into practical application and physical practice.

This involved two sections of revealed Law: (1) the portion of Law to be written down and given to all Israel; and, (2) the esoteric or Oral Law to be memorized by Moses and the priests which would enable them to teach the people the technical level of the Law so the people could all obey the Law together in harmony according to God's will. The Israelites could not be left to themselves, each person trying to practice the Laws as he privately interpreted them. Rather, God revealed to Moses the standard for all the Israelites to practice the written Laws on a national scale. This additional revealed knowledge about exactly *how* to convert the written Torah (Law) into literal performance is what is defined as the Jewish "Oral Torah."

According to history, Moses received the Oral Torah on Mount Sinai and verbally transmitted it to Joshua. Joshua transmitted it to the elders, and the elders to the prophets, and the prophets to the members of the Great Assembly. All that was transmitted was contained in the Written and Oral Law -- the Written Law to *all* the people, and the Oral Law to the men in charge of governing the Israelite nation and teaching the people.

The Law was understood to be "dual" in nature. The Written Torah (Law) was understood to be the Higher Torah, the great bright light revealed from Heaven which expresses God's ideal on the spiritual level for mankind. The Oral Torah (verbal Law) was understood to be the Lower Torah, the smaller light revealed from Heaven which expresses the practical application of the Law on the physical Earthly level. Both the Higher Torah and the Oral Torah were spiritual. The Written Torah is God's expression of Himself to man. The Oral Torah is man's expression of himself in obedience to God.

King David of Israel stated it this way: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalms 119:105). Here, "lamp" ("candle") is used as a symbol for the Oral Torah which directed David's "feet," i.e., his application of the word of God in this physical world. "Light" is used as a symbol for the Written Torah which is the "path" to God's spiritual Presence. Also, king David provides another reference in Psalms 119:97-99: "O how love I thy Law (Written and Oral); it is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy (written) commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies, for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my (Levitical) teachers, for thy testimonies (Oral Law) are my meditation." King David excelled the Levites in his understanding of the oral culture! Verse 100: "I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts (verbal commands)."

When the Jewish people were being released from captivity in Babylonia, Ezra sought out the Levites who had committed the Oral Law to memory (Ezra 8:15-20). Verse 18: "And by the good hand of our God upon us they brought us a man of understanding, of the sons of Mahli, the son of Levi . . ." A "man of understanding" was a man who had memorized the Oral Torah and knew how to convert the Written Torah into practice.

In Nehemiah 8:4-18, we have an account of how the Oral Torah was used to put the Feast of Tabernacles into practice (verses 15-17). When Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood to teach the people, he was accompanied by men who knew the Oral Law whose names are recorded in verse 4. In addition to these particular men, are the men whose names are listed in verse 7, all of whom had various sections of Oral Law committed to memory. As Ezra would read portions from the Written Law, these men (Elders) and the Levites would explain to the people how the Written Law was to be converted into practice: "So they read in the book of the law distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading" (verse 8). The Hebrew word rendered "sense" here means "procedure" or "administration." The Hebrew word rendered "understand" also means to "interpret." Ezra knew it required the Oral Law to interpret the Written Law and provide the "procedure" for "administration" of the Written Law. Without the Oral Law, the Written Law could not be intelligently and authoritatively put into practice on a national level!

## What Should a Christian's Attitude Be Toward the TORAH?

Many who consider themselves to be "Christians" seem to be "put off" by the Torah, or nd anything which sounds the least bit "Jewish"! But why? Just what IS the "Torah" anyway? Is it abolished in Christ? Can one disobey and violate and break the "Torah" and still be saved? What was David's attitude toward it? The apostle James? Paul? Must we obey the "Torah" in order to inherit the Kingdom of God and receive eternal life?

Isn't it about time so-called "Christians" quit trying to "reinvent the wheel"? The knowledge of God has been preserved BY THE JEWS. The apostle Paul wrote plainly: "What advantage then hath the Jew? . . . Much every way: chiefly because that unto them were committed the ORACLES [WORDS] OF GOD" (Romans 3:1-2). Jesus Christ, our Saviour, was Himself a Jew. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:11). His mother Mary was Jewish. He is the "lion of the tribe of JUDAH, the root of David" (Rev.4:5). And He said, "And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me" (Matt.11:6).

In a sermon given on the Day of Atonement, Roderick Meredith was talking along, when for some reason, out of the blue, he began to speak evil of Judaism and the Jews. Seemingly out of nowhere, he began to vent his virulently anti-Semitic feelings, and exclaimed in a loud thunderous voice, "Going to a Jewish synagogue is just as bad and evil as going to the Catholic Church!" His remarks were so vitriolic and intemperate that one young Jewish woman began crying bitterly, and got up and left the services, never to return. The remarks were stricken from the taped version of the sermon which was sent out to the outlying church brethren.

How any professing "man of God" could so callously blast the Jews, as a people, and Judaism, which has PRESERVED THE VERY SCRIPTURES HE CLAIMS TO PREACH, is beyond understanding! How any man could compare the Jewish religion, which has maintained a love for the Torah, and the Scriptures, and has given us the very holy calendar which we use to determine Sabbaths and Feast days, with the utterly PAGAN and Satanic religion of the Roman Catholic Church, in its perversity and image worship, and heathen rites and ceremonies, is beyond belief!

In another case last year in the Global Church of God, led by Rod Meredith and company, a member was reprimanded and censured for using the word "Torah" around

the Church members! He was told that under no circumstances was he permitted to use words like "Torah," "Talmud," etc., at the Church or when fellowshipping with the brethren. He was informed that many found the use of these words "offensive."

I can understand how Christians could be offended at the use of profanity, or dirty jokes, or the taking of God's name in vain. But *how can true servants of God be "offended" at the use of the word "TORAH" which is found THROUGHOUT THE BIBLE???*

Notice!

The apostle James clearly taught that the Law (Torah) of God is still to be observed by all of God's true people today. He wrote, "If ye fulfill the ROYAL LAW according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced [convicted] of the law [Torah] as transgressors [law-breakers]. For whosoever shall keep the WHOLE LAW [TORAH], and yet offend in *one point*, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou are become a *transgressor of the law*. So speak ye, and so DO, as they that *shall be judged* by the law of liberty" -- the TORAH of GOD, given to Israel at the Festival of Freedom, Pentecost or Shavuot! (see James 2:8-12).

The apostle John also wrote that we are to strive to avoid sinning -- that is, transgressing the Law (Torah) of God. He declared, "Whosoever abideth in Him *sinneth not*: whosoever *sinneth* hath not seen Him, neither known Him" (I John 3:6). What is this thing called "sin" that we are to avoid -- that we must strive to avoid? John explains, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law (Torah): for *SIN IS the transgression of the LAW [Torah]*" (I John 3:4). Moffatt translates this verse: "Everyone who commits sin commits *lawlessness*: *SIN IS LAWLESSNESS*!!"

The very commandment to love our neighbor as we love ourselves is found in the Torah. This was not a new innovation brought during New Testament times at all. God told Israel: "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt *love thy neighbour* as thyself: I am the LORD" (Leviticus 19:18).

How it is then, that so many "Christians," today, have departed from the words of the Law of God -- the Torah? The Torah is the very Expression of the Character of God -- the Logos -- our Saviour and Redeemer! Let's understand more about it!

### ***David -- a Man After God's Own Heart***

David wrote,

"O how love I thy law (Heb., "Torah," Strong's Concordance, #8451)! It is my meditation all the day."

This word *Torah* is used by David throughout this wonderful Psalm, showing how greatly he prized the Torah -- or Law -- of God! Notice!

"Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the *torah* of the LORD" (verse 1).

"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy *torah* " (v.18).

"Remove far from me the way of lying: and grant me thy *torah* graciously" (v.29).

"Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy *torah* ; yea, I shall observe it with  
my whole heart" (verse 34).

"So shall I keep thy *torah* continually for ever and ever" (v.44).

"The proud had me greatly in derision: yet have I not declined from thy *torah* " (v.51).

"Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy *torah* " (v.53).

"I have remembered thy name, O LORD, in the night, and have kept thy *torah* " (v.55).

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"The bands of the wicked have robbed me: but I have not forgotten thy *torah* " (v.61).

"Their heart is as fat as grease; but I delight in thy *torah* " (v.70).

"The *torah* of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver" (v.72).

"Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy *torah* is my delight" (v.77).

"The proud have digged pits for me, which are not after thy *torah* " (v.85).

"Unless thy *torah* had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction" (v.92).

"O how love I thy *torah*! It is my meditation all the day" (v.97).

"My soul is continually in my hand: yet do I not forget thy *torah* " (v.109).

"I hate vain thoughts: but thy *torah* do I love" (v.113).

"It is time for thee, O LORD, to work: for they have made void thy *torah* " (v.126).

"Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy *torah* " (v.136).

"Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy *torah* is truth" (v.142).

"They draw nigh that follow after mischief: they are far from thy *torah* " (v.150).

"Consider mine affliction, and deliver me: for I do not forget thy *torah* " (v.153).

"I hate and abhor lying: but thy *torah* do I love" (v.163).

"Great peace have they that love thy *torah*, and nothing shall offend them" (v.165).

"I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD; and thy *torah* is my delight" (v.174).

The word *Torah*, meaning God's Law, is used 25 times in this very important Psalm of David -- 5 is the number of "grace." Five times five is grace multiplied by itself. God's *Torah* is the epitome of Grace, the very essence and quintessence and superlativeness of Grace magnified and exalted and multiplied.

David had a deep, abiding, passionate love for the Torah of God. He did not go "half way" in His devotion to the Torah. He loved it with all his heart and soul. And Scripture tells us that he was a "man after God's own heart" (Acts 14:22). Isn't it time we check up on our own attitudes toward the "Torah" of God? Remember, it is not those who give God "lip service" who count with Him, "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the DOERS of the law shall be justified" (Romans 2:13).

### *Human Customs and Traditions of Men*

The Jewish leaders during the time of Christ had apostatized to the extent that they persecuted, rejected, and delivered over to be crucified the very Messiah -- the Son of God, Jesus Christ of Nazareth -- a true Jew, who taught obedience to the Torah.

Jesus declared of the Torah: "Think not that I am come to destroy the Torah, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Torah, till all be fulfilled" (Matt.5:17-19). Does this sound like He came to abolish or do away with the laws of God -- the Torah? Not at all! Notice how *The New Testament in Contemporary English* puts this passage:

"Don't suppose for a minute that I have come to demolish the Scriptures -- either God's Law or the Prophets. I'm not here to demolish but to complete. I am going to put it all together, pull it all together in a vast panorama. God's Law is more real and lasting than the stars in the sky and the ground at your feet. Long after stars burn out and earth wears out, God's Law will be alive and working.

"Trivialize even the smallest item in God's Law and you will only have trivialized yourself. But take it seriously, show the way for others, and you will find honor in the kingdom" (Matt.5:17-19).

The Jews of Jesus' time professed to be followers of Moses and the Torah, but in truth they denied the very heart of the Torah -- which itself prophesied of the coming of Christ! Jesus said to them: "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). He added, "For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" (verses 46-47).

Moses indeed prophesied of Christ. God said to him, "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth;

and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of them" (Deut.18:18-19).

Jesus rebuked those of His generation, who added certain teachings to the law of Moses -- called "traditions of the elders" -- which contradicted the plain and simple intent and meaning of the Torah itself. For example, the Jewish religious leaders had added various stipulations concerning washing the hands before eating, and cleaning pots and pans, as signs of cleanliness (Matt.15:2-14). These were a burden to the people and turned true religion into a legalistic system in which "form" became more important than "substance."

During the time of Christ, the Pharisees were dominated by the school of Shammai, a very legalistic and oppressive group of self-righteous and hypocritical teachers. Jesus upbraided them severely for their hypocrisy and false teachings (Matt.23). However, He still acknowledged that they sat in "Moses' seat," and taught the law of God with authority (Matt.23:2-3). However, although Jesus and the apostles rebuked and corrected errors they found in the teachings of the Pharisees, they never rejected, or abrogated, or spoke evil of God's Law, the Torah!

Jesus plainly said that if we hope to enter the Kingdom of God, we must obey the Torah. A young rich man asked Him, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" Jesus answered him, "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, *keep the commandments*" -- *that is, OBEY THE TORAH!* (Matt.19:16-17). When the young man replied, "Which?" Jesus responded, "Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (vs.18-19). These were examples from the Ten Commandments, and the laws of God straight out of the books of Moses -- commonly known as the "Torah"!

Paul, the apostle sent to take the gospel to the Gentiles, also did not teach the Torah was abolished or done away. Instead, he wrote, "Do we then make void the law [Torah] through faith? God forbid: yea, we *ESTABLISH THE LAW [TORAH]*" (Rom.3:31).

As we have already noted, the apostle Paul himself -- the one many falsely accuse of doing away with the laws of God -- wrote in plain language, "For not the hearers of the law [Torah] are just before God, but the *DOERS OF THE LAW [TORAH]* shall be justified" (Rom.2:13).

Paul spoke very approvingly of the Law, or Torah, of God, in Romans 7, where he plainly said, "Wherefore the LAW [TORAH] is *holy*, and the commandment *holy, and just, and good*" (Rom.7:12). He added, "For we know that the LAW [Torah] is *spiritual*" (v.14).



However, the Law of God was never intended to be administered in a cruel or heartless way. When Cain murdered his brother Abel, God could have exacted the "death penalty" for the flagrant transgression. But instead, God sent him into exile, giving him a chance to think about the act he had committed -- a chance to reflect, meditate, come to true, heart-felt, genuine repentance. Cain, however, hardened his heart and persisted in sin. Eventually he himself was slain -- murdered -- and died a violent death. God is long-suffering to us, seeking and desiring that men and women come to true repentance, and quit kidding themselves they are truly Christian, converted, or righteous in God's sight. He is very patient, Peter wrote, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Pet.3:9). Jesus spoke of "judgment [justice], mercy, and faith" as the "weightier matters of the law" (Matt.23:23). Even so, we should lead our lives loving God's Law, the Torah, but also loving mercy, and justice, and faith, as we carry out the instructions of God's Torah, His way.

### *A New Look at the Torah*

Obviously, some people may *think* they are "Christ's," and may *think* they are "converted," when they are *STILL IN THEIR SINS!* Any professing "Christian" who is "anti-Torah," or has even one anti-Jewish, one anti-Law of God bone in his or her body IS SINNING AGAINST CHRIST!

It really is time we quit fooling around, and quit all the religious games of "pretense," and strutting around in arrogant peacock vanity, or acting like self-important pouter pigeons preening their feathers. It's high time we TRULY "earnestly contend for the faith which was ONCE delivered to the saints" almost some 2,000 years ago (Jude 3)! It is high time we beware of all those who "despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities" (Jude 8), even those who "speak evil of those things which they know [understand] not" (v.10) -- those who rail against the Jews and Judaism when they themselves suffer from delusions of grandeur, and are abysmally *IGNORANT!* The basic, fundamental teachings of Judaism are the prime directives of true Biblical faith and teaching. For example, Judaism teaches:

"How do mortals serve God? by imitating His ways -- 'as He is just and merciful so must you be just and merciful' -- and by absolute devotion, even to death.

'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your might, and with all your soul.'

And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you? Only that you fear the Lord your God, and walk in His ways, and love Him, and serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, keeping the commandments of the Lord, and His statutes, which I command you this day for your good . . ." (*Judaism*, Arthur Hertzberg, p.80-81).

Moses Luzatto (1707-1747), a Jewish poet and mystic, wrote a famous ethical tract, *Mesillat Yesdharim* ("Way of the Righteous." In it he declared:

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 (see *Judaism*, by Arthur Hertzberg, p.80-83, 1991 edition).

What is the purpose of the Torah? To the Jews, "Torah" means "Teaching and Commandment." It also means, in a broader sense, "Revelation" from God. It is more than just the "Laws" of God or a legal code. The first five books of Moses are known as "Torah," yet Genesis is primarily history and the life stories of God's people. Exodus is primarily the story of Israel's being delivered from Egyptian slavery and servitude. Law is only a relatively small -- but very vital -- portion of the whole. Thus "Torah" means much more than just "Law," although the word "Law" is generally used in the Bible as the single word used to translate "Torah."

Says Arthur Hertzberg, in *Judaism*:

"The Torah was given only as a means of purifying mortals' -- so runs a famous rabbinic dictum. It is not an impossible set of demands, meant for angels or a very few people of superior piety. Its wisdom and ordinances are the way of holiness for all mortals, even the most ordinary among them. Through obedience we resist the temptations that come to mislead us each and every day -- so [said] Rashi, Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac (1040-1105), the classic commentator on the Bible and Talmud . . ." (p.85).

Judaism understands and teaches the true principles of sin and repentance. Although few "Christians" really understand these principles, Judaism does. It teaches:

"*Sin is rebellion against God*, but more seriously yet, Judaism considers it the *debasement of man's proper nature*. Punishment is therefore not primarily retribution; *it is chastisement*, as a father chastises his children, to remind them of their proper dignity and character. Repentance is therefore in Hebrew *teshuvah*, returning, man's turning back to his truest nature" (p.251).

In the Jewish synagogue service, before the Torah is read -- the most important, vital part of the religious service -- a blessing is said by the congregation, as follows:

"Praised are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has chosen us from among all peoples by giving us His Torah. Praised are You, Lord who gives the Torah."

After the reading of the Torah -- the Word of God -- another blessing is said:

"Praised are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has given us the Torah of truth, planting within us life eternal. Praised are You, Lord who gives the Torah" (*Judaism*, p.314).

After the Torah Scroll is returned to the Ark, the following words are recited:

"Whenever the Ark was set down, Moses would say: Lord, may You dwell among the myriad families of the people Israel. Return, O Lord, to Your sanctuary, You and Your glorious Ark. Let Your *kohanim* (priests) be clothed in triumph. Let your faithful sing for joy. For the sake of David, Your servant, do not reject Your anointed.

Precious teaching do I give you:  
 Never forsake My Torah.  
 It is a tree of life for those who grasp it,  
 and all who uphold it are blessed.  
 Its ways are pleasantness, and all its paths are peace.  
 Help us turn to You, and we shall return.  
 Renew our lives as in the days of old" (*ibid.*).

The Torah begins with the five books of Moses. But, by extension, it includes the entire Old Testament -- the Prophets and Writings -- the entire "Tanakh." And, by further extension, after the coming of the Messiah, One greater than Moses, and His disciples, the Torah of God was increased by the inspired writings of the apostles themselves -- the books of the New Testament!

Thus, in truth, the "Torah" of God is the *BIBLICAL REVELATION OF GOD!* The entire Word of God constitutes the true "Torah," today - - from Genesis to Revelation! And in addition to the "written" Torah, God has given us the "Oral" Torah, to help us interpret and put into practice the written Word of God.

What about you? What is YOUR attitude toward the Law and Word of God -- the *TORAH*? Do you love it? Do you look upon it as worth more than hid treasures of silver and gold? Do you *TREASURE* it, embrace it, and treat it tenderly, lovingly, with fond and deep affection and longing, as you would a husband or wife? The whole Torah or Word of God is the very character and expression of Jesus Christ, Yeshua the Messiah, written down! He is the very Embodiment of the Torah! If we truly love Him, and God the Father, then we *MUST* love the Torah!

In its broadest sense, the "Torah" includes all the writings of God's inspired servants, of every age, in which *the Holy Spirit* inspired the counsel, words, and thoughts expressed. It includes the inspired elements of the "Oral Law" as well as the written Scriptures. What should our attitude be towards the Torah -- the revelation -- of God? The apostle Paul wrote, "STUDY [Torah] to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Tim.2:15). David wrote of the righteous man, "But his delight is in the law (Torah) of the LORD; and in his law (Torah) doth he meditate day and night" (Psalm 1:2).

Your attitude towards the Torah, the Law of God, is very significant: It reveals your attitude toward God Himself, and toward Jesus Christ the Messiah, who are the perfect expression of the Torah. What *is* your attitude?