

## Torah Questions

Occasionally someone will ask questions concerning the Torah. Usually, the questions are along the lines of why don't we study the Torah of the Jews? This implies we are leaving something out of our studies and the Torah of today is not the same as the Torah of earlier years. We need to understand what is meant by the "Torah," see if it pertains to us, and if it indeed has been changed.

God gave man the Bible. It was recorded by prophets as they were inspired. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God," (2 Tim 3:16). "And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; 20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, 21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:19-21). Hence the word of God was written down for all to read, study, and understand.

Our Bibles are divided into Old Testament and New Testament. The Hebrew Bible is called the Tanakh. The Torah is the first 5 books of the Old Testament, also called the Pentateuch (Penta - means five; teuch - means book.) This is generally what is meant by the term "Torah." In this sense we do have the Torah, and we do study those five books of law.

However, to some the term "Torah" refers to those five books plus the oral law of the Jews and some later commentaries. Today we have articles and commentaries written to try and explain to us what the Bible means. Those words are not inspired and may or may not be accurate. The same goes for the Jews. It is one thing to read the law and another to apply it to everyday situations. Therefore, the Jews developed their oral law interpretations and application of the Torah. Different Rabbis would teach their followers what they thought God meant. The first 5 books were rearranged topically and the oral law was added. If one wanted to study all the Law said regarding the Sabbath one had to look up passages in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. In the Torah all of those passages are in one place.

Later on, many of the teachings of the Rabbis were recorded in the Talmud. The Talmud is not just one book, but a series of books. The format of the Talmud is,

a law is given from the Mishna, which is then followed by various interpretations. One may recall that Jesus was asked a question pertaining to marriage and divorce in Matthew 19. The question was “It is lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason” (verse 3). When one goes back to the Law of Moses, they will see divorce was allowed in one instance. “When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house,” (Deut 24:1). Divorce was allowed for one reason, this being some uncleanness, found in the wife. What did this mean? Two schools of thought emerged: one saying that the uncleanness referred to sexual immorality, the other said it meant anything the husband wanted. Jesus did not deal with either school of thought, but went right to God’s law in the Garden of Eden and explained that there is one only cause for divorce, that being sexual immorality. Later on, Jesus said, “And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15.9). The Talmud and Mishna dealt with the proper way for people to wash their hands, and how much one could do before “working” and violating the Sabbath. The problem being, these were additions to the Law of God and in many circumstances contradicted the Law. We see the same today as denominations have creed books with doctrinal teaching which directly contradicts the Bible. – Continued To Next Week