

It is Often Said

Tim Hegg

“Moses Brought Condemnation; Yeshua Brought Grace”

“The Work of the Spirit Began at Pentecost”

“Paul Was All Things to All Men”

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Forword

What is the Gospel? That seems like a very simple question, but throughout history, people have most certainly not agreed on the answer! In fact, disagreements about what constitutes the Gospel have been a major dividing factor in within the history of Christianity.

One important question we should ask about the Gospel is whether people who lived prior to the coming of the Messiah Yeshua (Christ Jesus) were saved the same way as people who lived subsequent to His coming. It's been interesting for me to ask this question to groups I've addressed. Interestingly, many tell me that what they've been taught by their Bible teachers is that people in the "Old Testament" were saved by keeping the Law while those who are part of the "New Covenant" are saved by faith apart from the Law. They are surprised when I tell them that the Bible does not support their answer, but that the Gospel has always been the same "good news" in all eras and for all people, and that salvation has always been by faith in the Messiah, not by any "good works" that a person may perform.

It is this very issue—the singularity of God's saving work throughout the history of our world—that was the impetus for writing the three essays in this third volume of *It is Often Said*.

The first essay, entitled "Moses Brought Condemnation; Yeshua Brought Grace," is a short study of John 1:17 and its implications for the question of the continuity of the Gospel. Did God intend the Torah He gave to Israel by the hand of Moses to be a vehicle of condemnation? Is the Torah contrary to the grace and truth which Yeshua brought? Far from being contradictory, the Torah

revealed to Moses and the message of Yeshua are the unified, non-contradictory word of God revealing His method of making sinners righteous.

The second essay, “The Work of the Spirit Began at Pentacost,” likewise deals with this question of the unity of the Gospel message, and particularly the role of the Spirit in salvation. Very often the story of Shavuot (Pentacost) found in Acts 2 is used to show that until that event, the Spirit was inactive in the salvation of individuals. A closer look at this important text, however, reveals a quite different picture. The outpouring of the Spirit at Shavuot signaled the special work of the Spirit, empowering the *ekklesia* to gather in the elect from the nations through the proclamation of the same Gospel, the same Gospel announced to Abraham (cf. Galatians 3:8).

The third essay of this volume confronts the teaching often articulated within Christian circles that Paul’s Gospel set aside the Torah as no longer viable for those who have come to faith in Yeshua. People who take hold this view often appeal to 1Corinthians 9:19–23, from which it is suggested that Paul had abandoned the Torah himself and was teaching others to do the same.

As you read and study this third essay, I hope you will see that this passage in 1Corinthians does not support such a teaching. Rather than adjusting his message to please men, Paul remained faithful to Yeshua and His Gospel of the Kingdom, seeking to make disciples as Messiah commissioned, by teaching them “to observe all that I commanded you” (Matthew 28:19–20) which included even the smallest letter of the Torah (Matthew 5:17–20).

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Preface

In our ‘post-Torah’⁴ era, the Apostolic Scriptures (New Testament) are read through the lenses of modern Christianity—where the Torah’s interpretations have long since been determined. The foundational question of how the Torah applies to the Christian’s life has been so thoroughly answered by long-standing theologies that it no longer maintains the status of a question. Most everyone is well-settled that one’s obligations to God’s commands shifted in the very distant past, and thus the well-worn paths of Christian tradition are the only ones found on the daily map of ‘spiritual formation’ in our times. The ancient trails have long since disappeared.

This post-Torah perspective is, as one could imagine, the paradigm by which the Apostolic Scriptures are read, interpreted and applied. With the colored lenses of post-Torah theology well-fitted to the eyes of modern-day believers, the words of Yeshua and His Apostles conform nicely to today’s preconceived theology. Most believe that the God of Israel has (in practical terms) become the God of the church, who, in ‘switching’ from one people to another, has likewise written a ‘new constitution’ by which the current ‘people of God’ are governed.

It is therefore understandable why the current ‘Torah movement’ has become like a burr under the saddle of the modern Christian church. We’re asking the old questions once again. And in so doing, we are subtly (and not so subtly) suggesting that the current ‘answers’ are patently insufficient. We’re questioning well-worn paths of theology and this is unsettling. In the

canoe of today's theology, gliding smoothly through the waters of Christian tradition, we're leaning over to see what's in the water, which makes the rest of the passengers very nervous.

We have discovered many awesome and wonderful treasures in the unknown waters of the Torah. We have discovered it is full of God's lovingkindness and truth;⁵ it contains words of life and blessing;⁶ it is God's will and wisdom for our lives;⁷ and perhaps one of the most surprising discoveries of all, His commandments are not too difficult for us to keep.⁸

We are realizing many theologies have missed the mark because they have been developed outside of the context of the entirety of God's Word. This volume addresses some of these miss guided theologies. We hope that you will dive in to the deep and refreshing waters of God's Word and find the same refreshing lovingkindness and depth of truth that we have found.

Please note, as you read through this book you will find yourself coming across terminology you may not be familiar with. We are using the original Hebrew translation for many commonly used words because the Hebrew word gives a much fuller meaning. Yeshua is Jesus' Hebrew name. His name means "salvation." The meaning of His name alone is good reason to use it. We also use the word *Torah* when referring to the first five books of the Bible. This word means "teaching or instruction" in the Hebrew. This is a much more accurate definition of the books of Moses than the more commonly used term *law*. The word *Tanakh* is used in place of Old Testament. *Tanakh* is an acronym formed from the three sections of the Hebrew Bible—the *Torah*, the *Nevi'im* (Prophets), and the *Ketuwim* (Writings).

We should not keep the Torah in order to merit salvation. The Torah is inadequate for that. We should keep Torah because we are saved. 1 John 5:2-5

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It is Often Said



“Moses Brought Condemnation; Yeshua Brought Grace”

As Christians are called back to the Hebraic roots of their faith, some claim that the Torah and the Gospel are at odds. Why? They think that the message of Moses is colored in hues of condemnation, while the words of Yeshua are portrayed as full of grace and forgiveness. No wonder many judge the return to Torah as “going back under the condemnation of the Law” or even as a denial of the Gospel. Since this view is so common in contemporary Christianity, well-meaning believers often react with genuine concern for friends and family who express a new-found love for Torah. To them it seems to betray the very heart of the Gospel.

Does the Bible teach that Moses and Yeshua proclaimed two different ways for a sinner to stand righteous before the Almighty? Was salvation before Messiah’s coming based on keeping Torah? Was salvation by faith through grace only available after Yeshua came? Since mainstream Christianity affirms that Abraham was saved not by his obedience to God, but through faith,⁹ how do we reconcile the notion that Moses and Yeshua brought opposite messages?

John 1:17

The opening prologue of John's Gospel sets the stage for his account of Yeshua's life. His goal was to show that Yeshua is the Messiah and that faith in Him is the only way a sinner may be considered righteous before the Almighty. He tells us this in plain language near the conclusion of his book (John 20:30–31).

John begins his Gospel by stressing Yeshua's eternal, divine nature, His oneness with the Father, and His mission to provide eternal salvation through His sacrifice for sinners. In this prologue we have a direct statement incorporating the work of both Moses and Yeshua. For centuries the King James Version offered this translation of John 1:17:

For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace and truth came by Messiah Yeshua.

The idea clearly suggested by this translation is that the law or Torah is at odds with grace and truth. We do not need to look far to find commentators emphasizing this contrast. For example, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown write:

The law is here placed in opposition both to “grace” and to “truth”—but in different respects, of course. The law is opposed to grace only in that sense in which the law contains no grace.¹⁰

This commentary does explain that the “law” contained a shadow of the Gospel, and that by this shadow the holy ones of old were enabled to believe. But the perspective is that when the Gospel came through the incarnation of Yeshua, the shadow in the “law” was no longer needed. In other words, the law or Torah is represented as a temporary measure anticipating Messiah's coming—a transitory entity that has run its course, fulfilled its mission, and is now no longer needed.

Here is another example from the scholarly work of F. Godet from his commentary on John 1:17.

The office of the law is to command and to demand; the peculiarity of grace, the essence of the Gospel, is to offer and to give. The law connects salvation with a work which it exacts; Messiah gives gratuitously a salvation which is to become the cause of works.¹¹

Let's set aside the commentaries and try to determine exactly what John is saying in this passage. Is he really putting the Torah at odds with grace and truth?

First, note that there is no contrast indicated in the Greek original of John 1:17. The word *but* in the King James Version was added by the translators. In fact, *but* is not found in any of the Greek manuscripts! Most of the modern translations have corrected this.

For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Messiah Yeshua.

In other words, the idea that John is contrasting the Torah with the work of Messiah is not found in the text itself. On the contrary, if we realize that the Torah spoke of and pointed to Yeshua, then John's words can be understood as paralleling Moses with Yeshua, not contrasting them. In fact, John makes a similar point with John the Baptist's work. Just as Torah (Moses) spoke of the Messiah, so too did John the Baptist come to testify of the Light (Yeshua):

There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light. (John 1:6–8)

Just as we would never think that John the Baptist's foreshadowing work is pitted against the coming of Messiah, we would do well to take caution in pitting the Torah against Messiah's teaching.

Yeshua also affirmed that Moses testifies about Him. Consider His words as He spoke to the disciples on the road to Emmaus after His resurrection:

And He said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures. (Luke 24:25–27)

In other words, “The Torah was given by Moses; grace and truth were realized (came) through Messiah Yeshua” simply reiterates that Moses, in the Torah, spoke of Messiah, pointing Israel to faith in Him. The grace and truth that were confirmed forever by the eternal work of His death, resurrection, ascension and intercession were revealed by the Torah that Moses brought to the people from the very hand of God. Far from putting the Torah on the shelf as some unusable antique, John asks us to see Yeshua in the Torah and to receive the grace and truth that God’s eternal Word teaches would be found in Him.

Grace and Truth

What does John mean by the terms *grace* and *truth*? The modern Hebrew translation of this verse (as well as Delitzsch’s translation) gives us an interesting perspective. For they translate the phrase “grace and truth” (*v’chesed v’haemet*), as “lovingkindness and truth,” the doublet so often used to refer to the covenant faithfulness of God throughout the Hebrew Scriptures.

We first encounter this two-word combination on the lips of Abraham’s trusted servant as he sought a wife for Isaac. Fully convinced that God had demonstrated His faithfulness to the covenant promises given to Abraham by directing him to Rebekah, Eliezer exclaimed:

Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His lovingkindness and His truth (*chasdo v'amito*) toward my master; as for me, the LORD has guided me in the way to the house of my master's brothers. (Genesis 24:27)

Another example of this covenant language is found in Jacob's request that his bones be carried to the Land and not left in Egypt. In a mini-covenant ceremony in which Joseph places his hand under Jacob's thigh,¹² we hear Jacob say:

Please, if I have found favor in your sight, place now your hand under my thigh and deal with me in kindness and faithfulness (*chesed ve'emet*). Please do not bury me in Egypt. (Genesis 47:29)

While the English translation may not indicate it directly, the phrase "kindness and faithfulness" is the same Hebrew phrase, *chesed ve'emet*, "lovingkindness and truth."

We also meet up with this covenant phrase in connection with the Davidic covenant. Sometimes abbreviated to the single word *chesed* (lovingkindness), we read in 2 Samuel 7:15, "My lovingkindness (*chasdi*) shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you."

This initial promise of God's covenant to David becomes the theme of the post-exilic Psalm 89 when God's people looked to the promise of the eternal throne of David for hope:

"I have found David My servant; with My holy oil I have anointed him, with whom My hand will be established; my arm also will strengthen him. The enemy will not deceive him, nor the son of wickedness afflict him. But I shall crush his adversaries before him, and strike those who hate him. My faithfulness and My lovingkindness (*chasdi*) will be with him, and in My name his horn will be exalted...My lovingkindness (*chasdi*) I will keep for him forever,

and My covenant shall be confirmed to him. So I will establish his descendants forever and his throne as the days of heaven.” (Psalm 89:20–24, 28–29)

The study of the Hebrew word *chesed*, in recent years, though debated among scholars, reveals that it was used in ancient Semitic cultures—especially in the Scriptures of Israel—to refer to covenant loyalty.¹³ When connected to the Hebrew word “truth” (*emet*), *chesed* portrays the sense of a firm covenant commitment flowing from compassion and loyalty.

This compassion and loyalty is often connected to the covenant made between God and Israel.¹⁴ The prophets repeatedly proclaim that God will be faithful to His covenant promises. The Dead Sea Scrolls also confirm that this biblical usage (combining *chesed* with covenant faithfulness) had molded the term and its usage in the first century. The combination of *chesed* and *b’rit* (covenant) are found in the non-biblical Qumran texts at least ten times.¹⁵

Thus, when John writes that “the Torah was given through Moses; grace (lovingkindness) and truth were realized in Messiah Yeshua,” he is affirming that the covenant promise of salvation revealed in the Torah by Moses has been realized in the person and work of Messiah. He is not setting the Torah and the Gospel at odds, but showing that the promise God made to the fathers was the very revelation of the Gospel—finally realized and confirmed in Yeshua.

What Gospel Did Yeshua Preach?

Ultimately, the idea that the Torah taught a different way of forgiveness than Yeshua simply does not match up with His own words. Note, for instance, our Master’s conversation with the “rich young ruler” (Matthew 19:16–22).¹⁶ This man comes to Yeshua asking, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Yeshua’s answer is unsettling for many; “If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments” (Matthew 19:17).

Yeshua's Gospel expected that those who called themselves the children of God should live in accordance with their identity.



Was Yeshua telling this seeker that he could obtain eternal life by keeping the commandments? Was Yeshua teaching that one could “earn” eternal life by keeping Torah?

After Yeshua summarizes the Ten Words, the young man responds, “All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?” (Matthew 19:20). Had Yeshua taught that a genuine attempt at keeping the commandments could bring eternal life, He undoubtedly would have reassured the man that he was doing well and that he already was on the path to eternal life. The young man would have been affirmed in his pious lifestyle and gone away satisfied. But that is not how the story ends.

Yeshua used the Torah to point this young man to the core issue: faith. He said:

“If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me” (Matthew 19:21). Yeshua told the man to entrust himself to God and to stop trusting in his own possessions—the matters of life that he believed he could control. He asked him to die to those things that he considered most important and to follow Him in a life of complete faith. In the Master's hands, the Torah worked its divine purpose: to reveal the heart and to require faith. The Gospel Yeshua preaches from the Torah is a Gospel centered in the exercise of faith, “Come, follow Me.”

After the young man left, Yeshua explained His words to His disciples. He expressed how difficult it is for a rich person to enter the kingdom. His words were not intended to demean those who are blessed with this world's wealth. Rather, He emphasized how easy it is for the affluent to trust in their wealth

rather than commit themselves to God in faith. In His answer, Yeshua spoke the Gospel: “With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” (Matthew 19:26) Yeshua’s Gospel message has faith at its core.

A second example of Yeshua’s Gospel appears in His interaction with Nicodemus in John 3:1–21. Here, the leader of the Judeans came to Yeshua seeking to know what kind of miracle worker He really was. Nicodemus expressed his view: Surely God was with Yeshua as proven by the miracles He performed. But Yeshua’s response cut to the heart of the matter: “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).

There was no need to remind Nicodemus of the commandments. He was a teacher, perhaps even a teacher over other scholars.¹⁷ But Yeshua knew that Nicodemus needed to exercise faith—to have the Torah written upon his heart. He needed the work of the Spirit to transform him and bring life where there was none. Had Yeshua’s Gospel consisted of calling Israel to the outward performance of the commands, Nicodemus would have likely fared quite well. That, however, was not Yeshua’s Gospel. The Gospel of the Torah on Yeshua’s lips was the good news that centered on faith in God, something that comes only by the work of the Spirit in giving a new heart.

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water
and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of
God. (John 3:5)

The message of Yeshua was no different from the message of Moses upon which it was built. The Torah—given to the nation after her redemption from Egypt—was God’s teaching in righteousness to a people who were already His. It was not a way for them to become His, but the rule and pattern of life for those He had purchased with the blood of the firstborn. Yeshua’s Gospel, therefore, expected that those who called themselves the children of God should live in accordance with their identity.

Their life of obedience to God’s commandments was the natural outcome of their adoption into God’s family by faith. Using Moses as His text, He preached a Gospel of faith in God—in His Messiah—as the only way to enter the kingdom.

How Were Abraham and David Saved?

The charge that living a life of Torah is a “step backward” away from the Gospel subtly portrays an underlying assumption that people who lived before Yeshua’s time were saved in a different way than we are. But such an assumption fails to consider Paul’s teaching. In Romans chapter four he holds up Abraham and David as prime examples of what he understands to be justification by faith.

Paul emphasizes that if anyone had cause to boast about his piety, it would be Abraham. Yet even though he was faithful in his obedience, he had no cause to boast before God. Why? Because his righteousness was not based upon obedience but upon faith in God’s promise: “Then he [Abraham] believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness” (Genesis 15:6). Paul goes on to teach that exercising faith as Abraham did is not a righteous deed that attracts God’s mercy:

Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness.
(Romans 4:4–5)

Paul plainly states that believing is not a work. Believing in God is admitting that what He has said is true—admitting that there is no one righteous, not even one.¹⁸ The one who truly believes has therefore resigned himself to God’s mercies. Only He can effect salvation—it is entirely in His hands. And Abraham is Paul’s prime example of this faith, the same faith he is commending to the Torah community in Rome.

Those who were saved before as well as after the appearance of our Messiah have eternal life in precisely the same way.



It is clear that as far as Paul was concerned, Abraham was saved by faith. And since only faith in Messiah saves, Yeshua must have been the object of his faith. Our Master declared as much when He stated that “Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad” (John 8:56). When Abraham believed, he believed in the Messiah.

Paul brings David into his argument as further proof that salvation has always been by God’s grace received by faith. In Romans 4:7–8 Paul quotes the words of the psalmist, linking Genesis 15:6 and Psalm 32:1–2 by the common term *credited* or *reckoned*:

Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD will not take into account (will not reckon). (Romans 4:7–8 quoting Psalm 32:1–2)

Once again, David testifies that sins are not forgiven by being balanced with good deeds; sins are forgiven because God declares the righteous and just forgiven—sins no longer reckoned to the account of the sinner. Far from believing that sins would be “passed over” by God because of the sinner’s noble efforts, David understood that God’s willingness to forgive sins could only be accomplished when the Almighty no longer took them into account.

So did David believe that God would diminish His justice in order to cover the sins of Israel? Could He “look the other way,” allowing His mercy and love to diminish His justice? No,

of course not! David had been given the revelation of Messiah. He understood that the covenant promised to him was based upon the coming of Messiah and the work of salvation He would accomplish.¹⁹ Peter declared this to be so in his Shavuot message in Acts 2. Speaking of David he said:

And so, because he [David] was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay. (Acts 2:30–31, quoting Psalm 132:11 and 16:10).

If David knew that the Messiah would rise from the dead, he also knew that He would die. And if David knew of the death and resurrection of the Messiah, it is obvious that he did not keep this a secret, but wrote about it in his many psalms. As a prophet he declared this central truth to Israel. We must conclude that the death and resurrection of Messiah were both known and anticipated in ancient Israel.

Why would the Messiah need to die? Isaiah gives us the answer in clear and certain words.

As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see light and be satisfied; by His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities. (Isaiah 53:11)²⁰

Thus, the message of the Gospel before the giving of the Torah (Abraham) as well as after (David) is the same message taught by Yeshua and His Apostles: The blessings of God come through faith in His Messiah. The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the Gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “All the nations will be blessed in you” (Galatians 3:8).

The Word of Faith which We Are Preaching

That Paul and Moses had the same Gospel message is explicitly taught by the Apostle. In Romans 10, after declaring that the Messiah is the goal²¹ of the Torah (10:4), Paul quotes Moses (Deuteronomy 30:12–14) in verses five through eight. In this quote, Moses admonishes the people of Israel to realize that the Torah—the word of God—is not far from them so that they would have to work hard to find it, but that it was in their mouth and in their heart.²² For Paul, the only way that the Torah could be written on the heart was through the regenerating work of the Spirit in the heart of faith. And such a work of the Spirit would mean that the truth of Messiah had been revealed. The Torah as the written Word of God inevitably points to Messiah, the living Word of God.

For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness. But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ (that is, to bring Messiah down), or ‘Who will ascend into the abyss?’ (that is, to bring Messiah up from the dead).” But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart”—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching. (Romans 10:5–8)

Though the English translations start verse six with a contrast (“But the righteousness based on faith speaks ...”), no such contrast is demanded by the Greek. Paul does not consider the words of Moses to rival his own teaching, but he shows that the two are in perfect harmony. Indeed, since Paul has already declared the goal of the Torah to be Messiah (10:4), he shows that both he and Moses preach the identical message. The words of Moses in Deuteronomy 30:12–14 that he quotes are “the word of faith which we are preaching” (Romans 10:8). Note carefully what Paul affirms here: first, the message of Moses was a mes-

sage requiring faith, and second, the message of Moses and the message of Paul is the same message.

Conclusion

The deeply entrenched teaching that pits Moses against Yeshua and finds the Torah and the Gospel at odds is not found in the biblical text. Taken to its logical end, this belief system requires two ways of salvation—one for those living before Yeshua’s coming and one for those after His resurrection. But the Scriptures are clear that there are not two ways of salvation. Those who were saved before as well as after the appearance of our Messiah have eternal life in precisely the same way: by God’s grace given to sinners on the basis of Yeshua’s saving work, applied to the individual through faith in the Messiah. The Torah and the Gospel are not at odds. The Torah proclaims the Gospel, both through its divine and eternal words as well as through the lives of those who live it.

Summary



“Moses Brought Condemnation; Yeshua Brought Grace”

**“The law was given by Moses to bring condemnation
but Yeshua brought us grace and truth.”**

This common theology is usually based on John 1:17 which states, “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Messiah Yeshua.” The idea clearly suggested by this translation is that the law or Torah is at odds with grace and truth. First, note that there is no contrast indicated in the Greek

original of John 1:17, “For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Messiah Yeshua.” The word *but* in the King James Version was added by the translators. In fact, *but* is not found in any of the Greek manuscripts! Most of the modern translations have corrected this. The idea that John is contrasting the Torah with the work of Messiah is not found in the text itself. On the contrary, if we realize that the Torah spoke of and pointed to Yeshua, then John’s words can be understood as paralleling Moses with Yeshua, not contrasting them.

“The people who lived before Yeshua’s time were saved in a different way than we are. We are saved by faith in Messiah; they were saved by works.”

Abraham is a prime example of justification by faith. Paul emphasizes that if anyone had cause to boast about his piety, it would be Abraham. Yet even though he was faithful in his obedience, he had no cause to boast before God. Why? Because his righteousness was not based upon obedience but upon faith in God’s promise: “Then he [Abraham] believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness” (Genesis 15:6). Paul plainly states that believing is not a work. It is clear that as far as Paul was concerned, Abraham was saved by faith. And since only faith in Messiah saves, Yeshua must have been the object of his faith. Our Master declared as much when He stated that “Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad” (John 8:56). When Abraham believed, he believed in the Messiah.

“Moses taught that salvation was based on keeping Torah, not faith. There was no salvation by grace through faith until Yeshua came.”

In Romans 10, Paul teaches that Moses had the same Gospel message as himself. Paul quotes Moses in verses five through eight. In this quote, Moses admonishes the people of Israel to realize that the Torah—the word of God—is not far from them so that they would have to work hard to find it, but that it was in their mouth and in their heart. For Paul, the only way that the Torah could be written on the heart was through the regenerating work of the Spirit on a heart of faith. Such a work of the Spirit would mean that the truth of Messiah had been revealed. The Torah as the written Word of God inevitably points to Messiah, the living Word of God. Paul does not consider the words of Moses to rival his own teaching, but he shows that the two are in perfect harmony. Paul calls the words of Moses in Deuteronomy 30:12–14 “the word of faith which we are preaching” (Romans 10:8). Note carefully what Paul affirms here: first, the message of Moses was a message requiring faith, and second, the message of Moses and the message of Paul are the same message.

Study Questions



“Moses Brought Condemnation, Yeshua Brought Grace”

1. Does the Bible teach that Moses and Yeshua proclaimed two different ways for a sinner to stand righteous before the Almighty? (John 3:3; John 20:30–31)
2. Does John 1:17 put Torah at odds with grace and truth? Why or why not?

3. Discuss Luke 24:25–27. What does this passage tell us about Yeshua’s relationship to Torah? Why did Yeshua use the Torah to reveal Himself?
4. How did John the Baptists work relate to Yeshua? Is there a similar relationship between Yeshua and the Torah? (John 1:6–8)
5. How does the phrase grace and truth in John relate to the phrase lovingkindness and truth in the *Tanakh*? What light does this covenantal language shed on John 1:17?
6. What does Yeshua’s response to the rich young ruler and Nicodemus tell us? Was His answer addressing a faith or obedience issue? Did He ask them to discontinue their obedience in lieu of their faith? (Matthew 19:16–22; John 3:1–21)
7. How was Abraham saved (before the giving of the Torah)? How was David saved (after the giving of the Torah)? If these men were saved by faith, what was their faith in? (Genesis 15:6; John 8:56; Romans 4:7–8; Psalm 32:1–2; Acts 2:30–31)
8. How were Paul and Moses preaching the same message? What was the “word of faith” they were preaching? (Romans 10:5-8; Deuteronomy 30:17–14)

King David understood that salvation was not to be found in works. Instead he declared his hope and longing for God's salvation. He relied not on his own righteousness; he waited for God's salvation. Yet at the same time, he kept the commandments and delighted in them.

Psalm 119:166,174



It is Often Said



“The Work of the Spirit Began at Pentecost”

The first celebration of Shavuot (Pentecost) following the ascension of our Messiah witnessed something that would forever mark the festival with new and additional importance for His followers. While the disciples of Yeshua gathered in the portico of Solomon on the Temple Mount, the Spirit of God manifested His presence in a miraculous way.²³ Acts 2 records what happened:

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.
(Acts 2:1–4)

This was in fulfillment of Yeshua’s own words, that the disciples should remain in Jerusalem until they would be clothed

with “power from on high.” (Luke 24:49) Only after receiving this power, were they to go as Yeshua had commanded, to Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the world, bearing witness of Him to all the nations.²⁴ In other words, until they received the power given by the Spirit, they would not be able to accomplish the mission of gathering in the Gentiles to whom Yeshua had sent them.

A Closer Look at Acts 2

What actually happened on that eventful Shavuot? And how are we to interpret the events in light of Yeshua’s previous promise that the disciples would receive specific power to accomplish their mission of evangelism to the nations? Moreover, what do the events of that Shavuot teach us about the work of the Holy Spirit in general?

From the beginning of John the Immerser’s ministry, he taught that while he was baptizing with water, the One coming after him (that is, Yeshua Messiah) would baptize with the Holy Spirit.²⁵ Just as John’s water immersion (*mikveh*) prepared the way by marking their readiness to join Yeshua’s Kingdom, Yeshua’s Spirit immersion prepared them for their future mission, to expand that Kingdom to include the nations.

The connection of ‘baptism’ with the ‘Spirit’ has its roots in the prophets. Isaiah prophesies that God would pour out His Spirit upon the descendants of Jacob in an act of blessing.²⁶ Joel prophesies that “in the last days God would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh,” which he further describes as the complete congregation of Israel, regardless of age, gender, or station in life. (Joel 2:28–29)²⁷

Similarly, the word ‘pouring’ fits with the picture of baptism, or *mikveh*. In Yeshua’s day, immersion in the *mikveh* was an act of obedience to Torah (immersion in a pool of water) through which the devout returned to ritual purity after becoming unclean. How was this accomplished? The ‘living water’ (running water) required for a *mikveh* symbolized the washing

The baptism of the Spirit, promised by John and Yeshua, had occurred, and its power was unleashed to begin the harvest of the elect through His disciples.



away of uncleanness, which enabled the worshipper once again to worship at the Temple. Since the *mikveh* waters engulfed the one submerged, its waters symbolized the change of status. As the whole person was covered with the water, the whole person emerged ritually pure and able to draw near to God at the Temple.

The ‘pouring’ metaphor is one of complete inundation. The Spirit, like *mikveh* waters, would come upon the whole person, sanctifying, enabling, and empowering for the work ordained by God Himself. Peter makes this same connection, for having witnessed the Spirit’s activity on that eventful Shavuot, he quotes from Joel 2:28–29, connecting the prophet’s words with the wind and tongues of fire: the prophetic promise of the outpouring of the Spirit was what they were witnessing.

In fact, the connection of wind and fire with the presence of the Spirit was not new. The Hebrew word *ruach* means both “spirit” and “wind” giving rise to the obvious connection. Throughout the Scriptures the presence of God is often accompanied by wind. Yeshua Himself used the metaphor of wind to describe the work of the Spirit,²⁸ while fire is frequently used in the *Tanakh* as a metaphor for the presence of God.²⁹

It was this long-standing revelation of God’s presence in wind and fire that caused Peter to interpret the phenomenon of the Acts 2 events as the presence of the Spirit. There was no hesitation—no questioning what the rushing wind and the tongues of fire could signify. He immediately understood it to be the activity of God’s Spirit. Like the water of the *mikveh* that

completely covers the individual, so the wind, in this scene, entirely engulfs the people.

This is the picture of full control, full sovereignty, something only God could produce. The tongues of fire appeared to rest upon each individual. This would symbolically indicate that each individual was to be empowered by the Word of God to accomplish the mission to the nations, as Yeshua had promised. The Spirit, Who inspired the Word of God, would work upon each individual to take that Word in power to the nations.

But prior to this, Yeshua had commanded the disciples to begin this mission in Jerusalem. Therefore Peter directs his words to Jews and proselytes who had come to celebrate Shavuot. The effect of his exhortation was phenomenal: Those who listened were pierced in heart and expressed their repentance and faith in Yeshua. Luke records that 3,000 believers were added that day! The baptism of the Spirit, promised by John and Yeshua, had occurred, and its power was unleashed to begin the harvest of the elect through His disciples.

The Spirit of God and Shavuot

The thousands that came to believe on that eventful Shavuot were added to 'The Way,' a sect of Judaism.³⁰ They knew themselves to be participants in the revival of faith among Jews (as well as the ingathering of the Gentiles) as evidence of God's faithfulness to Israel. God was keeping His covenant promises to make Israel a light to the nations and to bless the nations by bringing them to that light.

In the theology of the later emerging church, however, the manifestation of the Spirit at Shavuot was viewed as giving an exalted position to believers in Yeshua (in contrast to those non-believing Jews of the day) and therefore a rightful place to assert themselves as God's only chosen people. This misunderstanding of the purpose for the outpouring of the Spirit was used to fashion the "replacement theology" that eventually characterized the Christian church.

The Same Spirit and the Same Message of Faith

When Shavuot was viewed in this light, it was easy to create a new doctrine which taught that the Spirit's work began only after Yeshua's ascension. And if the Spirit began His primary work post-ascension, believers from that time forward were considered to have been endowed with a greater spirituality than those who lived before. The 'era of law' gave way to the 'age of grace,' and the work of the Spirit began to be assigned almost entirely to the so-called 'church age.' This, in turn, had grave ramifications on one's view of salvation. If the Spirit was only active after Yeshua's ascension, how were people in ancient Israel saved? How could they have been 'born again' apart from the Spirit's work? And how could they have grown in holiness without the Spirit of sanctification?

The faithful in ancient Israel were saved the same way we are: through faith in the Messiah. Paul uses Abraham and David as his primary examples of justification by faith apart from works, and the writer to the Messianic Jews in the book of Hebrews extols the faith of the men and women of Israel who walked in righteousness.³¹ Moreover, Paul confesses that the message of faith that he preached was the same message that Moses taught in his day and apart from the Spirit, no one is able to know God.³²

Likewise, Yeshua, long before His ascension and the sending of the Spirit, taught Nicodemus that apart from the work of the Spirit, one simply cannot be born again, and He expected that Nicodemus, being a teacher in Israel, would have known that!³³ Thus it is clear that wherever people have been drawn to a genuine saving faith—regardless of the era in which they lived—the Spirit was active in their salvation. But what, then, do the words of Yeshua mean when He promised to send the Helper?

I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is

the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. (John 14:16–17)

First, when Yeshua promised to “give you another Helper,” He was not suggesting that the Spirit was inactive, or somehow not already accomplishing His salvific role. Rather, Yeshua promises the Spirit’s specific work to help the Apostles in the leadership roles to which Yeshua had appointed them. They were to be the dispensers of truth, both to His growing congregation of Jews, as well as to the Gentiles who would be grafted into that congregation. Yeshua refers to the “Spirit of Truth” two more times in this context.

When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me. (John 15:26)

But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; or He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. (John 16:13)

Thus, Yeshua promises that the Spirit’s role is to help the Apostles spread His teachings (both via speech and in the writing of the Apostolic Scriptures, which the Spirit inspired).

Second, in John 14:16–17, all of the second person pronouns (you) are plural. Yeshua is not speaking of the indwelling presence of the Spirit in the individual believer. Rather, He is promising the Spirit’s presence within the band of Apostles who were His commissioned ambassadors. Just as the Spirit was active among the Apostles when they walked with Yeshua, the Spirit would continue to abide among them when Yeshua ascended.

The Beginning of the Harvest of the Nations

The Spirit empowered them to carry the message of the risen Messiah to the nations in fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise. This was, indeed, a new work of the Spirit. Only after Messiah's ascension did the harvest of the nations begin—something that had not happened before. Surely throughout Israel's history Gentiles were added to the people of God, drawn to faith by the Spirit. But the massive ingathering of the Gentiles in the final harvest of the nations was a new phase in the Spirit's powerful work. But it was new in quantity—not quality. The same work of the Spirit by which He drew in a few scattered Gentiles throughout Israel's history would now be expanded to bring the nations to faith in great number.

It was for this reason that Yeshua needed to leave and ascend to the Father.

But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment. (John 16:7–8)

It is this ingathering of the nations that constitutes the new work of the Spirit following Yeshua's ascension. And it is of this new work that John speaks when he says that the Spirit "was not yet," meaning that the Spirit was not yet engaged in the harvest of the nations.³⁴ The same is true of the 'sending' and 'coming' language: these speak of the Spirit 'coming' to accomplish a specific work, or being 'sent' for a specific task. This work was the harvest of the nations.

But the fact that the Spirit would be unleashed both to empower the Apostles to begin the harvest, and to draw in the elect from the nations through the witness of those who follow them, in no way suggests that the Spirit was inactive before Yeshua's ascension. Nor does this imply that the Spirit's work in

the salvation and indwelling of individual believers awaited the time following Yeshua's ascension. On the contrary, throughout the Apostolic Scriptures the way in which God saves sinners is the same in every era: through faith in the Messiah produced by the sovereign work of the Spirit.

We should not diminish the high importance of this new work of the Spirit, initiating and procuring the final harvest of the nations. In one sense it is the zenith of the Abrahamic covenant, for the blessing promised to Abraham and his seed is climaxed in the blessing upon all the nations of the earth. Certainly this new work of the Spirit is prevalent in the writings of the Apostles, particularly Paul. As the Apostle to the Gentiles, this would be expected, for he had come to realize that the giving of the Spirit in this harvesting effort was the culmination of the ages and would also bring about the salvation of Israel.³⁵

This is also true with regard to the emphasis upon spiritual gifts in the Pauline epistles. The gifting of the believers within the body of Messiah was not for their own benefit, but for the building up of the congregation as a whole.³⁶ Paul recognized that spiritual gifts were given to individual believers in order that the congregation of Messiah might fulfill her primary role in the world that is, being a witness and light to the nations to affect the final ingathering of the elect. This agrees with the words of Yeshua: "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). The unity of the body of Messiah, affected through the work of the Spirit in gifting each member for the service of the others, would create the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace, which in turn would bear witness of the risen Master.

We may conclude, then, that the giving of the Spirit at Shavuot as recorded in Acts 2 was not the beginning of the Spirit's activity—it was the culmination of His work throughout the ages as the Almighty fulfilled His plan of salvation. The promise that Yeshua's Apostles would be baptized by the Spirit was

fulfilled in the empowering work of the Spirit, equipping them and their disciples for the mission of evangelizing the nations. The ongoing work of the Spirit within the body of Messiah has this same goal in mind: that the elect from every nation should be gathered into the people of God to be blessed within the covenant that He had promised to Abraham.

The Festival of Shavuot, commemorating the giving of the Torah at Sinai, was the fitting appointed time for the beginning of the harvest of the nations, for the Torah would now go forth to the nations energized by the Spirit of God emboldening the followers of Yeshua and bringing conviction to the chosen ones who heard the message of the Gospel. The promise of the prophets that “the Torah will go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” began to be fulfilled on the first Shavuot following the ascension of our Messiah, because the Spirit had come to shine the light of Torah to the nations.³⁷ And He is still active in this work.

Summary



“The Work of the Spirit Began at Pentecost”

“The disciples were all crowded together in an ‘upper room’ on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended upon them.”

It is true that the disciples met together in an upper room somewhere in Jerusalem at the end of Acts chapter 1 on the day of Ascension. This was ten days prior to Shavuot. There is no indication in Acts 2 that they were still in that upper room on the day of Shavuot. It tells us they were all in “one place”

and that they were sitting in a “house.” We know that this one place had to accommodate at least 3,000 people because this was the number who heard Peter’s message and believed. But it describes them being in a house. What house in Jerusalem would have been able to accommodate that many people? The Greek word *oikos* translated as “house” in Acts 2:2 can be alternately translated as “Temple.” In the Scriptures, the term “The House” is a common name for the Temple in Jerusalem.³⁸ We also know that they were required by Torah to present themselves before the Lord in the Temple on Shavuot (Deuteronomy 16:16). With all the above in mind, the logical conclusion would then be that they were gathered in the Temple courts, not in an upper room somewhere in Jerusalem.

“The Spirit began His primary work after Yeshua’s ascension. This was a much more powerful and spiritual work than anything previous.”

The massive ingathering of the Gentiles in the final harvest of the nations was a new phase in the Spirit’s powerful work. But it was new in *quantity—not quality*. The same work of the Spirit by which He drew in a few scattered Gentiles throughout Israel’s history would now be expanded to bring the nations to faith in great number. We may conclude that the giving of the Spirit at Shavuot as recorded in Acts 2 was not the beginning of the Spirit’s activity—it was the culmination of His work throughout the ages as the Almighty fulfilled His plan of salvation. The promise that Yeshua’s Apostles would be baptized by the Spirit was fulfilled in the empowering work of the Spirit, equipping them and their disciples for the mission of evangelizing the nations. The ongoing work of the Spirit within the body of Messiah has this same goal in mind: that the elect from every nation should be gathered into the people of God to be blessed within the covenant that He had promised to Abraham.

**“This was a new work of the Spirit
never before experienced by Israel.”**

The ancient sages of Israel considered the biblical feast of Shavuot to be the anniversary of the day God spoke the Law at Mount Sinai. According to the rabbis, this event took place exactly 50 days after the day of the Exodus from Egypt. Historically, it was the original Shavuot. On this first Shavuot, God stepped down out of the heavens onto the top of Mount Sinai accompanied by wind, lightning, thunder, smoke and fire (Exodus 19-20). The original Hebrew of Exodus 20:18 tells us that “all the people saw the voices and the torches.” One ancient Jewish legend explains that the voice of God split into a multitude of sparks and came to the Israelites as fire. The torches are explained as the fiery words of God that came to each person individually.³⁹ Moses also retells this story in Deuteronomy and says in ten different passages that Israel heard God’s voice “from the midst of the fire.”⁴⁰ Perhaps these events in Acts were previously experienced by Israel at the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai, the original Shavuot.

Study Questions



“The Work of the Spirit Began at Pentecost.”

1. According to Acts 2, on the day of Shavuot (Pentecost) the disciples were gathered in “one place”? Where was this “one place” and why were they there? (See summary on previous page)
2. Discuss the connection between baptism or *mikveh* and the Spirit. (Joel 2:28-29; Isaiah 44:3)

3. Why did Peter quote from Joel in Acts 2:17-18? (Zachariah 12:10; Joel 2:28-29)
4. What connection is there between the wind and the tongues of fire and God's presence? (John 3:8; Judges 13:20; Psalm 29:7; Psalm 104:4; Isaiah 29:6)
5. Tradition teaches the Torah was given to Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai, on Shavuot exactly 50 days after the Exodus from Egypt. What connection is there between these two events? Were the disciples taught this tradition growing up? What impact would it have had on their interpretation of the events in Acts 2? (See summary on previous page)
6. Were there other people in the Scriptures that were empowered by the Spirit for a "specific work" for a "specific time"? (Numbers 11:25-26; 24:2-3; 1 Samuel 16:13 Judges 3:9-10; 6:34; 11:29; 14:6; 14:19; 15:14; 2 Chronicles 20:14) Discuss the similarities and differences between these examples and the giving of the Spirit at Shavuot.
7. What specific work were the people in Acts 2 empowered to do? Is this work still continuing today?

The physical salvation of
Israel from Egypt is a physical
dramatization of our own spiritual
salvation from sin and death. In
the story of the Exodus, we learn
that before we can receive the
Torah, we must already be 'saved.'

Exodus 15:13; 20:2



Is is Often Said




“Paul Was All Things to All Men”

Since ancient times, Paul has been interpreted as settling the Torah issue once and for all. Thoroughly versed in Torah and the Judaisms of his day, Paul is championed as the Apostle who led the followers of Yeshua beyond the confines of the repressive Torah to freedom in Messiah. While some openly admit that Paul was the first to stand boldly against the Torah, most simply presume that he further explained what Yeshua had taught. However, if we will open-mindedly scrutinize the life and teaching of Yeshua from the Gospels, we will clearly find that Yeshua not only maintained a Torah life Himself, He also instructed His disciples (Paul included) to do the same.

Paul: The Inconsistent Apostle?

The question becomes, “Could Paul have consistently claimed the position as ‘the Apostle of Yeshua the Messiah’⁴¹ and taught contrary to his Master?” Did not Yeshua instruct His disciples to carry the message He had given them (Matthew 28:19–20)—a message that included His strong teaching on the eternal value and applicability of the Torah (Matthew 5:17–20)? We are therefore left with only two options: Either Paul intended his message and teaching to be based firmly on the teachings of Yeshua,

The Gospel comes to the sinner, not as a “one size fits all” elastic kind of message, but as demanding the sinner’s conformity to the Word of the King



meaning that what he taught in no way contradicted the words of his Master, or he fashioned his own theology opposed to what Yeshua taught. If we opt for the latter, we should rip the Pauline epistles from our Bibles—they are the words of a heretic.

Thinking that Paul formulated a position contrary to Yeshua’s is not only bad scholarship, it is also illogical. Paul’s epistles circulated among the communities of “The Way” at the same time that the Gospels were being composed, or even earlier. It is illogical to think that communities who identified themselves with the risen Messiah would receive the teaching of someone like Paul if he brought a contrary message. We do well, then, to read his words with this in mind. When we hear Paul disagreeing with the teachings of Yeshua, we had better look again at Paul and seek to know how we have misinterpreted him.

Or is it possible that Paul was simply inconsistent with himself? Did he begin his life of service to Yeshua as a Jew with a Jewish message, then later disavow his Jewishness and head off to the Gentiles? At the beginning of his newfound faith in Yeshua did he maintain his Torah life of obedience, only later to abandon it as the unnecessary trappings of immature faith? Many modern scholars have considered this as the only reasonable explanation for what appears to be disparate statements of the Apostle. Yet with such an explanation we fare no better than if we hold that Paul taught contrary to Yeshua. If Paul flip-flopped his message along the way, we certainly cannot trust his words as authoritative. Moreover, if we believe that the epistles of Paul form part of the inspired Word of God, we surely cannot accept the theory that the inspiration of God’s Spirit would lead

him to pen one thing here only to contradict it there. The super-intending work of the Spirit would not allow such a thing.

Paul the Chameleon?

The worst-case scenario is that Paul was purposefully duplicitous, that he simply said what his audience wanted to hear. The text that forms the primary focus of our study here (1 Corinthians 9:19–23) is often read and interpreted as though Paul were a theological chameleon, changing color to fit the occasion. Indeed, Paul speaks of being all things to all men in order to save some (9:22), which at first blush sounds like full-fledged pragmatism: “the end justifies the means” when it comes to evangelism. It is not uncommon, then, to find this text interpreted to mean that Paul could present himself as Torah-observant when that was to his advantage, and disregard the commandments when keeping them would have caused waves. Reading the text in this way makes Paul seem like a salesman who does whatever necessary to propagate the Gospel.

But this is opposite of Paul’s own description of how he proclaimed the Good News! In 1 Thessalonians 2:1–5, he explicitly states that his proclamation of the Gospel was not “from error or impurity or by way of deceit.” He taught with boldness, even in the face of persecution, so his message was clearly not to please men. He came, not with “flattering speech” seeking the glory of men, but with the power of the Gospel of Yeshua infused with the demonstration of the Spirit.

Moreover, Paul rebuked Peter openly for changing his *halachah*⁴² to fit the situation. While in Antioch, and before the coming of certain disciples of James, Peter freely ate with the Gentile believers. But when his Jewish brothers arrived, he withdrew from table-fellowship with the Gentiles in conformity to the prevailing rabbinic *halachah*. If Paul’s modus operandi was to switch *halachah* to accommodate the current situation, it seems hypocritical of him to condemn Peter for doing just that.

To read this passage as suggesting chameleon accommodation for the sake of evangelism brings more problems than it solves. Can we honestly find Yeshua or Paul adopting an evangelistic pattern that condones disobeying God's commandments in order to get people to accept their message? Hardly! Both were persecuted, even unto death, because they refused to compromise the message, either in word or in deed, to satisfy the crowd.

Furthermore, to use accommodating methods for proclaiming the Gospel not only cheapens the message, it also undermines it. The Gospel comes to the sinner, not as a "one size fits all" elastic kind of message, but as demanding the sinner's conformity to the Word of the King. The message of the Gospel, as far as Paul was concerned, was that God is commanding people everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30).

1 Corinthians 9:19–23

If we're suggesting that Paul held the Torah as the eternal and unchangeable standard for faith and *halachah*, how are we to understand Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23? If Paul's gospel came not only in word, but also in deed (2 Corinthians 10:11), did he actually preach two different gospels, depending upon whether he was with Jews or Gentiles?

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the *Torah*, as under the *Torah* though not being myself under the *Torah*, so that I might win those who are under the *Torah*; to those who are without *Torah*, as without *Torah*, though not being without the *Torah* of God but under the *Torah* of Messiah, so that I might win those who are without *Torah*. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that

I may by all means save some. I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it. (1 Corinthians 9:19–23)

The Larger Context

The situation that prompted writing 1 Corinthians was division within the Corinthian community (See verse 1:10 and following). In a word, Paul is engaged in *politics*. As the “father” of the community (4:14–21), he had the strenuous task of nurturing its fragile existence in the face of external pressures and internal differences that threatened to blow it apart.⁴³

The factions that had engulfed the Corinthian congregation revealed themselves in various parties following prominent teachers (Paul, Apollos and Cephas; see 1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:22) and interpreting their teachings as the basis of conflicting *halachah*. Yet Paul does not pit one teacher against the other, nor claim some teachers to be right while others wrong. Instead, he emphasizes the identity of all in Messiah (1:20; 3:22–23).

The schisms that had occurred among the Corinthians were best seen in the community’s day-to-day life. Immorality was being tolerated within the community (chapter 5); legal disputes between believers were being taken to pagan courts (chapter 6). Other matters that brought schism related to questions of marriage, betrothal and divorce, especially when a marriage involved a believer and nonbeliever. Moreover, the growing persecution (the “present distress,” 7:26) against believers required that one consider the wider ramifications when entering into marriage or giving one’s daughter to be married. Likewise, slaves were to pursue obtaining their freedom if possible, but not through a revolt against their masters. And Gentiles were not to seek to become proselytes, nor Jews to give up their Jewish identity. All were to remain as they were with a focus on obedience to God’s commandments (chapter 7). The overarching

instruction is that one is to be willing to give up his freedoms for the sake of the Gospel.

In chapters 8–10, Paul tackles the problem presented by meat offered to idols; specifically, whether it was fit for consumption by believers in Yeshua. Some had “knowledge” that idols were actually nothing, and the gods they represented were only the figment of pagan imagination. For these, the profane influence of idolatry did not attach to the meat, so eating it could not bring idol defilement. Others were not so convinced. They most likely felt that the power of the idol adhered to the offered meat, and that one who ate it would therefore be defiled. Paul’s clear instructions are that participation in pagan temples, including engaging the temple prostitutes (chapter 6), was contrary to one’s faith in Messiah (10:18–22) and was therefore prohibited. However, meat that was eaten at a common meal, even with unbelievers, should not be scrutinized. The possibility existed that meat purchased from the market could have originated in the pagan temples. But unless one was specifically made aware of this, he was not to ask, since from Paul’s point of view, the profane status of idolatry did not adhere to the meat. If, however, one was specifically notified that the meat had come from the pagan temple, he should not eat it in order to guard the conscience of the one who served it (10:27). In short, believers should always present the life message that they have nothing to do with idolatry, and they should willingly give up their freedoms for the sake of the Gospel.

The Immediate Context—Chapter 9

In the midst of his instructions on the issue of meat offered to idols, and his appeal to forfeit one’s freedoms for the sake of another, Paul offers the illustration of his own life. As an Apostle, he had the right (freedom) to be supported by those to whom he ministered. Yet in 1 Corinthians 9:14–18 he explains that he forfeited this right in order to further the effectiveness of his ministry. In so doing, he appeared to some as less than a bona

fide Apostle, since he chose to work at menial tasks to support himself. Like an athlete who forfeits personal rights in order to train for and run in the race, so Paul gave up his freedoms in order to be a partner in the Gospel.

Why would Paul have voluntarily refused the support expected for an Apostle? There may be several reasons, though he never tells us directly. First, his need to spend extended periods of time with a given community meant that he would be a financial burden. Furthermore, we know that the *Didache* (an early didactic work written to establish doctrine and conduct among believing communities) considered any traveling apostle or prophet who stayed longer than two days, or asked for money, to be a false prophet.⁴⁴ Secondly, pagan prophets and teachers also circulated among the communities of ancient Rome, and it was their custom not to provide their service of divination until they were paid. Surely Paul would have wanted to distance himself from any connection to such prophets and teachers.⁴⁵ Finally, some within the Jewish communities may have looked askance at a teacher who took support from Gentiles.⁴⁶ Thus, it is clear that the overarching principle set forth by Paul in the immediate context of our passage, as well as throughout the epistle, is that one must be willing to give up his freedoms in order to establish the priority of the Gospel within the community of faith.

Verses 9:19–23

Since our text begins with the word *For*, it is linked directly with the preceding context. Here we have a final summary of Paul's pastoral example of forfeiting freedoms for the sake of the Gospel. It is important to realize that he is not describing what he is free to do, but rather the freedoms he has given up in order to further the success of his work as an Apostle of Yeshua.

Our paragraph follows a typical Hebraic parallelism, which may be represented like this:

- (A) I made myself a slave to all in order that I might gain more (v. 19).
 - (B) I became to the Jews as a Jew, in order that I might gain Jews (v. 20a).
 - (B1) To those under the Torah as under the Torah ... to gain those under the Torah (v. 20b).
 - (C) To those outside of Torah as outside of Torah ... to gain those outside of Torah (v. 21).
 - (C1) I became weak to the weak in order that I might gain the weak (v. 22a).
- (A1) I have become all things to all in order that I might in all circumstances save some of them (v. 22b).

In noting the structure of our text in this way, several important aspects are seen. First, the opening and concluding phrases (A/A1) are parallel. Paul begins by stating his position as “slave to all” and concludes that he has “become all things to all men.” Second, this structure indicates that Paul was not defining four different groups of people with whom he interacted, but two groups, each defined by two adjacent lines. Thus, the group designated “Jews” in line B is further defined in B1 as “those under the Torah.”

Likewise, the group designated “those outside of Torah” in C is further defined as “the weak” in C1. In each of these cases, the first line is more fully explained by the second. This was necessary because the more general term (given in the opening line), if left by itself, would have been ambiguous.

The phrase “to the Jews I became as a Jew” leaves the reader with a real quandary. Paul was obviously Jewish, and never ceased from identifying himself as Jewish (Acts 19:34; 21:39; 22:3; Philippians 3:4–6). It therefore makes no sense for Paul to write that he “became as a Jew” unless the Jewish group to which he refers is made more specific. This he does by the additional phrase “those under the Torah...,” further defining this Jewish group as those who comprised the synagogue community of unbelieving Jews.

Similarly, the designation “those outside of Torah” could, at first blush, be understood as ‘transgressors’ since the Greek word is *anomos*, which often describes “transgressors” or those who are “lawless.”⁴⁷ But Paul is not saying that he actually became a transgressor or committed unlawful acts in order to be received by this group. Rather, the second line further defines what he means by “without the Torah.” He is describing Gentile believers who were viewed by the unbelieving synagogue as weak or incapable of covenant status before God because they were Gentiles.

So Paul is affirming his membership in two groups, each of which had clear distinctions from the other. The unbelieving synagogue considered the primarily Gentile congregations as outside their covenant, while the believers viewed the unbelieving synagogue as outside the covenant of Messiah. In our paragraph, Paul explains his need to be a member of both groups. Understanding that our text deals primarily with two groups (unbelieving Jews and believing Gentiles) matches Paul’s description in 1 Corinthians 10:23, “Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God.”

Free from All Men

Now, beginning in 1 Corinthians verse 19, let us take a new look at what the text actually says. As we do, remember who Paul was and what he stood for.

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. (1 Corinthians 9:19)

How was Paul “free from all men”?⁴⁸ The previous verses tell us: Paul was free from the need to gain his livelihood as a worker engaged in the general commerce of his day. As an Apostle, he was entitled to remuneration from those he served. Therefore, he had the right not to engage in a daily occupation in order to supply his basic needs. Yet he gave up this right,

When it came to right standing before God,
Paul proclaimed that there was neither Jew
nor Greek (Galatians 3:28).



and instead engaged in the work-a-day world, appearing as a common “blue-collar” worker. As such, he served (“became a slave to”) each one, fulfilling his customers’ requests. But he did this because he wanted his work as an Apostle of Yeshua to be untarnished by those who might have accused him of huckstering the Gospel.

Here we also encounter the word *gain* or *win* (*kerdaino*). This verb appears five times in our passage, and it always forms the purpose for Paul’s voluntary forfeiture of his freedoms. He became as a slave to Jews and non-Jews in order that he might win some of them to his message of the Gospel. Most have understood *win* in the sense of evangelism, to “win lost souls for Messiah.”⁴⁹ Yet in the seventeen times this verb appears in the Apostolic Scriptures,⁵⁰ it never clearly speaks of evangelistic success.

Most often it refers to acquiring possessions or money. In terms of relationships, it describes successfully bringing someone to do what is right. Note Matthew 18:15: “If your brother sins go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won (*kerdaino*) your brother.” In this case, to win one’s brother is to rescue him from error and bring him to do what is right.

Thus, Paul’s purpose, couched in the word *win*, could include bringing someone to agree with the Gospel and its life-transforming message. But it could also include bringing those who had already espoused the Gospel to a fuller acceptance of its implications. To put it simply, Paul’s use of the word *win* could also include bringing fellow believers to agree fully with his

Gospel, which proclaimed membership in God’s family based on faith in Yeshua—without the need to become Jewish.

To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Torah, as under the Torah though not being myself under the Torah, so that I might win those who are under the Torah. (1 Corinthians 9:20)

The subsequent designation of those “under the Torah” helps define the Jewish group with whom he here identifies. Of the many first-century sects of Judaism, Paul continued to identify with the Pharisees (Acts 23:6) and thus submitted to their authority within the traditional synagogue.

Those Under the Torah

For Paul, the phrase “under the Torah” (*hupo nomou*) describes those who have not confessed Yeshua as Messiah, those who continued to rely on their Jewish identity, bound up in observance of the Torah, as the grounds for their acceptance by God.⁵¹ Most of Paul’s Jewish brethren, according to his own testimony, had rejected Yeshua as the Messiah, something that grieved him greatly (Romans 9:1–3). These were people who still needed redemption from the Torah’s curse and made up the majority of the established synagogues of Paul’s day. Yet he regularly submitted to their rule. Five times he bent to receive lashes at the hands of the synagogue authorities (2 Corinthians 11:24). Why did he receive such punishments? Probably because he continued to proclaim Yeshua as Messiah (something that may have been considered blasphemy), and he willingly received Gentiles as bona fide covenant members of Israel (which may have been considered participation with idolaters). Yet in order to keep an open door to his Jewish brothers and sisters by maintaining his place in the established synagogue, he submitted to their rule and to their whip.

Mishnah *Makkot* 3 describes the process of giving lashes. Those who had committed a crime worthy of being cut off could, in certain cases (such as blasphemy), be spared the extreme punishment of being banished by receiving lashes instead. As the transgressor bent down to receive the whipping, a reader would loudly proclaim the words of Deuteronomy 28:58–68, which comprise the curses of the covenant. Then Psalm 78:38 was read aloud, which speaks of God’s compassion and willingness to forgive. After the lashes were finished:

All those who are liable to extirpation [being cut off] who have been flogged are exempt from their liability to extirpation, as it is said, “And your brother seem vile to you” (Deuteronomy 25:3)—once he has been flogged, lo, he is tantamount to your brother... (Mishnah *Makkot* 3:15)

Paul proved himself to be fully vested within the larger Jewish community by submitting to the whip for matters that were, in reality, not transgressions, but were considered so by those who had rejected Yeshua. Paul had every freedom in Yeshua to walk away from such man-made legislation, but he gave up his freedom for the sake of the Gospel. It was in this manner that Paul “became as a Jew” to the Jews; that is, to the unbelieving Jewish community. Instead of accepting the penalty of being cut off from his people, he willingly received lashes that, according to the Jewish sages, confirmed his ongoing status as one within their group. Because he submitted to their punishments, he was received as a brother.

Those Without Torah

What does “without Torah” mean? By this term Paul does not mean that they were devoid of Torah in the sense of disregarding it. He clarifies this by adding the parenthetical phrase “though not being without the Torah of God but under (literally, “in”) the Torah of Messiah.” It was not Paul but the traditional synagogue

who had labeled these as “without Torah” (*anomos*). Thus, those to whom Paul refers as “without Torah” are the Gentile believers whom the established synagogue considered outside of God’s favor and promises.⁵² Since they had not become proselytes, the larger synagogue community reckoned them as “without Torah.” In their eyes, the Gentiles who had not become proselytes had not submitted to the full yoke of the Torah as defined by the sages, and could therefore not be received.⁵³ They were still classed as “sinners,” the antithesis of a Jew.⁵⁴ Remember that in the words of the sages, “without Torah” would include not only the words of Moses, but also the oral Torah’s interpretations and *halachic*⁵⁵ decisions.

Paul wants to make it clear that though the Gentile believers were labeled as “without Torah” by the traditional synagogue, they were not, in fact, without the “Torah of God.”⁵⁶ In the eyes of the synagogue leaders they had not qualified as bona fide covenant members since they had not submitted to the ritual of proselytism. However, Paul knew that they had submitted to the “Torah of God” as defined in the life and teachings of Yeshua, and Paul willingly identified with them in this.

Whereas before coming to faith, Paul based his covenant membership on his Jewish status as a keeper of Torah (Philippians 3:6), his participation in the Gospel had changed that. Like his Gentile brothers and sisters who had attached themselves to the God of Israel solely through faith in Messiah Yeshua, so Paul had come to realize that the Torah was not the means of righteousness before God for anyone. If they were deemed as “without Torah” because they had not sought to become Jews as the means of attaining covenant standing with God, Paul was happy to receive that same label, for his status as righteous before God was founded upon being “in Messiah,” not upon his physical linkage to Jacob. When it came to right standing before God, Paul proclaimed that there was neither Jew nor Greek (Galatians 3:28).

The language Paul employs here is insightful. The traditional synagogue labeled the Gentile believers as *anomos*, “without Torah” or “transgressors,” meaning that it considered them outside the realm of the Torah as traditionally taught by the sages. Paul counters by saying that they were not outside of God’s Torah, but actually were in the Torah (*ennomos*) of Messiah (translated “under the law of Messiah” in the NASB). The word *ennomos* only appears one other time in the Apostolic Scriptures, in Acts 19:39. There, in the ruckus caused by the silversmiths of Ephesus, Paul appealed to the protocol of Roman law. He requested that any formal charges against him come from a “lawful (*ennomos*) assembly;” that is, the established court.⁵⁷ In using the same word here, Paul establishes the fact that the Gentile believers do live in accordance with the Torah as written by Moses and modeled by Yeshua, even if they have not conformed entirely to the Torah as defined by the traditional synagogue. The truth was that their lives were governed by the very Torah of God as taught and lived out by Yeshua Himself.

Thus, the typical understanding of these verses (that Paul abandoned Torah-living while among the Gentiles) is entirely unfounded. He makes it clear that he (and by extension those he ministered to) lived by the Torah of God as defined by Yeshua. Furthermore, just a few chapters earlier (1 Corinthians 7:19), Paul had already stressed that obedience to God’s commandments was what really mattered, not whether one was a Jew (circumcised) or a Gentile (uncircumcised).

Paul further identifies those “without Torah” by adding “to the weak I became weak.” But there is a significant difference between this phrase and the preceding ones. In each of the others, Paul says he became “as” (*hos*), but here he does not say he became “as the weak,” but that he actually “became weak.”⁵⁸

Some contend that “weak” in this context means “believers who were weak in their faith.”⁵⁹ They suggest that Paul, likewise, somehow presented himself as weak in faith. But this cannot

It goes without saying that Paul did not become a pagan to pagans, a fornicator to fornicators, or a thief to thieves.



be what the phrase means, for the passage does not say that he became *as* weak, but that he actually was weak. Moreover, Paul does not add a qualifying phrase as he did before. If he were simply struggling at this point to “adapt himself to weaklings,” we would expect an additional phrase such as “though I myself am not weak.” But he does not say this. He affirms that with the weak, he was weak.

If, as I have suggested above, the phrase “to the weak I became weak” further identifies those who were considered “without Torah,” and if such a designation was the opinion of the Jewish community as it judged the Gentile believers to be outside the covenant because they remained Gentiles, then the designation *weak* identifies their inability to attain covenant status because they were not Jewish.

At one point in his life, Paul considered his Jewish status to be his strength in terms of covenant membership. But though his pedigree was impressive, the risen Messiah revealed to him that reliance upon his flesh was hopeless (Philippians 3:4–7). When it came to claiming a right to God’s blessings, Paul had come to the conclusion that he, like all of mankind, was weak before God. Thus he writes to the church in Rome, “For while we were still helpless (*asthenes*, the same word used in our text translated “weak”), at the right time Messiah died for the ungodly.” (Romans 5:6) The Jewish community considered the Gentiles among whom Paul ministered as ‘weak’ before God because they were outside the people group to whom God had made covenant promises. Paul, on the other hand, had come to realize that no one could be a legitimate claimant to God’s righ-

teousness in his own strength, or based upon his own worth. In this regard, all were weak before God when it came to deserving His favor. As such, he openly admitted that he, like the Gentiles, was weak before God. The righteous status he enjoyed was based entirely upon Messiah's strength that overcomes the weakness of sinful flesh.

Thus, when he came to the Gentile communities, he did so as one plainly stating his inability to garner God's favor because he was Jewish. Clearly he did not despise his Jewish heritage, nor did he try to hide his Jewish identity. Rather, he confessed the advantages of his Jewish heritage.⁶⁰ Yet he admitted that his Jewish status offered no advantage in terms of right standing before God. To those who were considered weak (Gentiles), he identified himself as equally weak.

With this in mind, Paul adds, "that I might win the weak." Throughout Paul's epistles it is apparent that some Jewish believers continued to encourage their Gentile brothers to become proselytes as the necessary completion of their confession of faith in Yeshua. Paul, of course, was strongly against such a thing since the linkage to Jewish status as the means of covenant membership was the motivating force in persuading the Gentiles to proselytize. When Paul, himself Jewish, confessed that his Jewishness gave no special privilege in terms of being declared righteous before God, he stood before them as a living example of God's means of justification. Moreover, as Paul evangelized the Gentiles, his message was one of faith in Yeshua as the only means of justification, and his own testimony supported this message of Good News. He proclaimed the Gospel not only in word, but also in deed (2 Corinthians 10:11).

Paul concludes with a restatement of the paragraph with which he began. He starts this section by declaring himself a slave to all and ends by saying, "I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some." Obviously, the idea of "becoming all things to all" must be limited to what he has just explained in the previous verses. It goes without saying

that Paul did not become a pagan to pagans, a fornicator to fornicators, or a thief to thieves. What he did do was give up his own freedoms in order to demonstrate the Gospel, centered in the Messiah Yeshua. Moreover, he willingly identified with the Gentile believers because he confessed that his covenant status was based upon the same foundation as theirs; namely, faith in Yeshua and His work, not in his Jewishness.

I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it. (1 Corinthians 9:23)

In this last verse of the section, Paul brings the context of the chapter to a fitting conclusion. When calling the Corinthians to give up their individual freedoms in order to effectively minister to one another, he used his own life as an example. The motivation for such a perspective is nothing less than the Gospel itself, which proclaims the self-sacrifice of Yeshua for His people. If the Gospel message is centered upon the selfless giving of Yeshua for sinners, then those who also sacrifice their own freedoms for the sake of others are privileged to participate in this Gospel. Paul recognized that in comparison to the sufferings of Messiah, his was merely “light affliction,”⁶¹ but even in this there was a filling up of the afflictions of Messiah (Colossians 1:24). Such self-abasement for the sake of the Gospel was, indeed, a participation in the sufferings of Messiah and as such, a partnership in the Gospel. It was to this that Paul called the Corinthians, and still calls us.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I offer this expanded paraphrase as commentary on our text:

Verse 19: Even though I could accept the remuneration that you are required to give me as an Apostle of Yeshua, I have voluntarily forfeited this right and thus continue to work with my hands to make a living. As such, I am a servant to many people every day as they hire my services. By rights I shouldn't have

to do this, but I've decided to become a servant to all kinds of people in order to enhance the ministry entrusted to me in the Gospel, and thus to win over some to the full message of Yeshua as Messiah.

Verses 20–21: And I've become a servant in far greater ways than just sewing tents. For instance, to the Jewish community of my brothers and sisters who have rejected Yeshua, I still present myself as a brother within their midst. I could have just as easily left that association and been content to submit only to the synagogues of The Way. But in order to give the Gospel a fair hearing within the community of my people who have not yet confessed Yeshua as Messiah (those who remain under the penalty of the Torah and are in need of redemption from sin), I have submitted to their authority, even though it meant being whipped five times and humiliated as a blasphemer and a companion of Gentile idolaters. I did this so I would be received as a true brother, and so I might have the ability to live out the Gospel before my countrymen.

Verses 21–22: On the other hand, I willingly associate with the community of The Way, comprised, in majority, of Gentile believers. I know that my own Jewish community considers them to be outside of the blessings of Torah and that they have no hope of covenant membership unless they become proselytes. But I tell you that we are not outside God's Torah, but that we live in accordance with God's teaching as we follow in the commandments of our Master, Yeshua. Moreover, I tell you this—If the teachers of my people designate this mostly Gentile community as “without Torah” because they have not become proselytes, they may as well say the same of me. The Torah is not the means of obtaining righteousness before God for anyone, Jew or Gentile. They say my Gentile brothers and sisters are weak, without any ability to obtain membership in God's covenant. Well, that accusation is correct, because no one, in and of himself, can attain such covenant status. Everyone is weak before God in this regard, myself included. And that is

my message to the Gentiles: I stand before them as a Hebrew of Hebrews, and Jewish to the core. But my Jewishness could never make me righteous before God, nor could the fact that they are Gentiles block their approach to God. All of us, whether Jew or non-Jew, come to God only through faith in His Son, Yeshua.

Verse 23: So you can see that I have lived out the very message I am impressing on you. You need to be willing to give up your rights and freedoms if doing so means you'll be able to effectively minister to others. You can see in the examples I've given that I have been affirmed as a brother within the non-believing Jewish community, and I've been willing to be maligned as "without Torah" and "weak" because I freely associate with the Gentile believers as well. You can see how I have given up my own freedoms in order to win a hearing for the Gospel. But while giving up my own freedoms was not always easy (I have the scars of the whip to prove this), it was worth it. For in suffering for the sake of the Gospel, I have been privileged to participate in the same kind of sufferings our Savior underwent. As such, I have come to understand and appreciate what it means to be a partner in the message of the Gospel.

Summary



“Paul Was All Things to All Men”

“Paul presented himself as Torah-observant in order to reach the Jews and disregard the commandments in order to reach the Gentiles.”

But this is opposite of Paul's own description of how he proclaimed the Good News! In 1 Thessalonians 2:1–5, he explicitly

states that his proclamation of the Gospel was not “from error or impurity or by way of deceit.” He taught with boldness, even in the face of persecution, so his message was clearly not to please men. He came, not with “flattering speech” seeking the glory of men, but with the power of the Gospel of Yeshua infused with the demonstration of the Spirit. Moreover, Paul rebuked Peter openly for changing his *halachah* to fit the situation. While in Antioch, and before the coming of certain disciples of James, Peter freely ate with the Gentile believers. But when his Jewish brothers arrived, he withdrew from table-fellowship with the Gentiles in conformity to the prevailing rabbinic *halachah*. If Paul’s modus operandi was to switch *halachah* to accommodate the current situation, it seems hypocritical of him to condemn Peter for doing just that.

“Paul began his life of service to Yeshua as a Jew with a Jewish message, then he later disavowed his Jewishness and headed off to the Gentiles.

At one point in his life, Paul considered his Jewish status to be his strength in terms of covenant membership. But though his pedigree was impressive, the risen Messiah revealed to him that reliance upon his flesh was hopeless (Philippians 3:4–7). When it came to claiming a right to God’s blessings, Paul had come to the conclusion that he, like all of mankind, was weak before God. When he came to the Gentile communities, he did so as one plainly stating his inability to garner God’s favor because he was Jewish. Clearly he did not despise his Jewish heritage, nor did he try to hide his Jewish identity. Rather, he confessed the advantages of his Jewish heritage.⁶² Yet he admitted that his Jewish status offered no advantage in terms of right standing before God.

Study Question



“Paul Was All Things to All Men”

1. In Matthew 28:19-20, Yeshua commands His disciples to teach to the nations all that He had commanded them and in Matthew 5:17-20 He says that whoever keeps the commandments and teaches them is great in the Kingdom. As an apostle of Yeshua, did Paul follow these teachings? If so, how? If not, how do we explain the teachings of Paul contradicting those of the Messiah?
2. Paul was obviously a Jew and never ceased to identify himself as a Jew. Why did he say that he became “as a Jew,” if he already was a Jew? Is there a parallel between this statement and those who are “under the Torah”? How do you think Paul defined those who are “under the Torah”?
3. Is there a parallel between the “weak” and those “without” the Torah in 1 Corinthians 9? In what way did Paul identify with this group? Was Paul saying he became a transgressor himself in order to reach them? (Philippians 3:4-7; Romans 5:6)
4. How is the word *win* defined in the context of the Apostolic Scriptures? What light does this definition shed on 1 Corinthians 9:19? (Matthew 16:26; 18:15; 25:16–17, 20, 22; Mark 8:36; Luke 9:25; Acts 27:21; 1 Corinthians 9:19–22; Philippians 3:8; James 4:13; 1 Peter 3:1)
5. Can we interpret 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 to mean that Paul abandoned Torah-living while among the Gentiles? How does 1 Corinthians 7:19, just two chapters earlier, impact this interpretation?

Endnotes

- ⁴ I use the term ‘post-Torah’ much like the term ‘post-modern’ in our times. That is, I refer to the era of the believing communities (churches) in which the primary matrix of faith and practice is entirely without connection to the Torah.
- ⁵ Exodus 34:6.
- ⁶ Deuteronomy 30:15
- ⁷ Psalm 119.
- ⁸ Deuteronomy 30:11.
- ⁹ “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” (Romans 4:3, quoting Genesis 15:6)
- ¹⁰ Jamieson, Fausset, Brown. *A Commentary: Critical, Experimental and Practical on the Old and New Testaments*, 6 vols. (Eerdmans, 1945), 5.349.
- ¹¹ F. Godet, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* 2 vols. (Funk & Wagnalls, 1886), 1.279.
- ¹² This is most likely a veiled reference to touching Jacob’s circumcision, the sign of the covenant.
- ¹³ See Larry L. Walker, “Love in the Old Testament: Some Lexical Observations” in *Current Issues in Biblical and Patristic Interpretation* [Studies in Honor of Merrill C. Tenny], (Eerdmans, 1975), 277–288; Gordon R. Clark, “Hesed: A Study of a Lexical Field,” *Abr-Nahrain* 30 (1992), 34–54; Robin Routledge, “Hesed as Obligation: A Re-examination,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 46.1 (1995), 178–196; Zobel, “chesed” in *TDOT*, 5.44–64; K. D. Sakenfeld, *The Meaning of Hesed in the Old Testament* (Scholars Press, 1978).
- ¹⁴ Deuteronomy 7:9, 12; 1 Kings 8:23; 2 Chronicles 6:14; Nehemiah 1:5; 9:32; Psalms 25:10; 89:28; 106:45; Isaiah 54:10; 55:3.
- ¹⁵ CD 19:1; IQS 1:8; IQm 12:3; 14:4, 8; IQha 15:20; 27:7; 4Q393 f3:2; 4Q463 f1:3; 4Q491 f810:2.
- ¹⁶ See also Mark 10:17–22; Luke 18:18–23

- ¹⁷ The LXX often uses the Greek term *archon* when translating the Hebrew *rosh* in the sense of “leader.” Thus John’s designation of Nicodemus as *archon* of the Judeans indicates that he was a *rosh*, possibly a *rosh yeshiva*, “head rabbi of an academy.” Note John 7:45–53.
- ¹⁸ Romans 3:10 quoting Psalm 14:3; 53:3.
- ¹⁹ In 2 Samuel 7:19 David understands the promise of his covenant to be fulfilled in the distant future, and that it was through the fulfillment of this promise that the Torah would come to all mankind: “And this is the Torah for mankind, O LORD God.”
- ²⁰ The word “light” should be restored in this text, since it appears in both the LXX and the Qumran Isaiah. The NIV and NRSV translations do incorporate the word “light” in Isaiah 53:11.
- ²¹ The word translated “end” in most English translations (the Greek word *telos*) is best understood in this context as “goal.”
- ²² 1 Corinthians 2:9–10.
- ²³ The events described in Acts 2:1–4 took place in the Temple precincts. See Murphy-O’Conner, J. “The Cenacle and Community: The Background of Acts 2.44–45.” In *Scripture and other Artifacts: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Honor of Philip J. King*, ed. M. D. Coogan et al., (Westminster/J. Knox, 1994), pp. 296–310.
- ²⁴ Matthew 28:19–20.
- ²⁵ Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:7; Luke 3:15.
- ²⁶ Isaiah 44:3.
- ²⁷ See also Zechariah 12:10.
- ²⁸ John 3:8
- ²⁹ Judges 13:20; Psalm 29:7; Psalm 104:4; Isaiah 29:6.
- ³⁰ Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 24:14, 22.
- ³¹ Romans 4; Hebrews 11.
- ³² Romans 10:6–8, quoting Deuteronomy 30:12–14. Also, 1 Corinthians 2:9–10
- ³³ John 3.
- ³⁴ John 7:39.
- ³⁵ Romans 11:25–26.
- ³⁶ 1 Corinthians 12:7.
- ³⁷ Isaiah 2:3; Micah 4:2.
- ³⁸ For example, see Exodus 23:19; 34:26; Joshua 6:24; Judges 18:31, Psalm 27:4; Mark 11:17 and 1 Peter 2:5. Furthermore, in Luke 2:49 Yeshua Himself alludes to the Temple as His Father’s House. cf. Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Bavli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem), 1.168.
- ³⁹ See b *Shabbat* 88b.
- ⁴⁰ Deut. 4:12, 15, 33, 36; 5:4, 23, 24, 26; 9:10; 10:4.
- ⁴¹ Romans 1:1; 1 Corinthians 1:1; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1; Colossians 1:1; 1 Timothy 1:1; 2 Timothy 1:1; Titus 1:1.

- ⁴² *Halachah* is a Hebrew word meaning “to walk.” It is used in reference to the way one interprets and walks out or applies the commandments of God to their lives.
- ⁴³ Stephen C. Barton, “All Things to All People” in *Paul and the Mosaic Law*, James D. G. Dunn, ed.. (Eerdmans, 1996), 273.
- ⁴⁴ *Didache* 11.5–6.
- ⁴⁵ Compare the notice in *The Shepherd of Hermes, Mandate* 11.12 which speaks of prophets who demanded payment before they would prophecy.
- ⁴⁶ John Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*, 4 vols. (Baker, 1979), 4.220.
- ⁴⁷ 2Thessalonians 2:8; 1Timothy 1:9; 2Peter 2:8; also “wicked” or “godless” in cf. Luke 22:37; Acts 2:23.
- ⁴⁸ The Greek has *ek panton pasi*, literally, “out from every person.”
- ⁴⁹ The common use of *win* in the sense of ‘bringing people to confess Yeshua as Savior’ may have had some connection to the use of the verb *sakar* (meaning “to hire,” “hire for oneself,” or “payment”) in rabbinic literature, see David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (Hendrickson, 1998 reprint), 355–361. However, the more modern use of the term *win* in the sense of evangelizing the lost is based upon a misunderstanding of Proverbs 11:30: “He who is wise wins souls.” The context of this verse would indicate that the righteous, because they live according to wisdom, have stability and thus avoid poverty, and therefore are able to sustain the lives of others as well. Whatever the phrase “he who is wise wins souls” means, it is not specifically talking about handing out gospel tracts.
- ⁵⁰ Matthew 16:26; 18:15; 25:16–17, 20, 22; Mark 8:36; Luke 9:25; Acts 27:21; 1 Corinthians 9:19–22; Philippians 3:8; James 4:13; 1 Peter 3:1.
- ⁵¹ In the Pauline epistles, “under the Torah” (*hupo nomou*) is found in Romans 6:14–15; Galatians 3:23; 4:4; 4:21; 5:18. In each of these cases, those who are designated as “under the Torah” are likewise still in their sin. This designates Yeshua, who was born “under the Torah” (Galatians 4:4), as the One who came to take the penalty of condemnation for sinners, “to redeem those who are under the Torah” (Gal. 4:5). Thus, for Yeshua to be “under the Torah” means that He took the condemnation of the Torah upon Himself for the sake of those He redeemed.
- ⁵² In the sense of being “without Torah,” see Romans 2:14, although *anomos* is not used in this verse. Note also that the same could be said of lapsed Jews in 1 Maccabees 7:5; 9:23; 9:5; 9:69; 11:25; 14:14 (in all of which *anomos* is used), showing that “without Torah” was used generally of those deemed to be outside the covenant promises made to Israel. Since in the eyes of the sages the Torah was the means by which the covenant was mediated to Israel, to be “without Torah” was likewise to be without the covenant.

- ⁵³ “A proselyte who took upon himself all the obligations of the Torah except for one item, they do not receive him” (t.*Demai* 2:5).
- ⁵⁴ Note Galatians 2:15, “We are Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles,” which are the words of those who were teaching that Gentile believers were not full-fledged covenant members until they became proselytes.
- ⁵⁵ A form of the word *halachah*. See footnote 42.
- ⁵⁶ I recognize that the Greek participle *on* (translated “being” in the phrase “not being without the Torah of God”) is singular, and thus refers specifically to Paul. Yet when Paul claims that he was “not being without the Torah of God,” it stands to reason that what he describes of himself must also describe the group he is with. Thus, when Paul speaks of “not being without the law of God but being in the law of Messiah,” this describes both his situation and that of the group with which he identifies.
- ⁵⁷ The Greek word *ennomos* was used in Paul’s day to define proper law and those whose lives conformed to it. (See Liddell & Scott, *Lexicon*, “*ennomos*.”) The word is found once in the LXX, *Sirach* 0:10, where it describes those who live in accordance with “the Law and the Prophets and the other books.”
- ⁵⁸ In some of the later manuscripts, scribes have added the word *as* at this point, most likely for two reasons: 1) they did not want Paul represented as actually weak, and 2) they felt that the parallelism with the former phrases implied that Paul had become “as” the weak. But the earliest manuscripts (P⁴⁶, \aleph , A, B) are unanimous in not including the word *as* at this point.
- ⁵⁹ Romans 14:1.
- ⁶⁰ Romans 3:1–2.
- ⁶¹ 2 Corinthians 4:17; cp Romans 8:18.
- ⁶² Romans 3:1–2.