

# Torah or No Torah?

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**Should the Torah and its commands be considered relevant by new covenant believers in Jesus? According to what most of us have been taught, the new covenant replaced the old covenant and the Torah was abolished along with it. Is this what the scripture *truly* says? Is this actually what Jesus instructs?**

**The aim of this writing is to present scripture, above and beyond any man-made doctrine, as a means to an end in answering these age old questions. Let's take a look...**



### **What is the Torah?**

Through Moses, God gave us a Torah (translated as “instruction” more commonly known today as “law”), which made known to all people what His standards for righteousness were. The Torah is composed of the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. It contains the creation story, the giving of the 10 commandments (in total there is 613 commandments - many of which involve the no longer relevant commands surrounding animal sacrifices), the story of Noah’s Ark, and more.

### **Jesus and Torah “The Law”: What did Jesus say?**

Most churches in today’s age teach that the coming of the messiah, Jesus Christ, marked the end of Torah adherence. Because we are saved by grace through repentance and faith in Jesus, we can have a right relationship with God. While this is true, is it really true that we no longer need to observe God’s Torah?

The two verses below offer an answer tot hat question directly from the one we can trust most - Jesus Christ.

“Do not think that I came to destroy the Torah or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to complete. For truly, I say to you, till the heaven and the earth pass away, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, shall by no means pass from the Torah till all be done. “Whoever, then, breaks one of the least of these commands, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the reign of the heavens; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the reign of the heavens.”

**Matthew 5:17-19**

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Master, Master,’ shall enter into the reign of the heavens, but he who is doing the desire of My Father in the heavens. “Many shall say to Me in that day, ‘Master, Master, have we not prophesied in Your Name, and cast out demons in Your Name, and done many mighty works in Your Name?’ “And then I shall declare to them, ‘I never knew you, depart from Me, you who work lawlessness!”

**Matthew 7:21-23**

This scripture clarifies without a doubt that Jesus did not come to destroy but fulfill the Torah. According to scripture, this means that the curse of the law is over. God uses the prophet Jeremiah to explain that the New Covenant will look like in regard to Torah observance:

“But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”

Jeremiah 31:33

Jesus came to teach us to live righteously not out of external obedience, but from a place of love and trust in God:

“‘You are to love ADONAI your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.’ This is the greatest and most important command.”

Matthew 22:36-37

“‘If you love Me, keep My commandments.’”

John 14:15

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In order to understand what God considers righteous versus sinful, we must pay homage and understanding to the very place we know what God commands as righteous behavior - the Torah!

## **Jesus on Torah Commandments**

Many Christians believe that the Torah and its commands have been replaced with the “two greatest commands”... What are these “two greatest commands”, according to Jesus?

“One of the Torah -teachers came up and heard them engaged in this discussion. Seeing that Yeshua (Jesus) answered them well, he asked him, “Which is the most important mitzvah (command/adherence to a command of God’s) of them all?” Yeshua (Jesus) answered, “The most important is, ‘ Sh’ma Yisra’el, ADONAI Eloheinu, ADONAI echad [Hear, O Isra’el, the LORD our God, the LORD is one], and you are to love ADONAI your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your understanding and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You are to love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other mitzvah greater than these.”

**Mark 12:28-31**

In the passage above, Jesus paints a wonderful picture of fulfilling Torah in our hearts through adherence to it out of trust and love. As mentioned previously, what many don't realize is that Jesus is citing the Torah to make this claim! Jesus is quoting the Sh'ma from the 6th chapter of Deuteronomy, the 5th book of the Torah.

Perhaps the most ironic aspect of the modern church claiming Torah is abolished is the widely accepted adherence to following the Ten Commandments (although many disregard the 4th—see article A Sabbath Rest Remains). What makes this ironic is the Ten Commands are introduced and discussed at length in the Torah!

More from Jesus, and others, on adherence to Torah commands:

“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments... He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me. He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and reveal Myself to him.”... Yeshua (Jesus) answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our dwelling with him.”

**John 14:15, 21, 23**

“Everyone who believes that Yeshua is the Messiah is born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves the one born of Him. We know that we love God's children by this—when we love God and obey His commandments. For this is the love of God—that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.”

**1 John 5:1-3**

Jesus came to save the world and reflect the correct understanding of Torah by faith in Him and carrying out good works through that faith. Observance of God's commands, some of which are to observe the holy days, feasts and festivals, is what God considers good works and is always the result of a deep love and trust for God and His word.

### **Paul and other Apostles on Torah Commands**

Many who claim the OT and the Torah have been abolished in the New Covenant site isolated verses from Paul's writings. Unfortunately, these verses are typically misunderstood and taken out of context leading to flawed theology. The verses below paint an undeniable picture of how Paul and other apostles concern the Torah and following its commands:

“Does it follow that we abolish Torah by this trusting (in Jesus)? Heaven forbid! On the contrary, we confirm Torah.”

**Romans 3:31**

“All who have sinned outside the framework of Torah will die outside the framework of Torah; and all who have sinned within the framework of Torah will be judged by Torah. 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 2:12-13**

“Therefore, if the uncircumcised keeps the righteous decrees of the Torah, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? Indeed, the one not circumcised physically who fulfills the Torah will judge you who—even with the written code and circumcision—break the

Torah. For one is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision something visible in the flesh.”

**Romans 2:26-27**

“Someone who disregards the Torah of Moshe (Moses) is put to death without mercy on the word of two or three witnesses.”

**Hebrews 10:28**

“but the others went on from Perga to Pisidian Antioch, and on Shabbat they went into the synagogue and sat down. After the reading from the Torah and from the Prophets, the synagogue leaders sent them a message, “Brothers, if any of you has a word of exhortation for the people, speak!””

**Acts 13:14-15**

## Party Time: Torah Feasts, Festivals, and Holy Days

Christians are known throughout the world for church on Sunday, Easter in spring, and Santa Claus bringing joy to the world during the snowy, cheery Christmas season. However, none of these have any credibility or basis out of the Bible. Jesus, nor His apostles, taught on these days, celebrated them, or instructed believers in Christ to do the same. The Torah on the other hand has a handful of festive events that God calls His followers to observe and teach others to do the same. The million dollar question is, did Jesus Himself follow the instruction to celebrate and observe these events?

### PASSOVER

Did Jesus observe this Torah festival? Absolutely! What did God ask of His children concerning the Passover (Pesach)?



“These are the designated times of Adonai, the holy convocations you are to proclaim at their designated times. “In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, between sundown and complete darkness, comes Pesach (Passover) for Adonai. **Leviticus 23:4-5** But the person who is clean and not on a trip who fails to observe *Pesach* will be cut off from his people; because he did not bring the offering for *Adonai* at its designated time, that person will bear the consequences of his sin.

**Numbers 9:13**

Jesus and His apostles participated in the Festival of Passover, as recorded in the New Testament:

“On the first day for matzah, when they slaughtered the lamb for Pesach (Passover), Yeshua’s talmidim (disciples) asked him, “Where do you want us to go and prepare your Seder?””

**Mark 14:12**

“Then came the day of matzah (Unleavened Bread), on which the Passover lamb had to be killed. Yeshua sent Kefa (Peter) and Yochanan (John), instructing them, “Go and prepare our Seder, so we can eat.””

**Luke 22:7-8**

*[For more information about Passover, see the article entitled Yeshua the Passover Lamb]*

## SHABBAT

Many times through the New Testament, Jesus is found in the synagogue teaching on Shabbat-the 4th commandment of the Torah. Attending synagogue on Shabbat was standard practice for any Torah observant individual.

“Yeshua was teaching in one of the synagogues on Shabbat.”

**Luke 13:10**

“Now when he went to Natzeret, where he had been brought up, on Shabbat he went to the synagogue as usual. He stood up to read,”

**Luke 4:16**

“On Shabbat he started to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They asked, “Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom he has been given? What are these miracles worked through him?”

**Mark 6:2**



*[For more information about Shabbat, see the article entitled A Sabbath Rest Remains]*

## Torah as a Tool: How did Jesus use the Torah?

### **TORAH IS SCRIPTURE: Jesus Does Battle with Satan**

Many

don't consider that the Word of God at this time was the Old Testament, which included the Torah. In fact, the New Testament was written between 50-150 years after Jesus died. All references to treasuring and relying on scripture in the New Testament by Jesus and the apostles are referring to the Old Testament, including the Torah!

When Jesus is being tempted in the wilderness, He very boldly uses the teachings in the Torah to stand firm and resist the devil. This is an indicator that Jesus himself finds the scriptures within the Torah teachings to be powerful, relevant, and God-breathed.

“But he answered, “The Tanakh (Old Testament) says, ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of ADONAI.’”

**Matthew 4:4/Luke 4:4**

This well known verse of Matthew is Jesus quoting directly out of the 8th chapter of Deuteronomy, the 5th book of the Torah:

“He humbled you, allowing you to become hungry, and then fed you with man, which neither you nor your ancestors had ever known, to make you understand that a person does not live on food alone but on everything that comes from the mouth of ADONAI.”

**Deuteronomy 8:3**

Jesus reveals how powerful and trusting He believes the Torah to be by continuing to battle Satan using its scriptures.

“Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

**Matthew 4:7/Luke 4:12**

“You shall not put the Lord your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah.”

**Deuteronomy 6:16**

### **TORAH IS SCRIPTURE: Jesus' Sermon on the Mount**

The Sermon on the Mount was the only sermon Jesus was ever recorded as having delivered. In large, this sermon consists of Jesus giving instruction on ethical behaviors, amongst other things. During the sermon, Jesus gives unbelievably convicting instruction on issues, such as, murder, adultery, anger, and more. Many of these instructions are by no means “made up” by Jesus. Actually, he is citing Torah commands and calling His followers to not only follow them but follow them to the greatest standard imaginable.



“You shall not murder.”

**Exodus**

**20:13**

“You have heard that our fathers were told, ‘Do not murder,’ and that anyone who commits murder will be subject to judgment. But I tell you that anyone who nurses anger against his brother will be subject to judgment; that whoever calls his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing!’ will be brought before the *Sanhedrin*; that whoever says, ‘Fool!’ incurs the penalty of burning in the fire of hell!

**Matthew 5:21-**

**22**



“You shall not commit adultery.”

**Exodus 20:14/Deuteronomy**

**5:18**

““You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

**Matthew 5:27-28**

### **Faith vs Works: Does this call for a works based observance of New Covenant related Torah commands?**

Absolutely not. We are saved by grace and faith in Yeshua the messiah alone. One only needs to remember the story of the thief on the cross that Christ forgave simply for his faith alone to clear that confusion. Likewise, we no longer need any of the animal sacrifices for the one sacrifice to save us all-Yeshua the Messiah.

The Torah is the basic text which informs us what God sees as sin, and what behavior is acceptable in His eyes. Without this, we lack true intimacy with God because we don't fully understand what pleases Him and what grieves His Spirit.

Although we are saved by grace and grace alone, when we are saved we are born again unto good works (obedience to the Torah) which God has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them:

“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 (Eph) 2:10**

Additionally, many Torah commands like observation of 7th day Shabbat and other holy days, reciting the Sh’ma, etc. are deemed by God as **“perpetual, everlasting, and to be taught throughout your generations”**. Is our God like that of Islam, Mormonism, and other false faiths in that He changes and contradicts Himself? Heaven forbid!

## **Conclusion: Torah’s Purpose in a New Covenant Believer’s Life**

So, why know Torah? Why observe Shabbat? Why celebrate the feasts and festivals?

“try to imitate me, even as I myself try to imitate the Messiah.”

**1 Corinthians (1 Co) 11:1**

We are called to follow in the ways and faith of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Despite what Replacement Theology, most modern church theology, and the author of confusion (Satan) teaches, all believers are of one body and one faith. One Torah. One word. One Messiah. We are saved by grace and called to live a sinless life in repentance and trust. Jew and gentile alike, as Spiritual Israelites in messiah.

Jesus and His followers called for a Torah observant life. Not only this, but it should be clear at this point that they themselves were all Torah observant. However, as plainly taught by Paul and widely misunderstood, Torah observance and religious works can never replace the salvation found through faith and faith alone in our Jewish Messiah, Yeshua Ha Meshiach-Jesus the Messiah. It is by grace alone we are saved. The Torah is a major part of the holy scriptures that should remain valuable to all believers to know how to honor and please God. It is the way of righteousness and the way of Jesus Christ, our messiah.

### **CONSEQUENCES OF DISREGARDING TORAH**

Earlier in this writing, we saw Jesus clearly relied on Old Testament scripture to teach His followers as well as to rebuke the devil. The below verses highlight OT and NT references explaining how important it is for a believer to know and pay attention to all scripture. Additionally, we learn the consequences of ignoring the *full* Word of God.

I will raise up a prophet for them [from among their countrymen] like you, and I will place my words into his mouth, and he shall speak to them [everything that I command him]. [And then] **the man that will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I will hold accountable.**

**Deuteronomy 18:18–19**

Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You will listen to him in everything that he says to you. it will be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet will be destroyed utterly from the people.’



## Acts 3:22–23

“But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But since **you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?**”

John 5:45-47

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