

Torah is about Law and Grace

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✓ Definition of God's Torah and Grace

In most non-Jewish translations of the Jewish Scriptures, the word "Torah" is translated "law." The word Torah means instruction. David stated, *"Your Torah have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against you."*

The words "law" and "grace" have different meanings among religious Jews and Christians. Most Christians think of the Torah, or law, as a collection of regulations and rules. However, Torah has a deeper meaning - It is the revealed will of God. It is instruction from God.¹

The word "grace" means "goodwill" or "favor." When the Bible speaks of God's grace, it is always rooted in his love. When we approach God, we stand as those who deserve his ill favor and judgment because of our sins. But He is always ready to forgive us from condemnation. Accepting God's grace begins with the affirmation that he has forgiven us.²

Yeshua (*Jesus*) summed up the Torah with these words, *"You are to love Adonai your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength... You are to love your neighbor as yourself. All of the Torah and Prophets are dependent on these two mitzvot (commandments)."* (Matthew 22:37-39). This was an affirmation of Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18.

Careful study of the Bible reveals that principles found in the Ten Mitzvot (*Commandments*) existed before God gave them to Moses on Mount Sinai (*Exodus 20:3-17*), and those same principles still exist today. The two primary principles of the commandments are love for God and love for others. The first four commandments tell us *"Who to worship," "What not to worship," "How to worship,"* and *"When to worship."* The last six commandments tell us how to lovingly relate to one another. Only when we understand and accept God's grace can we begin to display genuine love for God and people.

Principles	Before Sinai	After Messiah
<i>Love for God...</i>		
1. I am the Lord your God	Genesis 14:18-20	1 Corinthians 8:6
2. Worship no other gods	Genesis 35:2-4	2 Corinthians 6:16
3. Honor God's name	Genesis 26:25	Romans 2:24
4. Honor God's Sabbath	Exodus 16:27-28	Acts 13:14-16
<i>Love for Others...</i>		
5. Honor parents	Genesis 9:23-30	Colossians 3:20
6. Don't kill	Genesis 9:6	1 John 3:25
7. Don't commit adultery	Genesis 39:7-10	1 Corinthians 6:9
8. Don't steal	Genesis 27:1-41	Ephesians 4:28
9. Don't lie	Genesis 12:11-20	1 Peter 3:16
10. Don't covet	Genesis 13:10-13	Hebrews 13:5

✓ God's Grace Is Based on Torah

Some Christians insist that God's law did not exist prior to Moses and does not apply now. However, the Bible teaches that *"sin is violation of Torah"* (1 John 3:4) and *"where there is no law, there is also no violation."* (Romans 4:15). If the principles of Torah do not exist today, how can mankind ever be held accountable for sin? If there was no law to expose sin prior to Moses, how was it that God acknowledged *"the people on earth were very wicked"* (Genesis 6:5) and judged the world with a flood? How was it that Joseph recognized adultery as a *"sin against God?"* (Genesis 39:9).

The Brit Chadashah (*New Covenant*) says that *"all have sinned and come short of earning God's praise."* (Romans 3:23). If there is no law, then there is no transgression, no sin, and no need for a Savior. Grace is God's forgiveness of our sin. It is not our repentance that causes God's forgiveness; rather it is his forgiveness that causes our repentance. To be forgiven means to forgive and accept one another.³

✓ God's Judgment Is Based on Torah

Solomon wrote, *"Here is the conclusion, now that you have heard everything; fear God, and keep his mitzvot (commandments); this is what being human is all about. For God will bring to judgement everything we do, including every secret, whether good or bad."* (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). The New Testament sums up the purpose of God's *"royal law"* this way, *"Keep speaking and acting like people who will be judged by a Torah which gives freedom."* (James 2:8-12).

Just as judicial courts judge by established law, so God will pass final judgment using the principles of his law (*James 4:12*). God will judge our hearts (*Romans 2*). Those accepting God's grace, though guilty, will be free in him.

✓ Paul's Comments on Torah and Grace

Paul, who was Jewish, gives a balanced perspective on Torah and grace throughout his writings. *"For you have been delivered by grace through trusting, and even this is not your accomplishment but God's gift. You were not delivered by your own actions; therefore no one should boast. For we are of God's making, created in union with the Messiah Yeshua for a life of good actions already prepared by God for us to do."* (*Ephesians 2:8-10*)

"For it is not merely the hearers of Torah whom God considers righteous; rather, it is the doers of what Torah says who will be made righteous in God's sight." (*Romans 2:13*)

"For in His sight no one alive will be considered righteous on the ground of legalistic observance of Torah commands, because what Torah really does is show people how sinful they are." (*Romans 3:20*)

"Does it follow that we abolish Torah by this trusting? Heaven forbid! On the contrary, we confirm Torah." (*Romans 3:31*)

"For sin will not have authority over you; because you are not under legalism but under grace. Therefore, what conclusion should we reach? 'Let's go on sinning, because we are not under legalism but under grace?' Heaven forbid!" (*Romans 6:14,15*)

"Therefore, what are we to say? That the Torah is sinful? Heaven forbid! Rather, the function of the Torah was that without it, I would not have known what sin is." (*Romans 7:7*)

"So the Torah is holy; that is, the commandment is holy, just and good." (*Romans 7:12*)

Paul is not teaching disobedience to God's law. Rather he tries to convey an understanding that mere obedience does not save anyone. Salvation does not come through legalistic rules and practices (*Galatians 5:4*; *Colossians 2:22*), but through God's grace. Yet Paul admonishes, *"Being circumcised means nothing, and being uncircumcised means nothing; what does mean something is keeping God's commandments."* (*1 Corinthians 7:19*)

Paul regards the law as holy, just and good, and never taught its abolishment. The law expresses the will of God and the law of Yeshua (*Jesus*), which is a law of love, completes the Torah⁴

Observance of the law cannot save anyone. However, Paul also knew people would not be saved if they blatantly transgressed it.⁵ When we do transgress God's law, we can ask for forgiveness and cleansing from sin. *Ezekiel 36:25-27* promises us cleansing from impurity, a new heart of love, and the *Ruach Ha Kodesh (Holy Spirit)* to instruct us in righteousness.

✓What did Yeshua Teach?

"Don't think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come not abolish but to complete. Yes indeed! I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a yud or a stroke will pass from the Torah; not until everything that must happen has happened. So whoever disobeys the least of these mitzvot (commandments) and teaches others to do so will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whoever obeys them and so teaches will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven."
Yeshua in Matthew 5:17-19

Many followers of Jesus are taught to believe that Yeshua in Matthew chapter 5 is establishing a new set of commandments that we are to follow. But if you understand rabbinic thought, you would realize that what Jesus is doing is simply expanding on the existing commandments of God by telling people how to practically fulfill those commandments.

Yeshua said he came to fulfill the law, not abolish it, and that the law would endure until heaven and earth pass away. The word *"fulfill"* is a Jewish idiom, meaning to fill up to the brim and make complete—not eliminate.

How many followers of Jesus are going to be called "least" in the Kingdom of Heaven because of their reinterpretation and disregard for the Torah that encompasses God's commandments? Believers need to think and pray seriously about what Yeshua is teaching in Matthew 5.

Are Yeshua's teachings regarding Torah and the commandments of God to be replaced or undermined by the teachings of Shaul (*Paul*)? Is Shaul the final authority on Torah, or is Yeshua? And furthermore, did Shaul really dismiss Torah? Not according to Acts 24:11-14; Romans 2:13; Romans 3:31; and Romans 7:7,12.

In the new covenant, God promises to write his law in the minds and hearts of his people (*Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:8-10*). Yeshua renews the promised covenant. He does not create a new Torah and abolish the existing. Rather, Yeshua makes it complete.

*"The Jewish rejection of Messiah
was triggered
by the Christian
rejection of the Law." ⁸*

The emerging attitudes in the non-Jewish Church made it impossible for the Jews to accept the messianic claims of Yeshua. The non-Jews presented Yeshua on terms reflecting their own misunderstanding of the law; conditions unsupported by Yeshua himself.⁶ But the principles of God's instruction do not change because God does not

change (*Malachi 3:6*).

Because of anti-Jewish sentiment expressed within Christianity, many Jews have come to view the Messiah and the New Testament as being irrelevant.⁷ However, negative sentiments do not justify ignoring the truth of the matter. Have you searched for the truths found in the Bible, rather than the teaching of men - whether ministers or rabbis? God says, "If with all your heart you truly seek me, you will surely find Me." Yeshua said, "Seek and you will find."

The Ten Commandments - As Changed by Man

From *The Convert's Catechism of Catholic Doctrine*¹¹



I. I am the Lord your God; you shall have no strange gods before me.	VI. You shall not commit adultery.
II. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.	VII. You shall not steal.
III. Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day.	VIII. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
IV. Honor your father and your mother.	IX. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.
V. You shall not kill.	X. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.

Sadly, the "10 commandments" written above, by non-Jews, are substantially lacking in content from those given by God to Israel at Sinai. These "commandments" are not even numbered correctly or correlated properly to the original ten commandments. Is it any wonder that many today do not properly understand and apply God's commandments in their lives?

*"Here, the days are coming, says Adonai,
when I will make a 'new covenant'
with the house of Israel
and with the house of Judah...
I will put my Torah within them
and write it on their hearts;
I will be their God, and they will be my people...
because I will forgive their wickednesses
and remember their sins no more."
Jeremiah 31:30-33*

1. "Living by Grace," William Hordern, 1975, p.117,123
2. "Living by Grace," p.69-70
3. "Living by Grace," p.78,82
4. "The Forgotten Day," Desmond Ford, 1981, p.133
5. "A Pause for Reflection," Clifford Goldstein, 1992, p.100
6. "The Conflict of the Church and Synagogue," James Parkes, 1974, p.93
7. "Jewish New Testament," David H. Stern, 1989, p. xii
8. "Drinking at the Sources," Jacques Doukhan, 1981, p.25
9. "Pentecost is Jewish," Danny Litvin, 1987, p.27
10. "A Pause for Reflection," p.100
11. "The Convert's Catechism of Catholic Doctrine," Peter Geiermann, 1946, p.37-38