

What was Yeshua's View of the Torah?

A Study of the Sermon On the Mount

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Understand the Bible in Its Proper Context

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 YHVH Elohim, the God of the Hebrews. What defined the Israelites' spiritual relationship to their God—YHVH Elohim? It was the Torah, a Hebrew word that literally means “the teachings, precepts or 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 to Moses and the Hebrew Children of Israel and forms the foundation for the entire Bible: both sections, the former and latter covenants referred to in Christian circles as the Old Testament (i.e., Hebrew Scriptures) and the New Testament (i.e., Apostolic Scriptures). For the people of Israel in Yeshua's day, 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 its relationship with surrounding nations.

The Torah: Central Teaching Document for Israel and Messiah Yeshua

If the Torah is the central teaching document around which the nation and people of Israel, including the writers of the Bible, revolved, then what did the long awaited Messiah of Israel think of the Torah? After all, the Jewish rabbis and sages for hundreds of years had believed and taught that the Messiah would be the ultimate expositor of the Torah, that he would answer all of their unanswered questions about the Torah, and that he would be a righteous Torah-observant and Torah-teaching king who would rule the nation of Israel, like King David, and bring the nation into a one thousand year era of prosperity and peace called the Messianic Age (i.e., the Millennium).

Did that Messiah, who we know to be Yeshua (Jesus), uphold or abolish the Torah of Elohim given to Israel? How did he view the Torah? What did he teach his disciples and followers about the Torah? These are very important questions with which each of us must deal, for if we claim to be followers of Yeshua the Messiah (or Jesus Christ) and if you call yourself a “Christian,” which literally means “a little Christ,” hadn't you better know what he thought of the Torah so that you can line yourself up with your own namesake?

Let us take an exploratory journey through the pages of the Sermon on the Mount. Let us look at the red-letter portions of this sermon to see what Yeshua (Jesus) said about the Torah. Let us not read meanings or preconceived notions into his words, but let us look at the words for what they literally say. Let us be teachable, open-minded and have open hearts to receive the words of truth and life from Scripture. **As believers in Yeshua, his teachings and actions should be our model of how to think, act and speak— how to live our lives.**

Did Yeshua's “Fulfilling” the Torah-Law Annul It?—An Analysis of the “Sermon on the Mount”

The “Sermon on the Mount,” as recorded in Matthew 5:1 through 7:29, is the most famous and longest teaching of Yeshua recorded in the gospels. This sermon was a teaching primarily for his disciples (Matt 5:1) and much of it is an exposition on his viewpoint toward the Torah-law given to Moses from YHVH, for very early in this sermon

Yeshua addresses the subject of the Torah-law. Let us read what he said in Matthew 5:15,

Think not that I am come to destroy the Torah-law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

Let's critically analyze this key biblical quotation of Yeshua where he reveals, quite forthrightly, his official position toward and Messianic mission regarding the Torah-law of YHVH.

First, Yeshua mentions two of the three subdivisions of the Hebrew Scriptures in this passage: the Law or *Torah* and the Prophets or *Neviim*. The Jews have traditionally subdivided the Hebrew Scriptures into three sections: the Torah, Prophets and the Writings. We see Yeshua referring to this threefold subdivision in Luke 24:44. In fact, the Jews of today do not refer to their Hebrew Scriptures by the Christian term of "Old Testament," but rather by the Hebrew word *TaNakh*, which is an acronym representing this threefold division. The *T* in Tanakh stands for the Torah or the first five books of the Bible, the *N* stands for *Neviim* or the prophetic writings in the Hebrew Scriptures, while the *K* stands for the Hebrew word *Ketuvim*, which means *Writings* and includes the book Psalms, Proverbs, Job and others.

Next let us note that Yeshua says, using the imperative or command verbal form, "Think not that I am come to destroy the Torah-law ..." (emphasis added). It should stand to reason that when the Son of Elohim himself, the one who was with Elohim in the beginning, who was Elohim, and who was the Word of Elohim made flesh (John 1:1,14) commanded us to "Think not ..." that we should take notice of what he was commanding us to "think not" about. He said, "Think not that I came to destroy [throw down, bring to naught, to dissolve, to subvert or overthrow] the Torah." Yes, this is exactly what the word "destroy" means. Do not take our word for it, but look it up for yourself. It is *Strong's Concordance* Greek dictionary number 2647. Any Greek lexicon, concordance or word dictionary will verify the meaning of this word. Yeshua said, "Think not that he came to abolish or to do away with the Torah-law," yet this is exactly what most Bible teachers proclaim, and what most Christians believe; that Yeshua came to free Believers from the Torah-law, and to replace it with grace. After all, how many times have you heard it said, "We're not under the law anymore ... that's been done away with. It was nailed to the cross. It is for the Jews, not for the Christians, etc." It seems that many have not heeded Yeshua's words to, "think not that he came to do away with the Torah." In fact, it could be viewed that Yeshua was uttering prophetic words here. He could foresee the day when religious men would indeed attempt, through clever theological arguments, to abrogate YHVH's Torah by proclaiming it to be uniquely Jewish property, and by consigning it to dim antiquity claiming that it is irrelevant for Believers today.

In reality, when Yeshua said in Matthew 5:17 to, "Think not that I am come to destroy the Torah-law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil," he was using a particular kind of Hebrew idiomatic expression that does not transmit through from Hebrew to English. An example of an idiomatic expression that does not translate from English into, say, French would be the following: If I were to tell you that, "I am in a pickle," you would immediately know what I mean because you are an English speaking American and you know that I am not literally inside of a pickle, but that I am facing some sort of difficulty in my life. However, if I were to translate this idiomatic phrase into French for example and say, literally, "Je suis dans un cornichon," a French person would think I was crazy, since in French there is not an equivalent phrase for this American expression.

So what are the idiomatic expressions in Matthew 5:17 that we need to define in light of Hebraic thought? In the verse under consideration, we find two Hebraic idioms that are untranslatable into the English. The first one is Yeshua's statement, "I am come ..." According to Hebraic Christian Scholars David Bivin and Roy Blizzard, this phrase is a Hebrew idiom denoting intention and purpose.¹ When Yeshua said, "Think not that I am come ..." he is really saying, "Think not that my purpose or intent is to destroy the Torah-law."

So what about the second Hebrew idiom (or Hebraism) in this passage, "destroy the Torah-law" and "fulfill the Torah-law"? What do these phrases mean in Hebraic thought? Again, according to Hebrew linguists and language professor, Biven, "*destroy* and *fulfill* are technical terms used in rabbinic argumentation. When a [Jewish] sage felt that a colleague had misinterpreted a passage of Scripture, he would say, 'You are destroying the Law!' Needless to say, in most cases his colleague strongly disagreed. What was 'destroying the Law' for one sage, was 'fulfilling the Law' (correctly interpreting Scripture) for another.

Biven continues, What we see in Matthew 5:17ff is a rabbinic discussion. Someone has accused Yeshua of 'destroying' the Torah Law. Of course, neither Yeshua nor his accuser would ever think of literally destroying the

¹ *Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus*, by David Bivin and Roy Blizzare, pp. 92, 113.

Torah Law. Furthermore, it would never enter the accuser's mind to charge Yeshua with intent to abolish part or all of the Mosaic Law. What is called into question is Yeshua's interpretation, or the way he interpreted Scripture.

"When accused [of destroying the Torah], [Yeshua] strongly denies that his method of interpreting Scripture 'destroys' or weakens its meaning. He claims, on the contrary, to be more orthodox than his accuser. For [Yeshua], a 'light' commandment ('Do not bear hatred in your heart') is as important as a 'heavy' commandment ('Do not murder'). And a disciple who breaks even a 'light' commandment will be considered 'light' (or have an inferior position [or be least]) in [Yeshua's kingdom] (Matt 5:19)."²

Though Biven gives no historical documentation for his interpretation of Matthew 5:17, some background information about Professor Biven may help to give weight to his claims. Biven is one of the leaders of the Jerusalem School, which is comprised of both noted Christian and Jewish scholars whose goal is to understand the Gospels in light of first century Jewish context. Taken into consideration are linguistics, Jewish literature, history, religion and culture. "The Jerusalem School's approach to the Gospel texts is a painstakingly careful attempt to examine [Yeshua's] words in their original context. This is a unique cooperative effort, which marks the first time in history that Christian scholars, fluent in the Hebrew language and living in Israel, have collaborated with Jewish scholars in Gospel studies."³

In his book, Dr. William Bean quotes a teaching article from the Jerusalem School where they discuss their approach to interpreting difficult to understand gospel text such as Matthew 5:17,

A Hebrew translation is prepared in two stages. First, an examination is undertaken to determine the usual Hebrew equivalent in the Septuagint for each Greek word in the passage. The Septuagint is the second-century B.C.E. Greek version of the Hebrew Bible and Apocrypha. It is used as a touchstone because it strongly influenced Hebrew-to-Greek translators of succeeding generations. Second, post-biblical material such as the Dead Sea Scrolls and rabbinic literature is examined to determine whether there are alternate Hebrew equivalents for Gospel words. This is necessary because there occasionally developed different ways of expressing certain words in Hebrew (Ibid. p. 164 quoting "Translating the Gospels to Hebrew," *The Jerusalem Perspective*, December, 1987, by David Biven).

Bean then writes, "A discussion of Matthew 5:17 exemplifies the process. First mentioned is the literal translation of the Greek. 'Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fill/fulfill.' The Hebrew word behind "to fulfill" is *ki-YEM*. One nuance of *ki-YEM* is to show that the text is given in agreement with your teaching. The verb is based on the idea that the test of any teaching is whether you can give full effect to 'uphold' every word of the Law. The basis idea is: 'to establish the full meaning.' The article concludes with the dynamic translation of the Hebrew reconstruction. 'Do not suppose that I have any intention of undermining Scripture by misinterpreting it. My purpose is to establish and maintain the knowledge and observance of God's Word, not undermine it'" (Bean, p. 164).

Additionally, it is possible that Yeshua, in speaking the phrase under scrutiny (Matt 5:17), he may have had in view the Torah's admonition recorded in Deuteronomy 4:2 and repeated in 12:32,

You shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall you diminish aught from it, that you may keep the commandments of YHVH your Elohim which I command you.

This concludes our study of Matthew 5:17. Now let us continue to verse 18 of Matthew chapter five. Yeshua said in this verse,

For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Torah-law, till all be fulfilled.

If, as traditional Christian theology teaches regarding Matthew 5:17, Yeshua came to annul the Torah-law by living it out perfectly, thus fulfilling it, and thus freeing Christians from having to live it (in essence, therefore, freeing them to violate the Torah-law without the repercussions of its penalties), then why, we must ask, would Yeshua in the very next verse make the point so forcefully about the permanent nature of the Torah? What is the point of his statement if it has no relevance upon his disciples? In response to this question, we are obliged to ask the following

² Ibid. p. 114.

³ *New Treasures—A Perspective of New Testament Teachings Through Hebraic Eyes*, by Dr. E. William Bean, pp. 149-150, Cornerstone Publishing, Minneapolis, MN: 1999.

question: Who is correct here? The literal words of Yeshua, or traditional Christian interpretation, which flies in the face of Yeshua's straightforward statement that "till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Torah-law till all be fulfilled"? You be the honest judge of the truth in this case, but as us, we will choose Yeshua over the traditions of men, which make of non-effect the Word of Elohim (Matt 15:6).

What is Yeshua really saying about the Torah in Matthew 5:18? Simply stated, if heaven and earth are still in existence, than the Torah is still binding upon the people of Elohim. In fact, to emphasize the inviolate and immutable nature of the Torah of Elohim he makes the following point: "one jot or tittle will in no wise pass from the Torah-law till all be fulfilled." The word "fulfil" in verse 17 and the word "fulfilled" in verse 18, though the same words in English, are two different words in Greek. So "fulfilled" in verse 18 does not relate back "to fulfil" in verse 17. The word "fulfilled" in our present verse is the Greek word *ginomai*⁴ meaning "to be, come to pass, be made or to be done." Simply stated, the Torah-law will not pass until we see the demise of heaven and earth come to pass. The fact that you are reading this right now is proof that heaven and earth are still in existence and that Torah is still binding upon us today.

Now what are a *jot* and a *tittle*, one might rightly ask? A "jot" is actually the anglicized version of the *yud*, which is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet. A "tittle" is a small pen stroke, flourish, or overhang that exist on some Hebrew letters to distinguish one letter from another. What Yeshua is saying here is that the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet, even down to the smallest pen stroke is vitally important, is inspired of YHVH Elohim and **will not pass away!** Are we twisting the words of Yeshua to come up with this explanation for this verse? Again, let the reader be the judge, but what else could he mean if we take his words at face value?

Now let us analyze the next verse in this series of three verses: Matthew 5:19,

Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least [Torah] commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

In this verse, Yeshua commends those who teach his Torah to others and rebukes those who forsake or break the laws of Torah and teach others to do so, as well. The word "break" in this verse is the Greek word *luo*⁵ meaning "to loose, unloose, destroy, dissolve, put off, or break down."

Not only does Yeshua uphold the validity of the Torah of Elohim as given to the ancient Israelites through his servant Moses, and not only does he uphold the Torah as the central document upon which his disciples should base their teachings, but Yeshua states clearly that one's level of reward in his heavenly kingdom will be determined by one's orientation toward the Torah of Elohim. Note, Yeshua says that one's level of Torah-obedience will determine one's level of reward in the kingdom, not whether one *is in* the kingdom or not. One gains access into YHVH's kingdom solely on the basis of a faith and grace-based a relationship with Yeshua the Messiah. In other words, the Bible has always taught that man is saved by grace through faith in the blood of Yeshua, which leads to good works of righteousness (Eph 2:8-10). On this basis, Yeshua says in John 5:24, "He that hears my word, and believes on him that sent me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but has passed from death unto life." Yet we learn from Yeshua's Parable of the Talents as well as from this passage in Matthew that there are levels of rewards in the kingdom of Elohim. From Yeshua's own words here in Matthew 5:19, we see at least two levels of rewards in his kingdom: the greatest and the least. Those who will receive the positions of the greatest honor in his kingdom will be those who both live and teach the Torah-commandments of Elohim.

In verse 20 of Matthew chapter five, Yeshua continues his teaching about the Torah.

For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

What is Yeshua saying here? He is identifying those who will be part of his kingdom. The "righteousness" of the Pharisees was often characterized in the gospel accounts by a legalistic obedience to the Torah-commandments of Elohim (Matt 23:23), by self-righteous arrogance (Matt 6:2,6; 6:16; 23:13; Luke 18:10-11) by hypocrisy (i.e., not practicing what they preached) (Matt 23:3,25,27), by making void the commandments of Elohim by their man-made religious traditions (Matt 15:6,9), and by not having a proper heart orientation toward Torah-obedience (in other words, they lacked love, faith and mercy) (Matt 15:7-8; 23:23).

Many of the religious Jews of Yeshua's day had perverted the Torah-law of Elohim into a works-based,

⁴ Strong's G1096.

⁵ Strong's H3089.

legalistic, self-righteous, money-making religious system, which had little or nothing to do with YHVH's original intent of the Torah for his people Israel. The Torah or YHVH's instructions in righteousness were designed and structured to lead his people into a set apart (kadosh) and righteous relationship with him (Lev 11:44-45; 19:2) and to promote peaceful coexistence among people.

The purpose of the Torah was to bring YHVH's people into "good success" (Josh 1:8), to give them wisdom and understanding in the sight of the nations (Deut 4:6), to ensure a long and successful life (Deut 4:40; 8:1), to lead to righteousness (Deut 6:24), to be bring blessing into every area of life (Deut 1:26-28; 28:1-14), and obedience to Torah leads to life because it points to Yeshua (Deut 32:47). The purpose of the Torah and the Mosaic Covenant was not to save people, but to show people *how* to walk in righteousness and holiness before YHVH once they were saved. And once saved, one was not to establish a man-made religious system full of self-righteous and self-serving legalistic hypocrites. Yeshua, as we have noted, came to rescue the Torah from such religiocrats and a religious system that had perverted and twisted YHVH's Word into something burdensome and even, at times, evil. Yeshua came to restore Elohim's instructions in righteousness to their original intent, purity, beauty and life-giving truth. To accomplish this goal, he not only attacked the Jewish religious system of his day that had perverted the Torah, but he taught his disciples how Torah should be properly lived from a heart attitude of love, faith, mercy and grace.

In light of the status quo of the Jewish religious establish of the time, in Matthew 5:20 Yeshua instructs his disciples that unless their righteousness would exceed that of the Pharisees they would not enter into the kingdom of heaven. He was exhorting them to renounce all their religious baggage, traditions of men, greed, self-righteousness, arrogance and hypocrisy. Yeshua was concerned with faith, love, mercy, heart and spirit issues, and if Yeshua's disciples would add those dimensions to the Pharisees' letter-of-the-law Torah obedience the disciples' righteousness would exceed that of the Pharisees. This was the original intent of the Torah—for obedience to proceed from a circumcised heart. A circumcised heart is a Torah principle⁶ that, contrary to popular Christian belief, was not original to the Apostle Paul in the (Re)new(ed) Covenant.

Yeshua then proceeds from Matthew 5:21 to the end of the Sermon on the Mount (7:27) to show his followers the original intent of the Torah that many of the religious Jews of his day had lost along the way.

Yeshua did not come to abolish the Torah-commandments of Elohim. Instead his purpose in coming (Matt 5:17) was to see Torah properly interpreted and then lived out in the lives of those he came to redeem. So his teaching in the rest of the Sermon on the Mount was in contradistinction to the religious ideas the Pharisees commonly taught. This is why he uses the phrase starting in Matthew 5:21, "You have heard that it is said ... but I say unto you ..." a phrase he repeats five times (verses 27ff, 31ff, 33ff, 38ff, 43ff). In these verses, Yeshua both teaches and upholds the letter of the Torah-law (e.g., anger, hating your enemies, murder, adultery, oaths, retaliation) and the spirit of the law in these areas as well (love your enemies, hatred, lust, forgiveness, pure communication and so on). Yeshua is not only focusing on the act, but on how the act starts—in the heart. To overcome sin and to live righteously one has to deal with sin at the heart level and not just at the action level, which is the outward manifestation of what is in the heart.

Yeshua's Allusions to the Torah-Law Elsewhere in the Sermon on the Mount

Let us now examine in Hebraic thought some phrases and concepts that Yeshua, who was a Jewish rabbi, used elsewhere in the Sermon on the Mount that have direct implications regarding the Torah. Did he speak of Torah in a favorable or negative light?

In Matthew 7:13, he speaks of the straight gate and the narrow way that leads to life versus the wide and broad gate that leads to destruction. In Genesis 28:10-22, we have the account of Jacob's dream of a ladder reaching into heaven. The dream greatly amazed Jacob and afterwards he concluded he had had a divine encounter. He named the spot where he had the dream *Beth El* meaning "House of El (God)" and concluded that this spot was "the gate of heaven" (verse 17). In Hebraic thought, "the ladder" to heaven is equivalent to the Tree of Life, which is another term for the Torah of Elohim. We know that Yeshua was the Torah-Word of Elohim made flesh (John 1:1,14). Not only that, Yeshua likened himself to a ladder reaching to heaven (John 1:51). Furthermore, we see both Moses and Joshua describing the Torah-law of Elohim as a (narrow, by implication) path from which one must turn neither to the left nor to the right (Deut 5:32; 17:11, 20; 28:14; Josh 1:7; 23:6). In Proverbs, the path of wisdom (i.e., Torah) is also likened to a (narrow, by implication) path from which one must not turn either to the left or to

⁶ See Deut 10:16; 30:6; Jer 4:4; Ezek 44:7 and 9.

the right (Prov 4:27).

The term “gate” (or door) itself in Matthew 7:13 is a Hebraism referring to the means by which one enters into the Tabernacle or Temple of Elohim (Exod 27:14, 16; 32: 35:17; Ezek 40:3,6,7,8,9,10,11,13 etc.). The Tabernacle (or *Mishkan*) of Moses was representative of the pathway to redemption or salvation. Before actually entering the Tabernacle, one encountered the Altar of the Red Heifer, which pictures the cross of Yeshua. To enter the Tabernacle, one passed through a multi-colored gate. One of the colors was crimson, which represented the blood of lamb on the door posts of the Israelites’ homes on Passover eve. After that, one would come to the Brazen Alter of Sacrifice, which pictures the new Believer dying daily, after the example of Yeshua on the cross, and daily ingesting of the “blood” and “body” of Yeshua (pictured by communion), the Lamb of Elohim. Yeshua fulfilled all these prophetic types and shadows. He said that he is the door or gate (John 10:7,9,10) by which all must enter to have salvation (Acts 4:12) and to have access to the Father in heaven (John 14:6). Yeshua told the rich young ruler that the Torah-law was the path to eternal life (Matt 19:16-17). The Torah points to Yeshua who was the “aim” or “goal” (not the “end” or “termination” of the Torah, as Rom 10:4 is often mistranslated to in most of our English Bibles) of the Torah who is the Living Torah-Word of YHVH (John 1:1, 14). Yeshua said that he was the way (to the Father in heaven), the truth and the life (John 14:6), and that the Word of Elohim is truth (John 17:17). The only Word of Elohim that existed when Yeshua spoke these words was the Hebrew Scriptures (OT).

If Yeshua is *the truth*, then how do the Hebrew Scriptures define “truth”? In Psalm 119:142 and 151, David says that the Torah-law and Torah-commandments of Elohim are truth.

We see the concept of *gates* in the messianically prophetic Psalm 118:19 and 20. Here the Messiah (Yeshua) is likened as *gates of YHVH* and *gates of righteousness* (Ps 119:172 defines “righteousness” as “all of thy Torah-commandments) which all the righteous shall enter.”

So Yeshua is the *gate*, or the *straight way* of life and truth, the *door* to salvation or redemption and the way to the Father in heaven. He is the *Word* of Elohim made flesh or the Living Torah.

Next let us examine the term “tree” in Matthew 7:17-20, which is another Hebraic idiom referring to the Torah. There Yeshua says,

Even so every good tree brings forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit.
A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.
Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore
by their fruits you shall know them.

As we have seen above, the Torah is called a “tree of life.” In Proverbs, Solomon equates wisdom with the Torah (Prov 3:1, 18) in which he says is length of days and long life (verse 2). In Proverbs 11:30, we see that “the fruit of righteousness is a tree of life.” Scripture defines “righteousness” in Psalm 119:172 as all YHVH’s Torah-commandments.

Likewise, the word “fruits” is a reference to the Torah, as well. In biblical language, “fruits” represents works of righteousness (i.e. Torah-obedience) coming from a good tree (Prov 11:30).

Continuing on in our analysis of the Sermon On the Mount with regard to Yeshua’s attitude toward the Torah-Law of Elohim we come to verses 21-23 of chapter seven where we read,

Not every one that says unto me, “Master, Master,” shall enter into the kingdom of heaven;
but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day,
“Master, Master, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in your name have cast out demons?
And in your name done many wonderful works?” And then will I profess unto them,
“I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity.”

In verse 21, Yeshua makes reference to “the will of the Father.” In Hebraic thought, to what is he referring here? What is “the will of the Father”? Keep in mind that when Yeshua gave this teaching the only Scriptures in existence were the Hebrew Scriptures. As we have seen at the beginning of this study, the Torah or the first five books of Moses in the Bible, were the central teaching document for the Jewish people—the nation of Israel. Therefore, we would be expected to find “the will of the Father” to be revealed in the Word (or Oracles) of Elohim originating from heaven and delivered to man. The will of the Father was revealed at Mount Sinai and was the reference point of all the Hebrew prophets who were constantly charging the people of Israel to return to the ancient paths of YHVH’s Torah (Jer 6:16, 19; 18:15).

Yeshua, the Living Word or Torah (instruction, precepts, teachings) of Elohim, came to set Torah on a firm

foundation (the whole point of the Sermon on the Mount, as we have seen) by rescuing it from the hands of the hypocritical, greedy, arrogant and self-righteous religionists of his day. Yeshua said in John 7:16 that his doctrine or teaching was not his own, but that of his Father in heaven and that those who *do* the will of the Father will recognize that his doctrine or teaching is from the Father (verse 17).

In John 7:19, Yeshua asks the Pharisees: “Did not Moses give you the Torah, and yet none of you keep [do, perform] the Torah?” What is the summation of what Yeshua is saying here? He is telling the people that he came to do the will of his Father, to bring to them the oracles or doctrine of the Father as given at Mount Sinai (called the Mosaic Covenant), and that these words are not his and that, basically, he is simply a messenger transmitting his Father’s words to the people—the very words of Moses, which he accuses the people of *not* keeping or obeying.

This was the message of Yeshua to the people in his day. Is this not a relevant message to the Christian church of our day, which teaches that the Torah-law of Moses is of little nor no relevance to Believers? The idea that Yeshua came to abrogate the Torah-law of Moses is difficult to comprehend in light of such Scriptures as John 14:15, a direct quote from Exodus 20:6, where Yeshua equates himself with YHVH who spoke at Mount Sinai. (See also 1 Cor 10:4.). Do you comprehend the full impact of this? Yeshua, whom the Christians call Jesus Christ, is the very one who spoke out from Mount Sinai and the one who gave the Torah-law and led the Children of Israel through the Wilderness. It is this Torah-law that Yeshua came to uphold and restore as we have seen by our study on the Sermon on the Mount.

Now let’s return to our analysis of Matthew 7:21-23. We see that many religionists will claim to be followers of Yeshua, but what separates the true followers from the counterfeit ones is whether they are doing the will of YHVH or not. Many will be prophesying in Yeshua’s name, casting out devils and doing many miraculous works in his name, but this is not the proof that they are his. What is the proof? He says in verse 23, “And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity.”

What is the meaning of the word “iniquity”? It is the Greek word *anomia*⁷ meaning “unrighteousness” or “lawlessness.” We have already defined the word “righteousness” as “adherence to the Torah-commandments of YHVH” (Ps 119:172). The word “law” in the Apostolic Scriptures is always a reference to the Torah. In Hebrew thought then and now, there was no other law except the Law of Moses. This “law” or Torah came from Elohim through the “Angel” or “Messenger” from heaven who gave the Torah to Moses, and who was none other than the pre-incarnate Yeshua (Acts 7:37–38). So the word “iniquity” or “lawlessness,” as used in our verse, is referring quite simply to “Torahlessness.” In other words, Yeshua is speaking to those who claim or profess to be his followers, who claim or profess his name, claim his miraculous power, claim to speak by his authority and even claim, no doubt, to love him, but who fail to obey his Torah-commandments (John 14:15). In other words, they are sinners, walking in sinfulness, for John defines sin in his epistle as “transgression of the Torah-law of Elohim” (1 John 3:4). Of these people he will say, “Depart from me, you that work [do] iniquity, I never knew you.” Yeshua will not accept these people on the basis of their verbal professions or claims, nor will he accept them on the basis of their prophetic or miracle-working abilities. Yeshua, the Living Torah of Elohim made flesh, accepts them only on the basis of their obedience to and orientation toward the Torah-law of Elohim.

Is Yeshua here abrogating or nullifying the Torah-law given to Moses or is he reaffirming it to his followers? The language of the Scripture is very clear to those who have ears to hear and to those who are truth-seekers. He is validating the Torah and its relevance upon the lives of his disciples or followers, loudly and clearly!

Finally, Yeshua ends his teaching of the Sermon On the Mount with the parable of the house that was built upon the rock versus the house that was built upon the sand. Matthew 7:24-27 reads,

Therefore whosoever hears these sayings of mine, and does them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that hears these sayings of mine, and does them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

What is Yeshua saying here? We have already seen in our discussion above that Torah is equated with wisdom. Therefore, a wise man is one who walks in the Torah. The same man will be called “greatest in the kingdom of

⁷ Strong’s G458.

heaven” (5:19), referring to one who keeps the Torah-commandments of Elohim and teaches men to do them, whereas the one who rejects Torah the Messiah Yeshua will reject him (verse 23).

A “house” in Hebrew thought is a reference to the Temple of Elohim⁸ built upon Mount Moriah (originating from the Hebrew word *moreh* meaning “to teach”) from which the Torah-law (the righteous teachings or instructions) of Elohim will go forth to the nations (Isa 2:3; Mic 2:4). We know from the Apostolic Scriptures that the Saints are called the spiritual temple (or house) of Elohim (1 Tim 3:15; Heb 10:21; 1 Pet 4:17; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21). What we see here is that the “teachings” or “instructions in righteousness” (the Torah) of YHVH go forth from the Temple or House of Elohim located on Mount Zion or Mount Moriah for the benefit of the spiritual house or temple of the Saints or Believers. Clearly stated, Yeshua is saying that the Torah-law of Elohim is for Believers today during the “Church Age.”

The “rock” is a clear reference to Yeshua.⁹ He is a Rock and a House (Ps 31:2). He was the Rock in the Wilderness from which the water of life flowed and that followed them (referring to the Pillar of Fire) (1 Cor 10:4; John 4:13-14). He was the Rock that is the Creator (Deut 32:18). As the Rock of Israel, his work was perfect and all of his Torah-ways (instructions, precepts, teachings in truth and righteousness) are judgment and truth (Deut 32:4). He is the Rock of Israel’s salvation.¹⁰ In Jacob’s dream of a ladder to heaven (which we discussed above), the rock or stone upon which Jacob rested his head and from which the ladder to heaven ascended is mentioned several times (Gen 28:11,18,22). This is a clear reference to Yeshua. He is the Stone that the builders rejected and which has become the Head of the corner (Ps 118:22). He is the Stone of stumbling and the Rock of offense (Isa 8:14), and he is the Stone that was laid in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a sure foundation (Isa 28:16). Yeshua is the Torah-Word of Elohim made flesh (John 1:1,14), and as we have already seen, he was the one who spoke out the Torah-instructions in righteousness to Israel at Mount Sinai. And upon what were those instructions written? Upon two tablets of stone.

So how could we summarize what Yeshua is teaching in his parable about the house on the rock? Does it give us any insights into how he viewed the Torah-law of Elohim that was given to the Israelites at Mount Sinai? Was Yeshua negative in his view of the Torah? Was he indicating that it would be replaced with another (new) law for the disciples—one that would supersede the Torah? Or as the Apostle Paul said in the book of Romans, “Do we make void the Torah of Elohim by faith? Elohim forbid!” (Rom 3:31 cp 6:15). Not at all. Yeshua’s teaching of the house on the rock validates the Torah and therein he states clearly that the man whose spiritual house is not built on Torah is a foolish man and that his house will fall. Such individuals will be the ones who will hear the words of Yeshua, the Living Torah, “Depart from me, you that work Torahlessness. I do not know you.” This warning is totally consistent with Yeshua’s words of Matthew 5:17-19 where he forcefully upholds the legitimacy of the Torah of Elohim. He has nowhere in the Sermon on the Mount contradicted himself, nor deviated from his core teaching of upholding the central teaching document of the people of Israel—the Torah (the instructions, teachings, precepts in righteousness) of Elohim.

Conclusion: Yeshua’s View of the Torah-Law in His Sermon on the Mount

What we see in this discussion of Yeshua’s Sermon on the Mount is that having strongly affirmed the validity of the Torah-law of Elohim (Matt 5:17-19) Yeshua goes on to teach a higher standard of holiness and righteousness of which many of the Pharisees and other religious Jews of that day had lost sight. It is unthinkable that Yeshua would have taken such a strong position at the outset of his teaching in defense of the Torah (Matt 5:17-19) only to contradict himself later in supposedly promoting a “new divine law of love” that abrogated the Torah as many teach in Christianity.

In reality, we believe the Scriptural evidence presented above points to the conclusion that Yeshua was consistent in his teaching and that he was taking the Torah back from the hands of the hypocritical religionists of his day who had perverted and twisted its original intent and purpose. He was retrieving Torah and reestablishing it on the original foundational rock of truth, love, spirit, faith and an obedience out of a right heart motive. This is the real pro-Torah-based message of the Sermon On the Mount.

Yeshua, The Torah-law and the Great Commission

What were Yeshua’s final instructions to his disciples before his return to heaven? This portion of Scripture is com-

⁸ See 1 Chr 6:48; 9:13, 26,27; 22:2; 23:28; 28:21; 2 Chr 4:19; 5:1; Ezr. 4:24; Is. 2:3; Matt 12:4; Mark 2:26.

⁹ See Ps 18:31,46; 78:35; Rom 9:33; 1 Pet 3:8.

¹⁰ See Deut 32:18; Ps 62:2,6; 89:26; 95:1.

monly called, the Great Commission and is found in Matthew 28:19-20. Do we find here any clues to Yeshua's view toward the Torah as to what his expectations were of his disciples? Here Yeshua instructs his disciples (that includes you and me) to:

Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Set-apart Spirit: teaching them to observe [keep, preserve, hold fast] all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

It is clear from this text that Yeshua, a Jewish rabbi,¹¹ expected his disciples to follow, teach accurately and spread his teachings (the good news of the kingdom of Elohim) to the world. In the religious culture of first century, Judaism disciples (*talmudim*) were expected to teach exactly what their rabbi or Torah teachers had taught them. This is no different in our day when students enroll in a denominational Bible college or seminary, receive ordination and are then sent out into the mission field in the name of that denomination. The students are expected to carry forth the unique teachings and doctrines of that denomination. If they do not, they will either be reprimanded and expected to realign their teachings with the denomination's official position. If they refuse to do so, that denomination will discharge them from their duties and defrock them.

Likewise, Yeshua expected his disciples to teach the nations to "observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." In fact in Acts 1:8, Yeshua said to his disciples that, "You shall be witnesses unto me" to the whole world. This was their mission and assignment. Yeshua, as did all Jews of his era, spoke Hebrew, and maybe even Aramaic. The word for "commanded" (Matt 28:20) as in "whatsoever I have commanded you ..." in either the Hebrew or Aramaic is the word *mitzvah*, which would have been the same word used in Matthew 5:19 where Yeshua says, "whosoever breaks one of these least *commandments*, and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven ..." (emphasis added). The word *mitzvah* in Hebraic religious thought is a clear reference to the Torah commandments of YHVH in the books of the Law of Moses. David uses the term *mitzvah* in its plural form, *mitzvot*, numerous times in Psalm 119 equating it with the Torah-law of Elohim as given to Moses and the children of Israel. It was these commandments that Yeshua stated in the Sermon on the Mount that he told his disciples to "think not" that he had come to destroy, that he taught would never pass away as long as heaven and earth stood, that he said whoever would break one of the least of them and teach men so would be called least in the kingdom of heaven, and whoever would keep them and teach men so would be called the greatest in the kingdom. It was these same commandments that Yeshua commissioned his disciples to teach and observe, to keep, hold fast and preserve.

Even in his final word to his disciples before his death, Yeshua commanded his disciples to adhere to the Torah and to convey to those who would follow them the same message.

Can there be any doubt as to what Yeshua's view of the Torah was, and what his expectations were for his disciples in this regard? How is it that so Christianity has diverged so greatly from the fundamental teachings of Yeshua and his disciples when so many teach that he and his disciples came to "do away with the law?" It has been admitted, by even some in the Christian church, that Christianity *is not* the religion of *Jesus/Yeshua*, but rather the religion *about the Person of Jesus/Yeshua*. For it to be the religion of Yeshua and his early disciples, it would have to uphold that obedience to the Torah's standards of righteous living is a requirement of Christians today.

¹¹ See Matt 26:25, 49; Mark. 9:5; 10:51; 11:21; 14:45; John 1:38, 49; 3:2, 26, 4:31; 6:25; 9:2; 11:8.

