

# TORAH: UNDER LAW OR UNDER GRACE?

*Written by Rabbi Mordecai Silver. Posted in Articles*

The Talmud tells the story of a proselyte who came to the great sage, Hillel, in the First Century B.C.E. and asked to be taught the whole Torah quickly, in the time that he could remain standing on one foot. Instead of losing his temper at this impossibly presumptuous request, Hillel showed great patience and understanding. He answered by saying: "What is hateful to you, do not do to others. This is the whole Torah, the rest is its commentary. Go and study it" (Shabbat 31a).

Hillel's statement, his way of expounding upon the Biblical commandment, "and you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus - Vayikra 19:18), may still stand as the capsule summary of Judaism. It is, however, still essential to "go and study the rest."

Many believers, whether Jew or Christian are under the understanding that with the coming of Messiah Yeshua, we are no longer under the Torah or "law," but under "grace."

Mathew 5:17: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill." Has Messiah Yeshua fulfilled all the law, or better yet, has He fulfilled the Torah?

ALL of it?

Mathew 5:18: "For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the Torah until all is accomplished."

Has it all been accomplished? Has the Torah, the five Books of Moshe, been fulfilled in their entirety?

Think about that before you answer.

Colossians 2:14: "Erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. He set this aside, nailing it to the Tree."

Many use this Scripture as showing that the “law” has been set aside. The “law” has been set aside, and the Torah of God has been returned to its rightful place. The demands of Pharisaical Judaism, where the righteousness of the “law” was paraded around on the outside of a person who on the inside was dead, has been replaced with the Torah of truth and love. God's Torah!

Romans 2:20: “...a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the Torah the embodiment of knowledge and truth.”

Romans 6:14: “For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under Torah but under grace.”

Romans 5:20: “But Torah came in, with the result that the trespass multiplied; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.”

The Torah showed us the sin that we were under.

The Torah showed us the grace of God. For without Torah we would not have known that we were sinners, living in strife with the Torah, the Word of God.

Romans 7:12: “So the Torah is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good.”

Scripture is filled with the Word of God upholding the Torah, the commandments of God. The Mitzvot.

All of those men and women of God who lived in the pages of the Old Covenant, lived under the commandments of God but were not saved by their faith in the Torah, but were saved by their faith in the Word of God.

Romans 7:25: “Thanks be to God through Messiah Yeshua our Lord! So then, with my mind I am a slave to the Torah of God, but with my flesh I am a slave to the Torah of sin.”

Romans 8:2: “For the Torah of the Spirit of life in Mashiach Yeshua has made me free from the Torah of sin and death.”

The Grace of God is what saves, not the law. But without the law we would not know what sin is. Do we have the audacity to believe that we do not need the commandments of God anymore that with the coming of Messiah we are perfected to the point that we no longer need His commandments to guide our lives?

Sha'ul made the statement best. We are slaves to the law of God and to the law of sin. But we have been freed by the grace of God. The law shows us the way, the grace of God saves.

Now why don't we take a look at the issue of grace, and see if this is really a NT covenant.

Genesis 6:8: "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord."

Exodus 33:12: "Moses said to the Lord, 'See, you have said to me, "Bring up this people"; but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, "I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight."'"

Exodus 33:17: "The Lord said to Moses, 'I will do the very thing that you have asked; for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name.'"

Ezra 9:8: "But now for a brief moment favor has been shown by the Lord our God, who has left us a remnant, and given us a stake in his holy place, in order that he may brighten our eyes and grant us a little sustenance in our slavery."

Psalms 84:11: "For the Lord God is a sun and shield; he bestows favor and honor. No good thing does the Lord withhold from those who walk uprightly."

Are you getting the picture? Grace is not a NT Dispensation. Even under the Bringer of the "Law," Moshe, there was grace first. Without grace Moses and the children of Israel would have been like the rest of the "goyim" (nations) of the earth. Following the "Law" did not bring the children of Israel God's love nor merit His grace. God gave these things freely to those who were called His people.

Jeremiah 31:2: "Thus says the Lord: The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness; when Israel sought for rest."

Zechariah 12:10: “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.”

These are ALL OT Scriptures So, what do we see here? First off, Israel HAS NOT been replaced by the church. Second, love is not a NT invention. Third, grace began way back in Genesis in the OT. Love and Grace are not NT inspired. We have always needed the love and grace of God. Without it we are nothing. But we also needed to know God’s commandments. Without His Mitzvot (commandments), how would we ever hope to know what it was that God wanted us to do? We need to know how we are to live. We cannot just go around blindly without direction. The Torah is His directions to us. The Torah is His love and grace to us. He loved us enough to show us His way.

God’s commandments, His teachings, His instructions that we find in the pages of Torah, are how we know what is right and wrong in the eyes of God. Love and grace do not show us what sin is in the eyes of the Father. Yeshua did not die because of love and grace. He died because of our sin!

John 1:14-16: “And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth...From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Yeshua Ha’Mashiach.”

We learned how to distinguish between what God loved and did not love through His commandments.

But through Yeshua we learned what the true intent of the Torah was. That God loved us. Moshe brought the Torah and with it we learned what sin was. Sin brought Spiritual death. Yeshua was the heart of the Torah and with Him came life from the Spiritual death of sin. Yeshua was the Living Word of God and He was in the Words of the OT as well as in the NT.

We see the love and grace of God all over the pages of the OT. With Moses we finally see the commandments of God written down for a people. God was calling a people His own. He was showing His love and grace by giving a people His Torah.

Acts 13:43: “When the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who spoke to them and urged them to continue in the grace of God.”

Grace in the synagogue. Grace among the Jews.

Acts 15:11: “On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Yeshua, just as they will.”

Grace is in the truth of God. The truth comes through knowledge of His Word. His Word is Yeshua. Yeshua is Torah.

Acts 20:24: “But I do not count my life of any value to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Yeshua, to testify to the good news of God's grace.”

Acts 20:32: “And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.”

Through His Word we find grace. We need a path to get to God. That path is His Word. Torah brings us to God. Torah is Yeshua. We need guidelines to live by. The two most important commandments are: To love the Lord God with all your heart, soul and strength and To love your neighbor as yourself. But these are not the only commandments, these are the two most important. When Yeshua spoke of these He was speaking to Judah.

Romans 3:24: “...they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in the Mashiach Yeshua.”

Romans 12:3: “For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.”

If I as a Jew wish to follow the commandments handed down to Israel from generation to generation, why do people get so worked up over it? I know that my faith is in Yeshua. I have received Salvation in Him. He is Salvation. His name Yeshua means Salvation, the

Salvation of God. The same holds true for those from Ephraim who also choose to follow the Torah as given to Israel. Torah is for ALL of Israel --- Judah and Ephraim! Salvation is a free gift from God to all of His people. Faith in God by accepting Yeshua as Messiah, as the debt for our sins, is the only way to receive the promise of eternal life. Sin, though, is defined by the Torah the Word of God given to us as a nation by Moses and confirmed by Yeshua the Son of God and the Living Torah.

But as part of my walk with Messiah I choose to follow His Torah. In doing this I choose to imitate Yeshua, because He is the living Word of God. He is the Living Torah.

He lived His life following Torah. He could not do otherwise, because He is the Torah. How could He disobey Himself? In following Torah He obeyed His Father. If I choose to follow Torah as an expression of my faith knowing full well that Torah in itself cannot bring me salvation, then why is that wrong? I know that only by my faith in the Living Torah can I find Salvation. Because Torah leads me to the author, to Yeshua.

Romans 4:16: "For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us)."

To those who say that we who follow the Torah are under the "Law," I ask this question: Which of His "Laws" bother you?