

WHAT WAS THE APOSTLE PAUL'S VIEW OF THE TORAH-LAW?

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INTRODUCTION

Shouldn't knowing the heart of our Heavenly Father and Creator be the preeminent passion and pursuit of every born-from-above Believer? What is the heart, mind, will and character of YHWH Elohim? The answer to this question is surprisingly simple — in fact, one word: T-O-R-A-H!

Understanding *Torah* is crucial to understanding all of Scripture which is the very Word of Elohim to mankind. Understanding *Torah* is the key to having a right, blessed and eternal relationship with our Creator.

Furthermore, understanding *Torah* is essential if one is to understand the Hebrew roots of the Christian faith, for a love and comprehension of Torah is to grasp with the heart and mind the very fabric, foundation and bedrock of the Apostolic Writings, Messianic Scriptures or Brit Chadashah, commonly referred to in Christian circles as the “New Testament.”

Since the Apostle Paul (Rabbi Sha'ul) wrote more of the Apostolic Writings than any other first-century writer and since he is championed by Christianity as laying the foundation for Christian theology it is essential to understand his perspective regarding the Torah. This is what we will explore below.

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THE WORD *LAW* AS USED *BY THE APOSTLE PAUL*?

The word *law* as used in the Apostolic Writings (New Testament) is equivalent to the Hebrew word for law which is *Torah* (*Strong's Concordance* Hebrew #8451) which literally means *teaching, instructions, precepts*. The Greek word for *law* as used in the Apostolic Writings (NT) is *nomos* which in the Septuagint (the third century B.C. Greek translation of the Tanakh [“Old Testament” Scriptures]) is used in place of the Hebrew word *Torah*. Therefore, we know that the Jewish scholars who translated the Tanakh (OT) into the Greek language considered the words *Nomos* and *Torah* to be equivalent. Also, contextually, in the Apostolic Writings (NT), we can see that the word *law* means *Torah*. To the Messianic Jews who wrote the entire “New Testament” when the Greek word *nomos* is used this is not a reference to Roman, Greek or Babylonian law, but to the biblical Hebrew law or the Torah, or Torah-law of Moses.

Let us not forget that the Bible was written, for the most part, if not totally, in the Hebrew (or Aramaic) language by Hebrew people who spoke Hebrew, lived in a Hebrew culture, practiced the Hebrew religion and worshipped and served YHWH Elohim, the God of the Hebrews. What defined the Israelites' spiritual relationship to their God — YHWH Elohim? It was the Torah which by definition and to the Hebrew mindset of the first-century referred specifically to the instructions in righteousness of Elohim as delivered through his servant and prophet Moses to his people, the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Israel), known as Israelites. The Torah is recorded in what is commonly called the Books of the Law, the Books of Moses, the Pentateuch or the Chumash, or what we would call the first five books of the Hebrew Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. These books, called the Torah, or instructions in righteousness of Elohim, were delivered word-for-word and letter-for-letter from the very mouth of Elohim to Moses and the Hebrew Children of Israel and forms the foundation for the entire Bible: both sections which Christians commonly call the “Old Testament” or Hebrew Scriptures and the “New Testament” or Apostolic Writings.

For the people of Israel in Yeshua's day, including the Apostles who, under the inspiration of the Ruach HaKodesh (Spirit of Elohim) the Torah of Elohim, given through Elohim's servant Moses, formed the central teaching document that regulated and governed every aspect of life, culture, family relationship, marriage, society, religion and relationship with surrounding nations. Therefore, *law* for them was *Torah*. Nothing more nor less.

Keep in mind that the concept of Torah, to the Hebrew mind, did not have the pejorative connotation that the term *law* has to the traditional Christian mindset who tends to read a legalistic bias into the word *law* when reading the Apostolic Writings (NT).

HOW DID PAUL VIEW THE TORAH (“LAW”)?

In answering this question let us allow Rabbi Paul to speak for himself in order to establish his predisposition with regard to the Torah-law. Was he a proponent or opponent of it? Several Scriptural quotations from his own pen should suffice in answering this question:

- Rom. 7:12 Wherefore the law [Torah] is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.
- Rom. 7:14 For we know that the law [Torah] is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.
- Rom. 7:22 For I delight in the law [Torah] of Elohim after the inward man...
- Rom. 6:1-2 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin [i.e., violation of the laws/Torah of YHWH, see 1 Jn. 3:4], that grace may abound? Elohim forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?
- Rom. 3:31 Do we then make void the law through faith? Elohim forbid: yea, we establish the law. (Romans was written in about A.D. 56)
- 1 Tim. 1:8 But we know that the law [Torah] is good, if a man use it lawfully... (First Timothy was written just before Paul's martyrdom in about A.D. 66)
- Gal. 2:17 But if, while we seek to be justified by Messiah, we ourselves also are found sinners [i.e., violators of the law/Torah], is therefore Messiah the minister of sin [lawlessness/Torahlessness]? Elohim forbid. (Galatians was written between A.D. 55 to 56)

Toward the end of Paul's life and ministry when, according to Christian theology, Paul was supposed to have already liberated the first-century believers from the “shackles and bondage” of the law/Torah, yet in the Book of Acts we read the following:

- Acts 20:20-24 And when they heard it, they glorified YHWH, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe [in Yeshua the Messiah]; and they are all zealous of the law [Torah]: And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. What is it therefore? The multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come. Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them; them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law [Torah]. (Written in about A.D. 58 to 60)
- Acts 25: 8 While he answered for himself, neither against the law [Torah] of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all. (Paul made this statement in a court of law about A.D. 62.)
- Acts 28:17 And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, [i.e., the Torah] yet

was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. (Written about AD 63)

To summarize Paul's lifelong devotion to the Torah Dr. Brad Young, a Christian Hebrew roots scholar writes in his book, *Paul the Jewish Theologian*, “The Hebrew Scriptures are the foundation of his teachings. In Galatians 5:3 he writes, ‘I testify again to every man who receives circumcision that he is bound to keep the whole law.’ Was Paul circumcised? Did he ever stop obeying the teachings of Torah? This verse in Galatians must be recognized for its far-reaching implications. It suggests that Paul continued to live an observant life even after his experience on the road to Damascus. Though he became all things to all people so that he might win them for the Lord (1 Cor. 9:19-23), this does not mean that he stopped living an observant life. He would not rob a bank to win a bank robber or commit murder to convince a murderer. Paul was a man of integrity” (pp. 19-20).

Young goes on to say that, “Paul did not cancel the law. In Galatians he is not opposed to the observance of Torah. On the contrary, he upholds the teachings of Torah” (*Ibid.* p. 21).

For a fuller treatment of this subject see my article on our website entitled: *Rabbi Sha'ul (Paul): An Orthodox, Torah-Obedient, Messianic Jewish Rabbi*.

PAUL SAYS THE TORAH IS HOLY, JUST AND GOOD

In Romans 7:12 Paul states, “For we know that the law [Torah] is spiritual.” As renowned Messianic Jewish scholar Dr. David Stern, the translator of the *Complete Jewish Bible* states in his *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, Those who think Paul sought an escape from the Jewish law in order to make Christianity easy for pagan converts must find this verse difficult. It proves that Paul neither had a non-Jewish view of the Law nor desired to abrogate (do away with) it. This verse witnesses to Paul's lifelong high regard for the Torah, which corresponds to his lifelong observance of it (See Acts 21:20-24; 25:8; 28:17). This attitude would have been with him from his youth, since his parents were Pharisees (Acts 23:6); it would have been strengthened by his studies with Rabbi Gamliel (Acts 22:3); and there is no reason to suppose that his coming to faith in Yeshua—who did not come to abolish the Torah (Matt. 5:17)—would have changed it. God's holy Torah for holy living does not change. Why? Because God himself does not change (Mal. 3:6) and God's standards for and definition of holiness do not change. Moreover, this verse is not alone: verses 10, 14, 16, 22 and 8:2, 4, 7-8 all show that Sha'ul had a high regard for the Torah (p. 378).

Young corroborates this viewpoint. He writes, “[A]s a Pharisee, Paul viewed Torah as giving divine revelation for holy living. Paul learned the teachings of Torah in order to understand the mystery of God and to revere him by entering into a life of obedience. The apostle loved the Hebrew Scriptures and lived his life in accordance with the moral and spiritual values expressed in them” (*Paul the Jewish Theologian*, p. 22).

WAS PAUL BOTH *FOR* AND *AGAINST* THE TORAH (“LAW”)?

If we believe, at face value, the above-cited passages, can there be any doubt that Paul was consistent in his theology? He did not keep Torah and speak positively toward it, and all at the same time fail to live it and teach against it. Either he kept it or he didn't. Either he taught that it was valid or he did not. He did not waffle back and forth between Torah obedience and Torahlessness. Quite to the contrary, he warned that in the last days spiritual delusion would come upon the saints of YHWH, that they would fall away from the truth of Scripture (i.e., Torah literally meaning *YHWH's instructions, teachings, precepts in righteousness*) and turn to a Torahless Gospel message which he refers to as the “mystery of iniquity [the Greek word is *anomia* which means *without Torah*]” which would be championed by the very man of sin himself (2 Thes. 2:1-12).

THE WHOLE OF THE TORAH SUMMED UP IN ONE SENTENCE

This we find in Leviticus 19:18 which Paul also used in this way in Romans 13:8-10. “Love does not do harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fullness of the Torah.” Judaism contains a number of eptitomes

of Torah; one of the best-known passages naming several of them is in the Talmud: “Rabbi Simlai said, ‘613 commandments were given to Moses—365 negative mitzvot (commandments), the same as the number of days in the year, and 248 positive mitzvot, the same as the number of parts in a man's body. David came and reduced them to eleven (Psalm 15), Isaiah to six (Isaiah 33:15), Micah to three (Micah 6:8), Isaiah again to two—“Observe and do righteousness” (Isaiah 56:1). Then Amos came and reduced them to one, “Seek me and live” (Amos 5:4)—as did Habakkuk, “The righteous one will live by his trusting [or by faith] (Habakkuk 2:4)” (Makkot 23b–24a, abridged) (*ibid.* p. 565).

PURPOSE OF TORAH

The purpose of the Torah is to show man how to walk in right relationship (or righteousness) with his Creator (love YHWH with all your heart, soul, mind and strength [Deut. 6:5; Mk. 12:30] and his neighbor (love your neighbor as yourself [Lev. 19:18; Mk. 12:30]). Once one is saved by grace through faith (See my teaching article on our website entitled: *The Abrahamic Covenant: The Covenant of Salvation*) Torah helps show man how to walk in the straight and narrow path which leads to blessings and life and avoidance of curses (Deut. 30:15; 32:47). The Torah shows man how to avoid sin (which is the violation of YHWH's Torah-commandments, 1 Jn. 3:4) which is walking contrary to YHWH's instructions in righteousness which are for our blessing and benefit.

The Torah *does not* set an impossible standard by which to live. We must ask ourselves, would a righteous and just Creator and a loving Heavenly Father give to his chosen people and children a set of standards that were humanly impossible to perform, then curse them for their inability to meet these standards? Of course not. Rather, the Torah sets a standard of faith, trusting in Elohim, and of following its system of repentance and sacrifice for obtaining forgiveness from Elohim and restoring a condition of being considered righteous in his sight. After all, Moses, the human instrument through which YHWH revealed the Torah to the Children of Israel states in Deut. 30:11-14:

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

Paul quotes this very passage in Romans 10:6-8 where he relates the written Torah to Yeshua, the Living Torah or Word of Elohim incarnate (in the flesh) (See Jn. 1:1,14). He shows that they are one in the same and that Messiah Yeshua came to live and reveal to us the righteousness of the Torah-law (v. 4) that is available to us if we will but have a heartfelt faith in him (vv. 4, 9-10) and allow him to live out his righteousness in us through the empowering work of the Spirit of Elohim in us. In verses 11 through 21 Paul goes on to relate this very truth to being the central message of the Gospel that Isaiah prophesied (Isa. 52:7) would be preached to redeem both houses of Israel to Yeshua their Messiah.

THREE MISCONCEPTIONS THAT MANY CHRISTIANS HAVE ABOUT THE TORAH

David Stern, a Messianic Jew and translator of the *Complete Jewish Bible* in his *Jewish New Testament Commentary* (pp. 344-345) lists several misconceptions that Christians have about the Torah and believe that Paul taught. Here is a synopsis of what Stern writes:

- MISCONCEPTION #1 — *No one will be considered righteous by Elohim on the grounds of doing the good works the Torah requires.*

This concept is wrong because the most important good work the Torah requires is trusting Elohim, loving him with all one's heart and soul and strength (Mk. 12:28-30). Who can read the Torah without seeing this? (The problem is that most who believe this probably have not read the Torah, or if so, not with an open, truth-seeking heart and mind.) Furthermore, Paul, in Romans 10:5 (quoting Lev. 18:5) quotes with approval Moses' pronouncement that “the person who does

these things,” who performs righteous deeds commanded by the Torah, “will attain life through them.” Surely attaining life and being considered righteous (i.e. being justified, or obtaining right standing before Elohim) by Elohim are equivalent.

- MISCONCEPTION #2 — *No one will be considered righteous by Elohim on the ground of doing the good works the Torah requires, because no one is able to live up to the Torah's demands (Yeshua excepted).*

Where in any of Paul's writings, in Yeshua's teachings or anywhere in Torah or the rest of Scripture does it speak of human inability to live Torah? Quite the contrary, Moses himself says that Torah was given to be obeyed, and Elohim expected people to obey it: “This commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it beyond your grasp...The word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, to do it” (Deut. 30:11-14) Sha'ul quotes this in Romans 10:6-8. Furthermore, what kind of Creator would demand that his creation live up to a moral and spiritual standard/code of conduct/a law that he knew was impossible for them to keep, and then curse them for not doing it? An Elohim of justice and love? True, the people fell short of keeping the Torah; they sinned. But the Torah itself includes a procedure for dealing with sins. This was the purpose of the sacrificial system. This system offered forgiveness to a repentant person who brought the required sacrifice.

- MISCONCEPTION #3 — *No one will be considered righteous by Elohim on the ground of the bad works the Torah requires.*

This concept supposes that the Torah requires prideful, self-justifying, legalistic rule-following. How could this be when Sha'ul calls the Torah holy, just and good? (Rom. 7:12) Many Christians have the idea that the Torah somehow is an inferior product of Elohim, and that Messiah and the Apostolic Writings (NT) is in some sense superior to the Torah, and that makes the Torah bad. Such an interpretation impugns the character of Elohim. This is tantamount to the second-century heresy of Marcion who regarded the “Old Testament” and “OT” God as inferior to the “New Testament” and “NT” Elohim. This stemmed from the Platonic (pagan) concept of dualism which is at the base of many of the world's religions to this day.

WHAT DOES THE TERM “WORKS OF THE TORAH/LAW” MEAN?

The term *works of the law* (for a full treatment of this subject see my teaching article on our website entitled: *What Does the Term "Works of the Law" Mean?*) as found in Rabbi Paul's writings has almost always been misunderstood and made the underpinning of most Christian theology which should be properly termed as anti-Torah (anti-law) or anti-nomian theology which originally stemmed (in the early to mid second-century A.D.) from anti-semitism in the early church (See my teaching article on our website entitled: *From A.D. 70 to A.D 135 – How the Church Became Divorced From Its Hebraic Roots*). The word *Nomos (law)* is correctly taken by most Scriptural theologians to mean the Jewish Law, the Law of Moses, i.e. the Torah. The problem arises when readers of the Apostolic Writings do not understand the correct definition of the word *Torah*, nor understand its purpose and intent and how that relates to Believers now, nor understand the religious or social context .

In every instance where Paul uses the term *works of [the] law* in his writings (Rom. 3:27; 9:32; Gal. 2:16; 3:2; 3:5; 3:10) he is discussing how one is justified or how one's sins are remitted or how one is declared righteous by YHWH (i.e. saved).

What is the scriptural definition of *justification*? It is the process by which sinful humans beings are made acceptable to a holy Elohim. Justification is by grace unlike all the other religions of the world which are works based (Rom. 3:24). Elohim extends the grace, and it is man's responsibility to exercise believing faith and receive it. It is not based on man's works, and he can neither earn it nor keep it through his own human efforts (Eph. 2:8-10).

Paul says that through Yeshua Elohim is reconciling the world to himself not imputing their sins (violation of Torah) to them (2 Cor. 5:19). This reconciling covers all our past sins (Rom. 3:25) which we

have confessed, repented of and turned away from (Ps. 32:5; Prov. 28:13; 1 Jn. 1:9).

When Elohim justifies, he charges the sin of man to Yeshua, the Savior and Redeemer (2 Cor. 5:21). Justification is based on the righteous, Torah-obedient life of Yeshua and is a free gift to men and results in eternal life (Rom. 3:21).

Justification saves us from the wrath of Elohim (Rom. 5:9) against sin (violation of Torah - 1 Jn. 3:4) and results in our being at peace with him (Rom. 5:1) and we now have access to his grace (Rom. 5:2).

The word *justify* according to *Webster's Dictionary* means “to show to be just, right; to free from blame or guilt.”

Stern addresses this same thing in his *Jewish New Testament Commentary*. Stern says about Paul's usage of the term *works of [the] law* that it “means not deeds done in virtue of following the Torah in the way God intended, but deeds done in consequence of perverting the Torah into a set of rules which, it is presumed, can be obeyed mechanically, automatically, *legalistically*, without faith, without having to trust God, without having love for God and man, and without being empowered by the Holy Spirit” (Stern's comment on Gal. 2:16, p. 537). He goes on to explain why in his translation of the “New Testament” he substitutes the phrase *legalistic observance of Torah commands* for *works of [the] law*. To wit, let's see how he translates Galatians 2:16: “Even so, we have come to realize that a person is not declared righteous by God on the ground of his legalistic observance of *Torah* commands, but through the Messiah Yeshua's trusting faithfulness. Therefore, we too have put our trust in Messiah Yeshua and become faithful to him, in order that we might be declared righteous on the ground of Messiah's trusting faithfulness and not on the ground of our legalistic observance of *Torah* commands. For on the ground of legalistic observance of *Torah* commands, no one will be declared righteous” (*Complete Jewish Bible*).

WHAT DOES THE TERM “UNDER THE LAW” MEAN?

This is a legal phrase that Paul uses ten times in his writings (Rom. 3:19; 6:14,15; 1 Cor. 9:20,21; Gal. 3:23; 4:4,5; 5:18). Let's quickly analyze two of the passages of Scripture where Paul uses the term *under the law* to see exactly what he meant.

Rom. 3:19, “Under [the] Torah-law... all the world guilty before Elohim” Paul uses the term “under [the] law” twelve times in his writings (see my article entitled, *What Does the Term “Under the Law” Mean?* available on our website). In this case he is referring to those who are under the penalty for violating the Torah (the penalty of which is death, Rom. 6:23; 1 Jn. 3:4). This we know, for he speaks of guilt in the latter half of this verse: “and all the world may become guilty [subject to the judgment of Elohim] before Elohim.” The bottom line of what Paul is saying here is that all humans are guilty before Elohim, both Jews and Gentiles. This is the point he is driving at. Paul is breaking up the fallow ground of men's hearts, showing them their sinfulness (unrighteousness), that they have violated the righteous standards of Elohim's (the Torah) and in this condition need a Redeemer (a message Paul “plugs” in latter in the book of Romans). It is Paul's mission to bring the two opposing sides (Jew and Gentile) together, to show them their common state of sinfulness and their common need for Yeshua, the Redeemer, and their common need to dwell together in Torah-community as the Body of Believers in Yeshua. This is indeed the tall order to which Paul dedicated his life's efforts and which he terms “the ministry of reconciliation” to which he has been called (2 Cor. 5:18).

Rom. 6:14, “For you are not under [*the* is not in the Greek] law, but under grace: David Stern in his *Complete Jewish New Testament* translation translates it this way, “You are not under legalism but under grace.” Stern goes on to define *legalism* as a perversion of the Torah into a system of rules for earning God's praise without trusting, loving or communing with God the Giver of the Torah. *Under* which in the Greek is the word *upo* and means *controlled by, in subjection to* and opens the path to the slavery metaphor in the following verses. We are slaves to whom we serve: sin which leads to death, or the righteousness yoke of Yeshua which leads to blessings and life. Stern continues: God's people are to live *en (in)* or *within the framework* of Torah (see 2:12), not *upo*

or *in legalistic subjection* to it. God's people, the people who are in trust and in relationship with him, are and always have been under grace and under Torah (a gracious subjection), but never under legalism (a harsh subjection) (*Jewish New Testament Commentary* by David Stern, p. 374).

WHAT DOES THE TERM "CURSE OF THE LAW" MEAN?

Paul uses this term twice in his writings:

Gal. 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

Gal. 3:13 Messiah hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.

Is Paul here stating that the Torah-law is a curse? This is the traditional view held by many Christian Believers. If this is the reader's belief then my question for you is this: How can that which by definition means "the instructions, teachings and precepts of righteousness" which came from lips of YHWH and define the very character, nature, mind and will of the Creator and was given to the people of YHWH for their blessing be a curse? How can that which was designed to bring blessings and life to YHWH's chosen people, if followed, be a curse (Deut. 30:15; 32:47)? In Deut. 28 YHWH tells his people that if they would follow his Torah they would be blessed, but that if they disobeyed it they would be cursed (v. 15). Clearly, Scripture states emphatically that obedience to YHWH's Torah-law instructions brings a blessing, while disobedience brings a curse.

Is Paul, the orthodox Jewish rabbi, who still claims to be a Pharisee 22 years after his conversion (Acts 26:5; Eph. 3:5) now calling the Torah-law of YHWH a curse and contradicting what he states elsewhere in his writings when he calls the Torah-law, "good" (Rom. 7:12)? Or is it more likely that many have misinterpreted what Paul said and have set his statements at odds to the rest of Scripture? This writer believes that Scripture does not contradict itself, that the writers of Scripture were consistent in their theologies and that it is Christianity in divorcing itself from its Hebrew and Jewish pro-Torah roots that has misinterpreted Paul's statements. This, truthfully is yet another example of anti-Torah Christian interpretations for which there is no biblical basis in truth or logic when the full counsel of YHWH's Word is considered.

What Paul is clearly stating in Gal. 3:10 is that those who attempt to be justified (redeemed and saved) by keeping YHWH's Torah-commands perfectly will fail since no one can do this. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of YHWH" (Rom. 3:23). Perfect Torah obedience IS NOT how we are saved. Men are saved by grace through faith as was Abraham (See my teaching article available on our website entitled: *The Abrahamic Covenant: The Covenant of Salvation*). The result or fruits of our redemption or salvation is Torah obedience. The results of Torah-obedience IS NOT salvation. It is very important to understand this. The method of salvation (by grace through faith leading to good works) is the Biblical model from the very beginning and has never changed. Paul is simply defending the truth of Scripture. He is not originating a new doctrine on how to be saved.

In Gal. 3:13 Paul says that Yeshua has redeemed us from the curse of the law. Since keeping the Torah-law brings a blessing, what then is the curse? Violating the Torah-law of YHWH. Scripture states that the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23) and that sin is the violation of the Torah-law (1 Jn. 3:4) and the soul that sins shall die (Ezek. 18:4). Death (eternal separation from YHWH) is the ultimate curse of the law and Paul states in Gal. 3:13 that Yeshua redeemed us from the death penalty due to our sin (i.e., breaking the Torah) at the cross because he was the only one to have ever lived a sinless life. He took that curse or penalty upon himself for us so that we wouldn't have to bear it. The Torah-law of Elohim is not the curse. Our breaking it brings a curse upon us. The law of gravity is not a curse. Without gravity we would all float uncontrollably heavenward into outer space. Thanks to this law our feet stay firmly planted on the ground. But jump off a cliff and see what happens when one breaks that law. Yet no one blames gravity when someone dies from falling. Why then should we blame YHWH's Torah-law? It is simple logic.

IS THE TORAH SINFUL IN THAT IT IDENTIFIES WHAT SIN IS?

In Romans 3:20, 5:13, 20 Paul indicates that Torah makes people sin. Is it warranted, therefore, to jump to the conclusion that Torah itself is sin or that it's sinful? Simple logic should reveal the answer to this question. How can that which Paul refers to as "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12) be sinful? How can that which is designed to bring life (Deut. 32:47) be sinful, when sin leads to death (Rom. 6:23; Ezek. 18:4)? How can that which is defined as the Word of Elohim (Mt. 4:4) be sinful? For that Word to be sinful would mean that Yeshua, the Word of Elohim made flesh (Jn. 1:1,14) is sinful. To believe this is utter blasphemy!

Indeed, in Romans 5:20 Paul seems to indict the Torah-law for causing people to sin. But let us look at this logically. Because there is a speed limit law on the freeway do motorists consider that law evil, or for their own protection and safety? How can that which is designed to protect us and keep us driving safely on the freeway safely, or keep us on the path of life in spiritual safety and security be deemed as evil? Unquestionably, the Torah is a double-edged sword reflecting the character of YHWH, it's Giver and Originator. Is YHWH deemed unjust and sinful because he will hold sinners accountable for their actions and punish them accordingly? Likewise, if one violates Torah and reaps the resulting consequences on ones action (the curses outlined in the Torah) does that make the Torah sinful, or the sinner sinful? If you as a loving parent tell your child not to run out into the street and your child disobeys you and gets hurt who is the sinner here? Similarly to call our Heavenly Father's instructions to us sinful, or the cause of our sin is to call YHWH the originator of sin. Again, this is blasphemy!

In defense of Torah and contrary to what some in Christian circles have been taught, Young states, "Torah is neither the problem nor its solution. The problem is sin...Sin does not cancel the law. Torah reveals the sin by exposing human unrighteousness in light of divine holiness. It reveals both the sacred and the profane" (*Paul the Jewish Theologian*, p. 91).

DOES PAUL TEACH THAT MESSIAH IS THE END OF THE LAW/TORAH?

Romans 10:4-5—Trust in God—as opposed to self-effort, legalism, and mechanical obedience to rules—is the route to the righteousness which the Torah itself not only requires but offers. Therefore, the goal at which Torah aims is acknowledging and trusting in the Messiah who offers on the ground of trusting faith the very righteousness they are seeking and this occurs through our union with him spiritually—through his living in our lives by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The term *end of the law* as rendered in the KJV is a misleading and ambiguous translation. Most other modern Bible version have translated this verse in a similar anti-Torah manner, also, leading one to the conclusion that the law has been abrogated. The word *end* is the Greek word *telos* which in 37 out of 42 times in which it is used in the Apostolic Writings means *aim, purpose, goal* toward which something which is moving is directed. It also means the *outcome, result, consummation, last part* of a process not obviously directed and which may or may not be terminated. David Stern comments, that it therefore follows, Paul says, that a person who has the trust in Elohim which the Torah itself requires will—precisely because he has this trust, which forms the basic ground of all obedience to the Torah—understand and respond to the Gospel by also trusting in Yeshua. It is in this way and only in this way that he will be deemed righteous in the sight of the Elohim he wants to serve and whose Torah he wants to obey (*ibid.* p. 396). Only by believing in Yeshua will he be able to obey Torah.

Let us not forget that Yeshua is the Living Torah. It is he (in his preincarnate state—See Acts 7:38; 1 Cor. 10:4; Jn. 1:1,14; Rev. 19:13) who gave the written Torah on Mt. Sinai and it is he with whom the Israelites entered into state of betrothal (ketubah) relationship. In the wilderness he tabernacled with/or over them. Now, Messiah Yeshua is not only Emmanuel—El With Us—but now he is *in* us and we are in him by the power of the Set Apart Spirit through the miracle of the new birth. This was the aim, goal or end result of the Torah which Yeshua came to fulfil: to make provision for us to be able to have a new heart of flesh (Jer. 31:31-33) where the Torah would be written in our hearts. Therefore, one would be able to obey Torah from an inward heart motivation of love and trusting faith, and not just through an outward mechanical heart-of-stone orientation.

CONCLUSION TO THE MATTER

The writings of Paul have been a source of great controversy for nearly two thousand years. Even his own peers had difficulty understanding his teachings and stated that his writings were “hard to be understood” and that those unlearned in the Scriptures would twist to their own destruction (2 Pet. 16). Christian scholars have debated about Paul's seemingly ambivalent view of the Torah-law. They have been hard-pressed to rationally explain Paul's supposed waffling on what he taught and practiced: one moment he seems to be advocating adherence to the Torah, while other times he seems to be abrogating it. Human nature being indigenously rebellious against YHWH's Torah-commands (Rom. 8:7) and incited in that course by Satan, the Adversary, at the very beginning at the Tree of Knowledge, is it no wonder that theologians have erred on the side of carnal convenience in attributing to Paul anti-Torah theology?

Yet a careful analysis of Paul's writings, of which this paper is but a brief introduction that will hopefully spur the reader on to deeper study, one can see that Paul was neither capricious nor schizophrenic theologically. On the contrary, his teachings with regard to the Torah-law were totally consistent with the whole counsel of YHWH's Word. For him, Torah-commands of YHWH were “holy, just and good” (Rom. 7:12) and the idea of grace negating Torah obedience was unthinkable to Paul and he stated so in the strongest possible terms (Rom. 3:31; 6:2,15; 7:7,13; Gal. 3:21). To say otherwise is to level the charge of double standards, changeableness, inconsistency and downright contradiction to the Ruach HaKodesh (Set-Apart Spirit), the One who, as the agency of YHWH Elohim, inspired the writing of the Scriptures. Again, this is blasphemy!

In his book *They Loved the Torah – What Yeshua's First Disciples Really Thought About the Law*, Messianic Jewish Rabbi Dr. David Friedman after outlining Paul's Torah-observant lifestyle as chronicled in the book of Acts writes, “The historic dignity of Rabbi Sha'ul can only be upheld if he is seen as a Torah-observant rabbi. Any other view casts doubts on the statements he made about himself, and on the truth of Luke's writings... Attempts at portraying Sha'ul as abandoning the Torah make Sha'ul a hypocrite and a liar at worst, and an inconsistent person at best.

“Sha'ul remained a Torah-observant rabbi after he came to believe in Yeshua as the Messiah. Understanding this truth can help us interpret the writings of Sha'ul They do not contradict how he lived. This fact should help us to see Sha'ul with new eyes, for he loved the Torah and did not allow for its cancellation. In fact, as Yeshua, he fought for its correct understanding and use” (p.57).

As one Bible commentator astutely notes, If one keeps in mind that Paul had nothing but bad to say for the sin of perverting the Torah into legalism, and nothing but good to say for the Torah itself, then the supposed contradictions in this view of the Torah will vanish. Instead of being the villain—from the Jewish perspective—who destroyed the backbone of Judaism and led Jews astray (or —from the Christian perspective—the hero who “set them free” from the law), Paul becomes the most authentic expositor of Torah that the Jewish people have ever had, apart from the Messiah Yeshua himself.”