



Why then the Law?

Further Thoughts on Parashat Ki Teitzei

Since parashat Ki Teitzei contains more legal commandments than any other Torah portion, it is natural that we should revisit the question of whether we are obligated to follow the lawcode of Moses or not... In light of the salvation given in Yeshua, what is our relationship to the law?

Some Jewish scholars have attempted to count and catalog the various *mitzvot* (commandments) listed in the Torah. For example, the Jewish philosopher Maimonides (i.e., “Rambam”) listed a total of 613 commandments in his book *Sefer Ha-mitzvot* (“Book of Commandments”) and divided them into two general groups:

1. **MITZVOT ASEH** (מִצְוָה עֲשֵׂה). These refer to the 248 “positive” commandments (i.e., imperatives of the form: “Thou shalt do [something].”)
2. **MITZVOT LO TA’ASEH** (מִצְוָה תַּעֲשֶׂה). These refer to the 365 “negative” commandments (i.e., imperatives of the form: “Thou shalt not do [something].”)

The sages colorfully explain that the positive commandments equal the number of bones of the body (most of which are in the hands and feet), whereas the negative commandments correspond to the number of days in the solar year. This explanation was meant to teach that we should obey God with every bone and organ of our bodies, every day of the year. In Jewish tradition, the entire set of 613 commandments is sometimes called *taryag mitzvot* (the word “taryag” functions as a numerical acronym for “613”).

At any rate, this week’s Torah portion, Ki Teitzei, is notable because it contains the *most* commandments of all the other weekly Torah readings: 74 according to the count of Maimonides (over 12% of the 613 commandments). These various commandments cover a wide assortment of rules related to ethical warfare, family life, burial of the deceased, property laws, fair labor practices, proper economic transactions, and so on. Even rules about a mother bird and her young are included (Deut. 22:6-7). Your Heavenly Father knows when the sparrow falls (Matt. 10:29).



In every aspect of human life - religious, moral, social, civil, environmental, agricultural, dietary, sexual, and so on - the Torah has its voice. For example, Rabbi Pinchas ben Hama said, “Wherever you go and whatever you do, pious deeds will accompany you. When you build a new house, ‘make a parapet for your roof’ (Deut. 22:8). When you make a door, ‘write the commandments upon your doorposts’ (Deut. 6:9). When you put on new garments, ‘do not wear cloth that combines wool and linen’ (i.e., *shaatnez*; Deut. 22:11). When you cut your hair, ‘do not round the corners of your head’ (Lev. 19:27). When you plow your field, ‘do not plow with an ox and an ass together’ (Deut. 22:10). When you reap your harvest, and have forgotten a sheaf, do not pick it up. Leave it for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow (Deut. 24:19). And even if you are not engaged in any particular kind of work but are merely journeying on the road, the precepts accompany you. If a bird’s nest is before you on the road, ‘do not take the mother with her young’ (Deut. 22:6-7).” We might add, whenever you eat or drink something we are to recall how God’s Presence sustains us...

Imperatives and Presence

The pervasive scope of God’s commandments indicates that there is no “dividing line” between the sacred and the profane in the life of the *tzaddik* (saint). The world is not compartmentalized into the realms of the spiritual and the material. No, “the whole earth is filled with the glory of God,” and it is only because of spiritual blindness that we do not discern this truth. Simply put, all the various commandments found in the Scriptures were given because the spiritual realm is intended to permeate *every* aspect of our lives (1 Cor. 10:31). Just as reciting 100 blessings a day helps us be mindful of the source of our blessings, so studying the Torah’s commandments helps us to “wake up” to divine Presence regarding every practical decision we make.

קִדּוּשׁ קִדּוּשׁ קִדּוּשׁ יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
מְלֵא כָל־הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory!”





So the Scriptures are filled with commandments intended to awaken us to the reality of God's immanent Presence. *Da lifnei mi attah omed* (דַּע לְפָנַי מִי אַתָּה עוֹמֵד) - "Know before Whom you stand." There are 613 commandments given in the Torah of Moses, hundreds more found in the Writings and the Prophets, and over a thousand revealed in the New Testament. All of these *imperatives* are intended to point to the Presence of God and to move us to obey His will for our lives. That is the *general* idea, though the specifics are where we are apt to get confused.

The Voice of Torah

The subject of the divine imperatives quite naturally raises the subject of whether a follower of the Messiah should adhere to the lawcode of Moses. After all, Yeshua Himself was "the Voice of the Living God (קוֹל אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים) *speaking* (*davar*) from the midst of the fire" at Sinai (Deut. 5:26), and surely He lived *shomer ha-Torah* (שׁוֹמֵר הַתּוֹרָה) as a Torah observant Jew. Should we follow His example by becoming *shomer ha-Torah* as well?

Of course we should love and study the Torah (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Christians certainly should be "Torah aware!" After all, Yeshua was the Angel of the LORD (מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה) who spoke at Sinai when the Torah was given to Israel (Exod. 3:2, Deut. 4:12), and He is the same "yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8). During his earthly ministry, Yeshua studied Torah, read the Torah and haftarah portions in synagogue, and clearly taught us to keep the ways of the LORD (Luke 4:16, Matt. 7:12). He repeatedly affirmed the central teaching of the Torah – the Shema –putting the duty to love God above all else (Deut. 6:4-6; Mark 12:29). Indeed, the "New Covenant" itself promises that *Torah* would be written "upon our hearts" (Jer. 31:31-33, cp. Matt. 26:28) and is inscrutable apart from it – just as Yeshua himself clearly taught (Luke 24:27; see also: Matt. 5:17, Rom. 15:4, 1 Cor. 10:11, 2 Tim. 3:14-17, etc.). The Torah is the foundation of the ministry of the Messiah...

Now while all that is undoubtedly true, it is *vital* to remember that Yeshua came to die for our sins and to set us free from the Torah's judgment against us (Gal. 3:13). He came to offer a *New Covenant* (בְּרִית הַחֲדָשָׁה) with God that is based on His merit and righteousness. In other words, it is important to make the distinction between the general idea of Torah (תּוֹרָה) with the more specific idea of *covenant* (בְּרִית), since these are different (though related) ideas. The Hebrew word "Torah" is a general word that means "instruction" or "teaching," whereas the word "covenant" refers to a specific *agreement* made between God and man. In order to avoid confusion between the "Torah of Moses" (תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה) and the Torah of Yeshua (תּוֹרַת יֵשׁוּעַ), we must keep in mind that Torah is always a *function* of the underlying covenant (בְּרִית, "cut") of which it is part. This implies that if the covenant were to change, so would our responsibility (i.e., Torah).



Failure to make this distinction leads to exegetical errors and invalid doctrines. We must “rightly divide” (ὀρθοτομέω, lit. “cut straight”) the “word of truth” (see 2 Tim. 2:15).

The author of the Book of Hebrews makes this point when he states that, “in these last days God has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world” (Heb 1:2). The Greek construction for the phrase translated, “by his son” is ἐλάλησεν ἡμῖν ἐν υἱῷ, which literally means “he spoke to us *in son*” -- that is, in the language or voice of the Son of God Himself... God now speaks in the language “of Son” from the midst of the fire revealed at Zion...

Don't Outrage the Spirit of Grace

I've written extensively about the question of “Torah observance” in numerous articles elsewhere on this site. “Torah triflers” (i.e., those who advocate legalism but have yet to seriously think through its implications) are often unaware of the deeper function of Sinai and its provisions. Two things should immediately be said regarding this: 1) Olam (עולם), “everlasting,” doesn't necessarily mean *unchanging* (at least in the Greek sense of the term), especially since Moses, David, and Ezra all *changed* the Torah, and most of the later Jewish sages acknowledged that Torah would be changed in *yemot ha-Mashiach* (“the days of the Messiah”); and 2) the New Covenant is an entirely *new* covenant -- not a *renewed* version of the *sefer ha-brit* sprinkled with the blood of bulls at Mount Sinai (Exod. 24:4-10). The Apostle Paul goes back to the unconditionally given *Abrahamic* covenant (*brit bein ha-chatarim*) -- not to the “blessings and curses” issued from the mountains of Gerizim and Ebal -- as the foundation that underlies the deeper covenantal message of God's *chesed* (Gal. 3:3-9; Rom. 4:3).

Of course you are “free” to attempt to justify yourself using the terms of the covenant given at Mount Sinai, but then you are *constrained* by the conditions of that agreement (Deut. 27:26), and you are thereby implicitly *denigrating* the need for a radically New Covenant. Be forewarned: Persisting in such a project ultimately *outrages* the Spirit of Grace (רוח הקודש) that broods over the Cross of Yeshua (Heb. 10:29). We are furthermore cautioned that hardening our hearts on this matters can lead to *eternal loss* (Heb. 6:4-8). God is not mocked. He did not sacrifice His Son for the sake of creating disciples of Moses and the rabbis... We are called to follow the Messiah and submit to His authority alone (Matt. 23:8). Anything else is *chillul HaShem* and a betrayal of the Messiah!



Why then the Law?

The Apostle Paul wrote that the lawcode reveals our sinful condition: “for from the law comes the knowledge of sin” (διὰ γὰρ νόμου ἐπίγνωσις ἁμαρτίας). “But now the righteousness of God (יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֲדֹנָי) apart from the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets” (Rom. 3:20-21, see also Gal. 3:19). The phrase “apart from the law” means from an *entirely different sphere* from that which says, “do this and live.” It is the “righteousness” (δικαιοσύνη) that comes from God, not from man.... Yeshua is *Adonai Tzidkenu* - the LORD our Righteousness.

But what about the statement that the LORD would write *the Torah* upon our hearts mentioned above? Does not the New Covenant state: “I will put my *law* (תּוֹרָה) within them, and I will write it on their hearts” (Jer. 31:31-33)? Yes, it surely does, but it is vital to understand that the instruction referred to here is the Torah of the New Covenant. In other words, God would write the Torah of the New Covenant on our hearts, not the Torah of the Old Covenant (2 Cor. 3:14). Surely the “ministry of death (ἡ διακονία τοῦ θανάτου), carved in letters on stone, which is being brought to an end” was *not* to be written on our hearts! No, the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. The “ministry of condemnation” (i.e., τῆ διακονία τῆς κατακρίσεως, judgment) is contrasted with the “ministry of righteousness” (i.e., ἡ διακονία τῆς δικαιοσύνης) and far *exceeds* it in glory and value (2 Cor. 3:6-9). As Paul wrote elsewhere: “The law is good if it is used *lawfully*,” understanding that the lawcode speaks to those who are lawbreakers - to the lawless and disobedient, to adulterers, murderers, and so on (1 Tim. 1:8-10). In other words, the law functions as a sort of “cage” intended to restrain the evil impulses of the heart. The problem is not with the law, but rather with the underlying condition of the heart....What we need is not more laws, but a *change of heart* - and that is precisely what the New Covenant is all about: Spiritual rebirth, a new “heart of flesh,” and God-given power to walk in love and thereby transcend the law and its requirements.

“Why then the law?” What was the purpose of Sinai? Why were the Jews repeatedly commanded to keep the law and follow it? “It was *added* because of transgressions until the Messiah would come” (Gal. 3:19). The conscience was not enough for the human heart to understand the extent of human sinfulness. The law was *added* (i.e., προστίθημι, “set forth”) so that the impulses of the lower nature could be seen for what they are: violations of the will of God Himself (1 John 3:4). The law is not contrary to the promises of God, though it was powerless to impart eternal righteousness and life (Gal. 3:21). The Scripture reveals that everyone is “imprisoned” to sin so that the promise of faith could be given to all (Gal. 3:22; Rom. 3:19-20). But what then about the statements that the law was eternal and binding? What about statements in the lawcode that we should observe such and so “forever” (עוֹלָם)? The system itself is self-contained and therefore the terms of the covenant



are indeed eternal. If you attempt to please God on the basis of the older covenant, you are free to do so, though this implies that covenantal blessings and curses would fall upon you, and that you are liable to fulfill the righteousness of the *whole law* to its smallest point (James 2:10). The New Covenant, on the other hand, imparts the righteousness of God *apart from the law* (χωρὶς νόμου) through *faith* (Rom. 3:20-21). Faith in God's righteousness transcends the weakness of the law (caused by human frailty) by imparting a new principle (or law) called the law of the Spirit of Life: "For the law of the Spirit of life in the Messiah has set you free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2).

Those who attempt to mix the covenants are called *adulterers* (Rom. 7:4-ff.).... The goal or aim of the Torah was the New Covenant -- *not the other way around* (Gal. 3:17-19). The law is called a "schoolmaster" meant to lead to the Messiah and His Kingdom rule (Gal. 3:23-26). The glory of the Torah of Moses was destined to fade away (2 Cor. 3:3-11), just as its ritual center (i.e., the Tabernacle/Temple) was a shadow (σκιά) to be replaced by the greater priesthood of *Malki-Tzedek* (Heb. 10:1; 13:10). "Now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code (Rom. 7:6). "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:3-4). Yeshua is the goal and the *Go'el* (i.e., גואל, redeemer) from the curse of the law... "For the law made nothing perfect, but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, and that is how we draw near to God" (Heb. 7:19).

If you claim to be a follower (i.e., *talmid*, or "student") of Yeshua then you are obligated to receive, study, and accept the yoke of the "Torah of the Messiah" (תורת המשיח). In other words, you will submit to *His authority* as your Master by walking in His redemptive love (2 John 1:9, 1 Tim. 6:3-6; John 15:12; 1 John 3:23, etc.). The law of Moses (תורת משה) was intended to function as a "propaedeutic" (παιδαγωγός) or "tutor" for apprehending the Messiah's greater instruction (Gal. 3:19-25). Note that the Greek word used here ("paidagogos") referred to a trusted servant who would supervise the life and morals of boys belonging to the upper class. Before arriving at the age of manhood, boys were not allowed to leave their house without being escorted by their "paidagogos." Followers of the Messiah are admonished not to revert to childish thinking but to understand matters *maturely* (1 Cor. 13:11, 14:20, Heb. 5:12-14). Even the most zealous among the Jewish people could not bear the strain of the yoke of the Torah of Moses, as Peter testified (Acts 15:9-10). We are now led by the Spirit of God as God's sons and are therefore no longer "subject" to religious regulations (δόγμα) that command us to "touch not, taste not, handle not." We are now called to seek those things that are above, where the Messiah reigns from on high (Col. 2:20-3:1).



How Firm a Foundation...

The two “great commandments” center on loving God and loving others (Matt. 22:36-40), but both of these *presuppose* faith that God exists and that He is loving and good (Heb. 11:6). You can recite the Shema twice a day for the rest of your life, but if you do not believe from the heart that God is a real Person who wants to have a relationship with you as your Heavenly Father, then you might as well save your breath.... But believing that God is your Heavenly Father is surely not enough, since God’s salvation is known and demonstrated in the sacrificial love of His Son. Only those who trust in Yeshua as their Savior can therefore truly know the Father’s love, just as only those who honor the Son can truly honor the Father who sent Him (John 5:22-23). Therefore the most important commandment - the one on which all the others ultimately turn - is to *personally trust* in the work of God’s salvation given through Yeshua the Messiah. “Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1 John 5:12). “Having the Son” is therefore the goal of God’s Torah (Rom. 10:4).

The Talmud (Makkot 23b-24a) says, “Moses gave Israel 613 commandments, David reduced them to eleven (Psalm 15), Isaiah to six (Isaiah 33:15-16), Micah to three (Micah 6:8), Isaiah reduced them again to two (Isaiah 56:1); but it was Habakkuk who gave the one essential commandment: *v'tzaddik be'emunato yich'yeh* (וְצַדִּיק בְּאֱמוּנָתוֹ יִחְיֶה), literally, “the righteous, by his trust, shall live” (Hab. 2:4). In the New Testament, the apostle Paul likewise distilled the various commandments of the Torah to this primordial principle of faith (see Rom. 1:17, Gal. 3:11, and Heb. 10:38). “Without faith we are powerless (*ἀδύνατος*) to please God” (Heb. 11:6).

Walking in the Spirit

It is the Holy Spirit that gives us life and who breathes the true meaning of Torah into our hearts. “If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law” (Gal. 5:18). That is, you are no longer to be constrained by either legalism *or* lawlessness, since “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is power” to please God. The Spirit sets us free from the seduction of *both* legalism and debauchery (Gal. 3:1-2; Eph. 5:18). When we are led by the Spirit, we rely upon God’s provision to walk in a way that pleases Him. On the other hand, when we rely on the “flesh,” we are operating under the principle of our own (in)ability to please God, which invariably leads to pride (legalism) or profligacy (anti-legalism) - and sometimes to *both*. Therefore we see that role of the “law” is often connected with the “flesh,” but the role of the Spirit is connected with life and power...



Walking in the Spirit (i.e., trusting in God's salvation) does *not* lead to lawlessness but rather fulfills the righteousness of the law in us through faith (Rom. 8:4; Gal. 5:16). Christians live under the "law of liberty" (תּוֹרַת הַחֵרֶוֶת), though this obviously does *not* mean the supposed "freedom" to become enslaved to sin again (Gal. 5:13; 1 Pet. 2:16). On the contrary, the law of liberty implies that we are made free from the "law of sin and death" (i.e., the futile principle of self-justification) in order to serve God in newness of life. As the Apostle James uses this term, it is *the power to act* on the truth that has been given to you. We are to be "doers" of the Word, and not hearers only, since faith without works is dead and leads to self-deception (lit., "reasoning around" the truth, i.e., παραλογίζομαι, from παρα, "around, beside" and λογίζομαι, "to reason"). Only those who follow through and live their faith will be blessed in their actions (James 1:25). This mirrors Yeshua's statement, "If you know these things, blessed are you *if you do them*" (John 13:17). This is the "law of the Spirit of life in Yeshua (תּוֹרַת רוּחַ הַחַיִּים בְּיֵשׁוּעַ). We are no longer enslaved to the power of sin but have *a new principle of life* that leads us to true freedom. After all, true freedom doesn't mean doing whatever you want, but rather means the *power to choose contrary to the demands of your lower nature*. We "put off" the old self and "put on" the new (Eph. 4:22-24). It is the divinely imparted "new nature" that gives us the power to "put to death" the old self by reckoning it crucified with Messiah (Gal. 2:19-20). Obedience to *this* Torah leads to further revelation, just as disobedience to it leads to further darkness (Matt. 13:12). Yeshua is only the "Author of Eternal Salvation" for *those who heed and obey Him* (Heb. 5:9). "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25).

Set Free by the Son

Yeshua said that everyone who commits sin is a "slave" to their sin nature (the word translated "slave" is doulos (δοῦλος), from the verb δυνω, "to bind"). If the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed (John 8:36). Because of Yeshua, we are no longer slaves to: 1) uncontrollable lust and the power of our lower nature (Rom. 6:12-14; Eph. 4:22-23; Gal. 2:20), 2) untrue thoughts (John 8:32; 1 Cor. 2:16; Col. 2:8), 3) fear - even the fear of death itself (1 John 4:18; Heb. 2:15); 4) the vanity of the world system and its godless pressures (1 John 2:16-17; Col. 2:20; Rom. 12:1-2); 5) various forms of pride and cultural identity (Phil. 3:1-11; Gal. 3:28); 6) Satan's power (1 John 3:8; Luke 10:19); 7) the curse of the law and the penalty for our sins (Gal. 3:13; 1 Pet. 2:24), and so on. Being set free by Yeshua does not imply that we will be sinless (James 5:16, 1 John 1:8-9), but it does imply that the root connection we have to sin has been irreparably *severed*. Often maturity means "catching up" with what God has already done for you in the Holy Spirit...



The Rule of Messiah

But what about keeping the law? Well, as we've seen, this phrase needs to be *qualified* somewhat. If we mean this to mean should we follow the lawcode of Moses (and the rabbis), the answer is decidedly *no*, since that system has been replaced by a new and *better* covenant based on the glorious salvation of God (Heb. 8:6). On the other hand, if we understand this to mean obeying the gospel by receiving and obeying the Torah of Yeshua, then of course should "keep the law." "For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not *obey* the gospel of God?" (1 Pet. 4:17; 2 Thess. 1:8). The Torah of Moses has 613 commandments, but the New Testament has over 1,000. In Yeshua's famous Sermon on the Mount address, He demanded that the inner intent of the law be fulfilled, not mere outward conformity to the law. The righteousness he called for was to *exceed* that of the scribes and Pharisees of His day (Matt. 5:20). He then went on to contrast the *inner* intention of the law with various *outer* forms of religious expression (Matt. 5:21-48). It should be noted here that most of us have trouble obeying the very first commandment, namely, to love the LORD, let alone practicing the sort of heart attitude that Yeshua requires. Indeed, as Bonhoeffer said, "When Christ calls a man, he bids him to come and die." Moral reformation is never enough to please God. It takes a genuine miracle for someone to die and be reborn in the Spirit. You cannot "fake" the qualities of heart that Yeshua demands...

The End of the Law

For the Christian, the law must be understood *as it pertains to the gospel* (εὐαγγέλιον), that is, in relation to the message of salvation delivered in the Person and finished work of Yeshua. That is the intent of Romans 10:4, "For Messiah is the *end of the law* for righteousness to everyone who believes" (τέλος γὰρ νόμου Χριστὸς εἰς δικαιοσύνην παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι). The Greek word translated "end" is *telos* (τέλος), which means "termination," "goal," or "limit at which a thing ceases to be." Weust explains: "The sense required - a sense which the words very much naturally yield - is that with Christ in the field, law as a means of attaining righteousness has ceased. The moment a man sees Christ and understands what He is and what He has done, he feels that the legal religion is a thing of the past, the way to righteousness is not the observance of statutes, no matter though they have been promulgated by God Himself; it is faith, the abandonment of the soul to the redeeming judgment and mercy of God in His Son" (Weust: WSGNT, 172). This explanation aligns with other statements made in the New Testament, including the statement that the covenant made at Sinai is "passing away" (ἀφανισμός) and the Levitical priesthood has transformed based on a higher priesthood found in Malki-Tzedek. "For when there is a change (μετατίθημι) in the priesthood, there is necessarily a



change (μετατιθεμένης) in the law as well” (Heb. 7:12). The word translated “change” here comes from the verb μετατίθημι (from meta, “after” + tithemi, to “set”) which might better be translated as “transposed.” The idea is the priesthood *reverted* back to the original priesthood of Zion and therefore required a corresponding “transfer” of authority (μετάθεσις) to the original kingship as well. Yeshua alone is both High Priest and King...

Obeying Yeshua as Lord

Yeshua warned, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the *one who does the will of my Father* who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness’” (Matt. 7:21-23). Notice here that Yeshua did not rehearse the Ten Commandments or mention “halachic” aspects of the law of Moses, but instead focused on the deeds of those who claimed to be His followers. We are to be judged according to His word, His Torah, His law... The Greek word translated “lawlessness” is *anomia* (i.e., ἀνομία, lit. a=without; nomos=law) and refers to the condition of “freely” and consciously rejecting Gods’ will. These are people of whom King David said, “Let them be ashamed who are *gratuitously faithless* (רִיקָם הַבּוֹגְרִים) (Psalm 25:3). In context, then, *anomia* refers to those who merely give lip service to obeying the Messiah but who are spiritual impostors. It is a category mistake to think that Yeshua here referred to those who disregarded the lawcode of Moses. Surely those who “do the will of the Father” are those who put their trust in Yeshua (John 6:40; Matt. 12:50; Gal. 1:4). Attempting to refer the idea of “lawlessness” (*anomia*) to refer to violating the lawcode of Moses is therefore absurd and fallacious. God’s will is for people to repent and believe the message of His salvation given through His Son (John 3:16; Acts 16:31; 2 Pet. 3:9, etc.). Any “Torah” that denies this great truth is therefore a *false torah* that leads to death... “Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son does not have life” (1 John 5:12). “Unless you believe that I AM, you will die in your sins” (John 8:24).

Faith and Works

The “law of Messiah” (תּוֹרַת הַמָּשִׁיחַ) is to humbly love others in the truth (John 14:15; 15:12, Gal. 6:2, etc.). This is not some mawkish sentimentality that is devoid of practical obedience. No, as Bonhoeffer also wrote, “Only those who obey can believe, and only those who believe can obey” (*Cost of Discipleship*, 80). Faith and works are really two sides of the same coin: *the heart of the law is the law of the gospel*. Indeed, taking up the cross and truly following Yeshua sets a higher standard than what “Torah observance”



demands and can produce (e.g., Matt. 5:20). The *inner* is not the *outer*. It is the love of Yeshua that fulfills the law and its demands (Gal. 5:14; Rom. 13:8; 1 Tim. 1:5). All the various civil, moral, and religious rules of Torah were intended to help us get *someplace* - to be in a loving relationship with God and others - but it takes the Holy Spirit to transform the human heart. As Yeshua told us, “the kingdom of heaven is within you” (Luke 17:21). It is therefore a mistake to revert back to the lawcode of Moses since it was never intended to become an end in itself (Rom. 10:4; 1 Cor. 7:23; Col. 2:20-23). The goal of the law was to bring us into an authentic relationship with the LORD through the miracle of spiritual rebirth. Our destiny is to live as “priests and kings” before the Him forever (Rev. 1:6; 5:10). “For freedom Messiah has set us free; stand firm (στήκετε), therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery” (Gal. 5:1).

God doesn't need your help – you need His!

We are saved by trusting in God's grace *alone*. We can add nothing to the finished work of Yeshua. God paid the *highest* possible price for our salvation (i.e., the death of His Son), and therefore it is a *profound* error to think you can “help” God in the work of redemption. “Salvation belongs to the LORD” (לִיהוָה הַיְשׁוּעָה). But while we are not *justified* by works of righteousness, our lives should reveal the *evidence* of our faith. Indeed, a life devoid of good works may be indicative of a “false conversion.” “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who *does the will of my Father* who is in heaven” (Matt. 7:21). The will of the Father is to “believe on the LORD Jesus Christ and be saved” (Acts 16:31; 2 Pet. 3:9). Both the children of light and the children of darkness are known by their fruits (i.e., actions): a healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit (Matt. 7:16-17). Those who obey the gospel (i.e., the Torah of Yeshua) will evidence their salvation by producing the fruit of the Holy Spirit. As Yeshua taught using another spiritual analogy: “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).



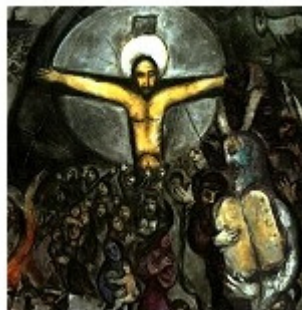


The Glory of God in the Face of Yeshua

There is a legend (from Midrash Tanhuma) that the Torah was written with letters of “black fire on white fire” (i.e., “the Flame Alphabet”). According to some, this refers to the “two Torahs” -- the white fire is the “written Torah” (*she-bikhtav*) whereas the black fire is the “oral Torah” (*she-b'al peh*). A similar point could be made about the unvoiced text of the Hebrew script found in the Tanakh. God provides the *consonants*, but it is the *Spirit that breathes life* into the text (i.e., the vowels). Likewise the Apostle Paul calls the Sinai covenant “the ministry of death (ἡ διακονία τοῦ θανάτου) carved in letters on stone” that came through the meditation of Moses (2 Cor. 3:7-8). It takes the gift of the Holy Spirit to *breathe* (רוּחַ) these words into our hearts (John 20:21-22). And though the Sinai covenant was indeed glorious (as evidenced by the Shekhinah glow upon Moses’ face), compared with the present ministry of the Holy Spirit, it was a glory that was covered with a veil (בְּסוּדָה) because it was fading away and “being brought to an end” (καταργέω). God’s abiding provision for our need is revealed in the face of Yeshua, not in the fading glory of the *ha-brit ha-yashanah* (הַבְּרִית הַיְשָׁנָה) - the older covenant (2 Cor 3:4-18; Matt. 17:8). Unlike Moses -- who veiled his face to hide the fact that the glory of the former covenant of Sinai was indeed fading away -- “we all, with unveiled face, reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. This comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:12-4:1). Each of us, like Moses, must ascend the mountain of Zion to behold the Glory of God: “And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only” (Matt. 17:8).

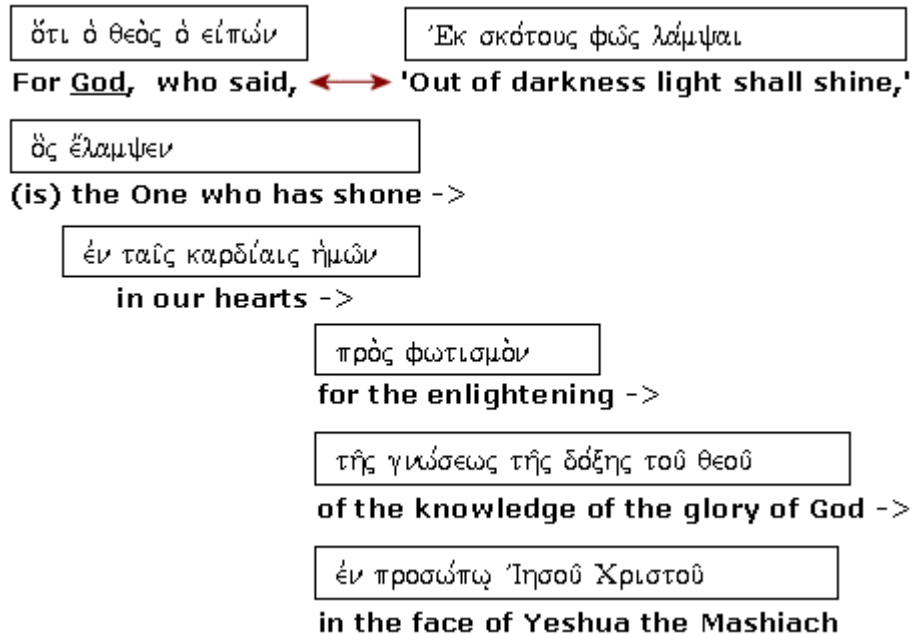
Our faith in God is intended to reflect back the shining glory (*zohar*) of the LORD as revealed in the face of Yeshua:

“For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness (יְהִי אֹרֶךְ)’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Yeshua the Messiah (2 Cor. 4:6).





Let's consider the grammar of this complex and marvelous statement:



The *subject* of the verse is obviously *God* (with quote from Gen. 1:3 functioning as an appositive). Next there is the participle “the one who has shone” (ος ελαμψεν), modified by the adverbial phrase “in our hearts” (εν ταις καρδιαις ημων), followed by the *purposive* clause: “for the *enlightening* (προς φωτισμον) of the *knowledge* (της γνωσεως) of the *glory of God* (της δοξης του θεου) *in the face of Jesus Christ* (εν προσωπω Ιησου Χριστου). Like the Divine Light created on the first day, God shines within our hearts to enlighten us with the truth that His glory is fully expressed in Yeshua.

“The face of Yeshua the Messiah” is therefore the radiance and glory of God Himself. As the author of the Book of Hebrews puts it, “He (Yeshua) *is* the radiance of the glory of God and the *exact imprint* of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power” (Heb. 1:3). There is indeed a “glory” and grace found in the older covenant, but that glory and grace has been far *surpassed* by the glory of God as revealed in the face of the LORD Jesus, blessed be He, who has the “Name above all Names” (Phil. 2:9-11). God now speaks in the language “of Son” from the midst of the fire revealed at Zion...

There is only one way to life, chaverim, and that is Yeshua...