

Obey the Torah: The Key to YHVH's Blessings

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Two years ago our Loving Father enabled me to prepare a study entitled *The Torah is Not the Law*. Since then the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit) has distributed it widely so many believers have been delivered from the bondage of the "Law" into the incomparable freedom found in the truth of the Torah.

Recently the Ruach HaKodesh has moved me to study in depth his call for all believers in Y'shua HaMashiach to obey the Torah. As we have studied through the weekly portions of Devarim (Deuteronomy), I have been impressed with the clarion call to obey the Torah that Moshe repeatedly made to Bnei Yisrael (the Children of Israel) as he spoke to them just before they entered Eretz Yisrael (the Land of Israel).

This study will first examine the calls to obey the Torah Moshe made to all Bnei Yisrael by the Ruach HaKodesh through Moshe from Devarim. Then it will reinforce the call to obey the Torah with the words of Y'shua and his talmidim (disciples) from the Brit Chadashah (New Testament). Finally, it will conclude with cautions about obeying the Torah - or not.

FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS

As we begin, we need to briefly summarize the previous study, *Torah Is Not the Law*, as a foundation for our study of obedience. Without being delivered from the bondage of the error that the Torah is the "Law," we can neither experience the incomparable freedom and undeserved privilege of being obedient to our loving Father nor receive the resulting indescribable blessings he has promised.

Here is the foundational truth about YHVH. He is Elohim (G-d), Creator, and King of the Universe, who is also Abba, our loving, heavenly Father. Abba is love. Abba is full of grace. Abba is full of mercy. Abba is unchanging. Abba is eternal. Abba has created mankind. Those men and women who submit themselves to Abba are his children.

In various ways, places and times, Abba, through the leaders of his people such as Moshe and the prophets who spoke for him, like Yesha'yahu (Isaiah), Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah), Yechezk'el (Ezekiel), and Y'shua (Jesus), gave his children instructions, guidance, directions for living. With these statements I believe we all agree. The original Hebrew words of the Tanakh, the "Old Testament," portray Abba and his word in these ways. Thus Moshe and all Bnei Yisrael (the Children of Yisrael, the descendants of Ya'akov (Jacob)) understood Abba to have these characteristics and accepted that in love he had spoken his instructions for living uprightly before Abba and with all of his creation.

What does Torah Mean?

In both Judaism and Christianity, Torah has come to mean the "Law" -- a code of laws given by a stern, overbearing god to be strictly obeyed on the penalty of death to be handed out by a vengeful judge in a black robe behind a large, high bench to anyone who failed to obey even one little law.

In truth, the Torah is Abba's system of instructions he lovingly gave to his children. Y'shua and the Jewish people of his day recognized and understood that Abba, as all fathers do, desired only the best for his beloved children. To achieve that objective, Abba had lovingly given his instructions which he asked all his children to follow for their own good. In Y'shua's day, the people walked in these instructions to the best of their ability even though the instructions had been muddled and corrupted by the traditions of the Sages through the centuries. Y'shua had been sent by Abba to restore Bnei Yisrael to the Kingdom of YHVH by teaching and living perfectly the Torah as the loving instructions of Abba. He came to fill full the Torah and teach by his perfect example.

Initially the Torah encompassed the first five books, B'reshit (Genesis) through Devarim (Deuteronomy), the books written by Moshe. Today, Judaism has an expanded definition of Torah that includes these five books plus the "Oral Torah" (commonly referred to as the Mishnah) plus the rabbinical commentary such as the Talmud plus other writings of the Sages from the time of Y'shua until today.

Messianic believers have expanded the definition of Torah to encompass the Tanakh (consisting of the Torah, the Nevi'im (Prophets) and the Ketuvim (Writings), what Christendom calls the "Old Testament") and all of the B'rit Chadashah (what Christendom calls the "New Testament") - the entire scriptures from B'reshit through the Revelation. We believe all the instructions of Abba that have been transmitted to us in these writings are applicable and appropriately called Torah.

This understanding of Torah is confirmed from the Hebrew language. Torah is the Hebrew word **hr'AT** (Strong's #8451) which is derived from the Hebrew word **hry** *yarah* which means to throw, cast, pour, shoot, point out, direct, teach and instruct. Thus, Torah means direction or instruction. It embraces and connotes:

1. human, parental, father-mother instructions
2. divine instructions, teaching, direction
3. societal rules, more properly equated with directions
4. customs and manners

The Torah is designed to point or direct our lives toward the goal of the Kingdom of Heaven. In Hebraic understanding, sin is defined as missing the mark. So when we are not following the Torah, not aiming toward the goal of the high calling, we are missing the mark. So we understand and accept the Torah as Abba's loving instructions and directions to be followed motivated by our love and respect for our Father so we will not miss his mark and sin.

The instructions of Torah are a unity just as YHVH, the giver of the Torah, is a unity. We proclaim this unity of YHVH regularly in the *Shema* from Devarim (Deut.) 6:4. "*Shema Yisrael. Adonai Eloheinu. Adonai Echad.* Hear O Yisrael. The L-rd is our G-d. The L-rd is one." The unity of YHVH has many diverse aspects as revealed in his many, varied manifestations described by approximately 50 names for YHVH in his scriptures. Likewise the unity of his instructions, the Torah, is revealed in diverse aspects described by a number of Hebrew words.

In *Torah Is Not the Law*, we demonstrated that the English translators of the Bible had consistently used legal terminology to support the church's erroneous position that the Torah was "Law." Terms such as law, commandments, statutes, ordinances, regulations, rules, and judgments were selected to perpetuate the Torah as the "Law" that, churchmen maintained, was abolished by Y'shua HaMashiach.

We further proposed that the use of words from the field of education was much more appropriate in the translation of the Hebrew words of the Torah. We suggested the use of words such as instructions, principles, precepts, declarations, utterances, imprints, images (impressions), directions, ways, pointers and requests. (See Appendix 1 for a list of these words, the transliterated Hebrew words that they translate, and the legal words they replaced.)

In the Scriptures quoted from the Torah, I will use the original Hebrew words (transliterated) and/or those words from the field of education that properly translate them. This is intended to enhance your understanding of the call to obey the Torah by listening, hearing, doing, performing, keeping, observing, and safeguarding the loving instructions of YHVH our Father. The new American Standard version (1995) will be used for the scriptures from the Tanakh (Old Testament) and the Jewish New Testament version by David Stern will be used for the scriptures from the Brit Chadashah (New Testament).

What Does Obey Mean?

The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary defines obey as, “Comply with the bidding of; do what one is told to do by a person; be obedient to. Comply with, execute a command. Submit to; follow a principal, an authority, etc. Be obedient. Do what one is told to do. Submit oneself.”

In Hebrew the word most often used for obey is [shema] (Strong’s #8085) which literally means “to hear” and is most frequently translated in the English Bibles as “hear” or “listen” but also “obey” (plus the derivatives of these words). Quite often, *shema* expresses the concepts of hearing and obeying. This is true at least 18 times in Devarim. Moshe pleaded with Israel to “listen” to what he was teaching them. The evidence of their listening was obedience. Hence, “to hear” or “to listen” means “to obey.” Devarim teaches that the most practical expression of our love for YHVH is to obey him.

But it is not only Moshe who taught that truth. Y’shua also reminds us --

“If anyone loves Me, he will obey My teaching.” Given his Jewish mind-set, this verse might well be translated, “If anyone loves Me, he will obey My Torah.” **Yochanan 14:23**

As the dictionary definition above implies, obedience is coupled with the verbs “to do” and “to perform” which are commonly used in the English translations of the Torah. The word “do” most often translates the Hebrew word [asah] (Strong’s #6213) which literally means “to do or make” and sometimes translated as “perform.”

Another important Hebrew word that occurs in the Torah in the context of obedience is [shamar] (Strong’s #8104) which literally means “to keep, observe, give heed” and also has the connotation of safeguarding. It typically is combined with *asah* and thus is translated into English as “observe to do.”

Summarizing what it means to obey the Torah, from the Hebrew words YHVH inspired Moshe to write, we might say, “To obey is to listen and hear, do and perform, keep, observe and safeguard the loving instructions of YHVH, our Abba.”

YHVH CALLS BNEI YISRAEL TO OBEY THE TORAH

Prepared with these foundational truths and definitions, we now examine in detail the calls of YHVH through Moshe to all Bnei Yisrael to obey the Torah.

YHVH had chosen Bnei Yisrael to possess the land located at the crossroads of the world where the three major continents met. He planted them there to become his model nation for all of the world to see and learn his Torah. They would fulfill and model his Torah by obeying it – hearing, performing, safeguarding all of the loving instructions of Abba.

To fully understand these calls to obey the Torah, we must not overlook the audience. Devarim consists of a series of speeches by Moshe to all Bnei Yisrael. About forty years had passed since their parents had been delivered from the bondage of Egypt and led to Har Sinai (Mount Sinai). There YHVH had delivered his loving instructions to all Bnei Yisrael assembled below the Mount. In these forty years, all of the men had died except for Yehoshua and Kalev and Moshe. The men had died because they did not have faith in the ability of YHVH to take them into Eretz Yisrael, defeat their enemies, and give them possession of the land. They had been concerned about their women and children. Now those women and children would be possessing the land as YHVH and his army conquered it.

The men of Bnei Yisrael living at this time had all been under the age of 20 when the Torah was given by YHVH to Moshe. Many had probably been too young at that time to remember the instructions of their Father through Moshe. And for those who remembered, through the years they may well have lost the clear meaning and deep impression of the Torah that was written on tablets of stone and transmitted orally through the camp.

At this critical time, Moshe spoke to all of Bnei Yisrael assembled on the east side of the Yarden (Jordan) River. In these speeches, Moshe recounted some historical events but primarily YHVH had Moshe restate the Torah as the loving instructions of YHVH for those who needed a refresher. In the process, YHVH repeatedly called for Bnei Yisrael to obey the Torah as they entered the land of promise.

Moshe's First Call to Obey the Torah

Devarim 4:1-2 “Now, O Yisrael, listen to the *chukim* (impressions) and the *mishpatim* (declarations) which I am teaching you to perform, so that you may live and go in and take possession of the land which YHVH, the Elohim of your fathers, is giving you. You shall not add to the word which I am charging you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the *mitzvot* (precepts) of YHVH your Elohim which I charge you.”

Moshe begins by instructing Bnei Yisrael to listen to what he is teaching them to perform. He clearly declares the purpose for obeying the Torah is to live, go in, and take possession of Eretz Yisrael which YHVH would be giving them.

He then warns them clearly and directly not to add anything to or subtract anything from the instructions of YHVH that comprise the Torah but rather to keep the precepts of YHVH as Moshe has taught them.

By definition perfection cannot be improved upon by adding or subtracting. The Psalmist wrote,

The Torah of YHVH is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony (Scriptures, the Word) of YHVH is sure, making wise the simple. So one cannot add to or take from the Torah of YHVH without making it less than perfect. **Psalm 19:7**

Furthermore, YHVH warns about tampering with his Word through King Solomon.

Every word of Eloah is tested; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. 6 Do not add to his words or he will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar. **Proverbs 30:5-6**

And the last few verses of the Brit Chadashah confirm this warning.

I warn everyone hearing the words of the prophecy in this book that if anyone adds to them, G-d will add to him the plagues written in this book. 19 And if anyone takes anything away from the words in the book of this prophecy, G-d will take away his share in the Tree of Life and the holy city, as described in this book. **Revelation 22:18-19 JNT**

Over almost twenty centuries, Judaism has added to what is declared to be perfect. To the Tanakh they have added rabbinical books such as the Mishnah and the Talmud and other writings of men and now count them all as holy scriptures with equal significance to the books of Moshe. They even refer to all of these writings as “the whole Torah.” These writings have become the “Law” to them and they are good lawyers, requiring legalistic observance of the traditions and interpretations they have added.

Also ignoring the fact that the Word of YHVH is perfect and YHVH’s warnings against tampering with it, churchmen through the centuries have split the sacred Scriptures, carving off the Tanakh (Old Testament) from the Brit Chadashah (New Testament). Sadly, few in Christianity accept the Torah as the instructions of Abba. Rather most see it as merely a book of history that has been superseded after the death of Y’shua by the “new and improved” scriptures.

This is too often true of those associated with and teaching in the “Hebrew Roots” movement. They willingly teach about the Torah but generally stop short of calling believers to obey the Torah as the loving instructions of Abba. After teaching about the Torah and the traditions of men that churchmen have added to Christianity, they often conclude by telling believers that they can choose what instructions they wish to

follow. This sounds like subtracting from the loving instructions. In the alternative, it is giving believers permission to choose what instructions they will obey rather than encouraging them to obey all of them as Abba has requested and the Ruach HaKodesh will enable.

Purposes for Obeying the Torah

Devarim 4:5-9 “See, I have taught you *chukim* (impressions) and the *mishpatim* (declarations) just as YHVH my Elohim charged me, that you should do thus in the land where you are entering to possess it. 6 So keep and do them, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these *chukim* (impressions) and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ 7 For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is YHVH our Elohim whenever we call on Him? 8 Or what great nation is there that has *chukim* (impressions) and the *mishpatim* (declarations) as righteous as this whole Torah which I am setting before you today? 9 Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons.”

YHVH charged Moshe with teaching the instructions of Torah to Bnei Yisrael so they would do them in Eretz Yisrael which would have three specific purposes or results. So Moshe directly instructs the people to “keep and do” the Torah instructions and the results will be:

1. The nations will see Bnei Yisrael as a wise and understanding people.
2. A testimony that their G-d is near and responds to them whenever they call on him!
3. A testimony to the righteousness - the correctness, the fairness, the justness - of these loving instructions YHVH set before them to follow.

Moshe also told Bnei Yisrael that they would have to work at remembering, observing, following and teaching his instructions so they would not forget and depart from obedience. How soon did Bnei Yisrael forget the Torah after moving into Eretz Yisrael? Within seven years they had forgotten about observing the Sh'mitah (Shabbat Year), much less the Yovel (Year of Jubilee). They never did observe even the Sh'mitah in Eretz Yisrael before they were punished by captivity for 70 years, the number of Sh'mitah they had failed to observe from the time they possessed the land until they were taken into captivity.

In this passage Bnei Yisrael was instructed by Moshe to teach all of the loving instructions of YHVH to their children and to their children's children. Not only was this to be done in word but also by way of example. But, sadly, the parents soon forgot the instructions and failed to be obedient. So instead of being taught the instructions of Abba and observing their parents as examples, the children and succeeding generations saw disobedience and became even more disobedient than their parents.

Throughout time but particularly in these last days, HaSatan has attacked the family unit. He has destroyed the teaching, by word and example, of the parents by separating them, causing them to do battle in front

of their children. These parents demonstrate that in their lives the Torah instructions are meaningless. Is it any wonder that their children have no use for YHVH, do not recognize Abba as their loving Father, and despise his instructions? The result is a generation that is essentially Torahless living in a land that is essentially Torahless surrounded by a world that is essentially Torahless. How soon will we witness the man of Torahlessness take his seat on the Temple Mount?

Moshe's Instructions Before the *Shema*

Most of us have recited and memorized the *Shema*, the central declaration of our faith, from **Devarim 6:4** “*Shema Yisrael! YHVH Eloheinu! YHVH Echad!*” “Hear, O Yisrael! YHVH is our Elohim. YHVH is one!” But how many of us remember the words immediately preceding the *Shema*? They are vital to our living out our declaration of faith by obeying the Torah of YHVH.

Devarim 5:32 - 6:3 “So you shall observe to do just as YHVH your Elohim has charged you; you shall not turn aside to the right or to the left. 33 You shall walk in all the way which YHVH your Elohim has charged you, that you may live and that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which you will possess. 6:1 “Now this is the *mitzvot* (precepts), the *chukim* (impressions) and the *mishpatim* (declarations) which YHVH your Elohim has charged me to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you are going over to possess it, 2 so that you and your son and your grandson might fear YHVH your Elohim, to keep all his *chukim* (impressions) and his *mitzvot* (precepts), which I charge you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. 3 “O Israel, you should listen (*shema* - obey) and be careful to do it, that it may be well with you and that you may multiply greatly, just as YHVH, the Elohim of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.”

Here Moshe repeatedly calls Bnei Yisrael to do what YHVH has instructed them. Notice these verb phrases. “Observe to do.” “Walk in all the way.” “Do them.” “Keep all his *chukim* and *mitzvot*.” “Listen and be careful to do it.” In a nutshell Moshe is saying, “Obey the Torah.”

Moshe also lists specific blessings that will come upon Bnei Yisrael for obeying the Torah. These blessings include:

1. You may live (v. 33)
2. It may be well with you (vs. 33, 3)
3. You may prolong your days in the land (vs. 33, 2)
4. You, your son and your grandson might fear YHVH your Elohim (v. 2)
5. You may multiply greatly (v. 3)
6. You may live in a land flowing with milk and honey (v. 3).

The phrase, “You shall walk in all the way . . .” is where the term *halacha* is derived as the Hebrew word for walk is *halach*. In Judaism *halacha* has come to mean the legal part of Talmudic and later Jewish

literature or “Law,” in an all-inclusive, abstract sense, or else a specific regulation. *Halachot*, the plural, refers to collections of laws, especially the oral law, the accepted tradition of interpretation of the written law passed down from generation to generation by the Sages.

From a Messianic, Torah-observant perspective, *halacha* can refer broadly to the whole system of living in obedience to the loving instructions of our Father, how we walk each day in the light of his word on the pathway through life. In a sense each of us may set our own *halacha*, the specific ways in which we follow the Torah on a day-to-day basis.

There are some leaders who will try to set rules and regulations that they call *halacha* for you to follow in your walk. They may require you to walk according to their *halacha* to be in affiliation with them. Before choosing to follow or reject such *halacha*, check it against the written Torah as you are led by the Ruach HaKodesh. Never forget that our only infallible and constant guide throughout our walk in obedience to the Torah must be the Ruach HaKodesh who will lead us into all truth and the word of YHVH is truth.

What YHVH Wants

Devarim 6:5 “You shall love YHVH your Elohim with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might (resources).”

This verse clearly tells us what YHVH wants. It defines the response that the One and Only G-d expects of us. There can be nothing less than complete love for him and total devotion of all our being and all the resources (body, mind, spirit, property, finances, life) we possess to him. As we obey the Torah, our total motivation must be our love for YHVH who first loved us. When we understand the true nature of the Torah as the loving instructions of our heavenly Father, we will not view our obedience as “having to” keep the instructions but rather “getting to” obey the Torah.

Y’shua HaMashiach, YHVH who came in the flesh to dwell among us, clearly defined how our love for YHVH will be demonstrated. It will only be by our obedience to his loving instructions just as Y’shua said, “If you love me, keep my *mitzvot* (precepts).” **Yochanan 14:15 JNT**

Teaching the Next Generation to Obey the Torah

Devarim 6:20-25 “When your son asks you in time to come, saying, ‘What do the *edot* (pointers), *chukim* (impressions) and the *mishpatim* (declarations) mean which YHVH our Elohim charged you?’ 21 then you shall say to your son, ‘We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and YHVH brought us from Egypt with a mighty hand. 22 ‘Moreover, YHVH showed great and distressing signs and wonders before our eyes against Egypt, Pharaoh and all his household; 23 He brought us out from there in order to bring us in, to give us the land which He had sworn to our fathers.’ 24 So YHVH charged us to observe all these

chukim (impressions), to fear YHVH our Elohim for our good always and for our survival, as it is today. 25 It will be righteousness for us if we are careful to observe all this *mitzvot* (precepts) before YHVH our Elohim, just as He charged us.

Moshe instructed Bnei Yisrael how to respond to the inquiries of their children about the importance of the instructions of YHVH. They were to recount their bondage in Egypt and the great deliverance of YHVH and the possession of Eretz Yisrael as he had promised the forefathers. Then the parents were to teach their children to obey the Torah of YHVH for their own good and survival. Furthermore, the children were to be taught that obedience to all of the loving instructions of YHVH would be counted as righteousness.

Please note that this is not a statement about salvation but rather a statement about how YHVH views those who obey his Torah - they are righteous in his sight.

YHVH Rewards and Punishes

Devarim 7:9-11 “Know therefore that YHVH your Elohim, he is Elohim, the faithful El, who keeps his covenant and his lovingkindness [*chesed* - grace, mercy] to a thousandth generation with those who love him and keep his *mitzvot* (precepts); 10 but repays those who hate him to their faces, to destroy them; he will not delay with him who hates him, he will repay him to his face. 11 Therefore, you shall keep the *mitzvot* (precepts) and the *chukim* (impressions) and the *mishpatim* (declarations) which I am charging you today, to do them.”

YHVH our Elohim is an awesome Elohim. He is totally faithful to his covenants and full of loving-kindness, grace, and mercy to those who love him and obey his Torah. But YHVH also brings retribution - he repays those who hate him - he destroys them without delay face to face. And who are those who hate him? Those who do not obey his Torah.

To enjoy the benefits of the covenants of YHVH and his lovingkindness throughout our generations, we should want to love our Heavenly Father, the Sovereign King of the Universe, and keep his loving instructions, his Torah, in its fullness to the best of our ability for our benefit. But our motivation must not be to receive blessings. Rather, we should serve YHVH out of our love and respect and reverence and fear of the one true and living Elohim. Likewise, we should not be motivated to obey his Torah because of our fear of his retribution but rather in appreciation for his love.

YHVH, the Covenant Keeper, Promises Blessings

Devarim 7:12-16 “Then it shall come about, because you listen to these *mishpatim* (declarations) and keep and do them, that YHVH your Elohim will keep with you His covenant and His lovingkindness which

He swore to your forefathers. 13 He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock, in the land which He swore to your forefathers to give you. 14 You shall be blessed above all peoples; there will be no male or female barren among you or among your cattle. 15 YHVH will remove from you all sickness; and He will not put on you any of the harmful diseases of Egypt which you have known, but He will lay them on all who hate you. 16 You shall consume all the peoples whom YHVH your Elohim will deliver to you; your eye shall not pity them, nor shall you serve their gods, for that would be a snare to you.”

YHVH is the covenant maker and Abba is the covenant keeper. In these verses he promises those who keep the covenant with him great blessings.

What a loving Father we have who is so willing to bless his children who obey his Torah. Just think -- he has given these loving instructions to those whom he loves for our own benefit. And then on top of that, when we actually obey his Torah (by just doing what is good for us), our Father blesses us even more. He keeps his covenant and lovingkindness -- loving us, blessing us and multiplying us. He increases the fruit of our womb and all the fruit of our labors so that we will be blessed above all peoples. He will remove sickness from us and keep us from the harmful diseases of Egypt which our forefathers suffered. Additionally, he promises his retribution against all who hate us and will deliver them to us. Abba is truly amazing!

Despite what many churchmen have taught in the past, Moshe told Bnei Yisrael that YHVH would keep the Brit Avot, the covenant he swore to the fathers - Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov. These covenants have not been canceled or broken by YHVH. YHVH is a faithful covenant-maker and covenant-keeper. YHVH does not break his covenants. He will always be the Elohim of his Chosen People and he will provide his promised blessings in abundance, if they listen and obey, in total fulfillment of his covenants.

Obey the Entire Torah

Deuteronomy 8:1 “All the *mitzvot* (precepts) that I am charging you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which YHVH swore to give to your forefathers.

Moshe instructed Bnei Yisrael to be careful to obey all of the Torah. The Hebrew word for “all” is *kol* and its primary meaning is the whole. Thus Moshe stressed that no one could pick and choose which of the Abba’s loving instructions they would obey. They were charged with obeying the whole. Furthermore, the blessings promised by YHVH were contingent on Yisrael’s acceptance of the entire Torah for all of it - in its entirety - is a single, integrated instruction.

YHVH Asks for Obedience

Next Moshe asks and answers the question every G-d-fearing human being has asked of himself. What does YHVH your Elohim ask from you?

Devarim 10:12-13 “Now, Yisrael, what does YHVH your Elohim require (ask) from you, but to fear YHVH your Elohim, to walk in all his ways and to love him, and to serve YHVH your Elohim with all your heart and with all your soul, 13 to keep YHVH’s *mitzvot* (precepts) and his *chukim* (impressions) which I am charging you today for your good?”

Who were included in Yisrael? Were those who stood before Har Sinai those many generations ago? Yes, except for the men who died in the wilderness. Were those descended from the twelve sons of Ya’akov who became Bnei Yisrael? Yes. How about those who are descended from the two sons of Yosef, Ephraim (to whom Ya’akov gave the blessing of the eldest son) and Menashe? Yes. All of the above were included in Yisrael. The generations of those who held faith in YHVH and Messiah Y’shua were also included. So if you believe in YHVH and Y’shua HaMashiach, you are included in Yisrael. As a part of Yisrael you are to be as one who stood at Har Sinai and entered into the covenant of Torah. Each day you are to carry out your part of the covenant by obeying the Torah.

Remember that the covenant YHVH made with Bnei Yisrael was one covenant with one people. There are not two covenants. Some say that Christians or non-Jews or Gentiles have their own new covenant with YHVH and that *Yehudah* (the Jews) have their own old covenant with YHVH. There is one and only one covenant YHVH made with his beloved people. There is only one Torah for all of YHVH’s people to obey following the example of the only one who ever perfectly fulfilled (filled full) the Torah, Y’shua HaMashiach.

In verse 12 we have an excellent example of the English Bible translators imposing their belief that the Torah was the “Law” by using the word “require.” The Hebrew word is **lav'** *sha'al* which literally means “ask, enquire, consult, request, beg.” Out of 173 occurrences of *sha'al*, the King James Bible translators used “require” only seven times. The New American Standard translators used “require” only two times. How conveniently and easily these translators changed the Torah picture of our loving Father into a picture of a mean judge, clothed in a black robe sitting behind a big bench gavel in hand ready to sentence anyone who fails to keep his “Law” to death. That is not the portrait of Abba painted in the Torah. Rather, our loving Father is portrayed as asking, even begging, his precious children to walk in his ways, loving him and serving him with all their heart and all their soul. His children are asked to demonstrate their love by observing, keeping, safeguarding, the entirety of his Torah, his loving instructions given for their benefit.

Love YHVH and Obey His Torah

Devarim 11:1, 8 “You shall therefore love YHVH your Elohim and always keep his charge, his *chukim* (impressions), his *mishpatim* (declarations), and his *mitzvot* (precepts). ... 8 You shall therefore keep every *mitzvah* (precept) which I am charging you today, so that you may be strong and go in and possess the land into which you are about to cross to possess it.”

Moshe continues his exhortation to Bnei Yisrael to love YHVH and obey his loving instructions for their own benefit - so they will be strong and able to possess the promised land, Eretz Yisrael. We should obey the Torah motivated by our love for YHVH, not for personal gain. Yet, the Torah reminds us that if we obey the loving instructions given for our benefit, Abba will bless us with physical and spiritual benefits.

But we must never forget that these benefits are conditional on our obedience to the Torah, loving our Father, walking in his ways and holding fast to him. The conditional nature of these benefits is clearly established by Moshe’s use of the word “if” at the beginning of

Devarim 11:22-23 “For if you are careful to keep the whole *mitzvah* (precept) which I am charging you to do, to love YHVH your Elohim, to walk in all his ways and hold fast to him, 23 then YHVH will drive out all these nations from before you, and you will dispossess nations greater and mightier than you.

Your Choice: Blessing or Curse

Devarim 11:26-28 “See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: 27 the blessing, if you listen to the *mitzvot* (precepts) of YHVH your Elohim, which I am charging you today; 28 and the curse, if you do not listen to the *mitzvot* (precepts) of YHVH your Elohim, but turn aside from the way which I am charging you today, by following other gods which you have not known.”

These verses begin Parsha Re’eh which means “look at, behold, perceive, consider.” That is what Moshe asked YHVH’s Chosen People to do - to consider the choices they had – a blessing or a curse. The blessing was obeying the Torah; the curse resulted from not obeying the Torah, following other gods.

Once again the translators of the English Bible did a disservice to the word of YHVH. They added a little word “if” after “the blessing.” There is no “if” in Hebrew! Why? Because the blessing itself is obeying the instructions of Abba, our Father. Yes, **obeying the Torah is the blessing!** These loving instructions were given for our benefit and obeying the Torah benefits us which is the blessing.

But our loving Abba promises even more and greater blessings as a reward for our obedience which demonstrates our love for him. Just as any loving father would, Abba rewards and lavishes his love upon the children who will do what he asks them to do. Why does an earthly father do this for his children? Because our heavenly Father has set the pattern in the Torah for the earthly father!

To make the distinction clear between the blessing and the curse, verse 28 in Hebrew does have “if” but “if” is associated only with the curse. From the teachings of the church we initially obtained a basic but erroneous understanding of blessings: blessings come from faith. Some have been taught by the Ruach HaKodesh a higher level of understanding: blessings are conditioned on obedience. Now the Ruach HaKodesh has raised our level of understanding to the highest level: **the blessing is obeying the Torah which results in further blessings from our loving Father!** Obedience to the Torah of Abba is inextricably intertwined with the blessings that he promises. Obedience itself is a blessing and a means whereby one blesses YHVH, our loving Abba, demonstrating love for him which triggers his further response of blessings far beyond our expectations. What an amazing truth!

YHVH’s Torah is Complete and Perfect

Devarim 12:32 “Whatever I charge you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it.”

YHVH the Creator gave the Torah as his instructions by which his beloved creatures would become acceptable to have a personal relationship with their Creator. So Torah is an expression of the will of G-d for mankind. Those who obey these loving instructions become people who love, respect and value one another and YHVH as their Creator. Torah is a revelation of the nature of G-d himself and as he is perfect, Torah is perfect. Any deviation from this perfect standard will result in the dehumanization of man and estrangement between creature and Creator.

Torah is the complete and perfect revelation YHVH intended for his beloved creatures. We may wish for more or we may desire less. But the Torah is the complete package that cannot be improved upon. That is why YHVH specifically prohibits adding to it or taking anything away. In a way, Torah is like a computer program, the instructions for how a computer is to act. If you alter even one line of these instructions, the outcome will be changed and will not be what was intended.

People attempt to circumvent this injunction not to add or subtract from Torah motivated by two evil influences. The first influence is the pressure from the world around us and yielding to it changes the Torah. The second influence is even more insidious and dangerous, the false prophet from within the community who led Bnei Yisrael far astray from Torah.

First, when Bnei Yisrael entered Eretz Yisrael and saw the religious practices of the inhabitants living around them, YHVH instructed them not to imitate the pagan practices. This was not so much a prohibition of idolatry, which was clearly forbidden, but of using these pagan practices in the worship of YHVH. The sophisticated rituals, beautiful pomp and ceremony, and displays of spiritual power demonstrated by these pagan priests pressured Bnei Yisrael to incorporate these practices into their worship. The result was catastrophic. The loving instructions of YHVH were diluted and eventually abandoned by Bnei Yisrael.

As we seek to obey the Torah, we must understand the difference between obeying the clear instructions of Torah and being pressured to follow the authority of tradition, Jewish, Christian, or pagan.

Second, the false prophet within Bnei Yisrael, through his words, deeds or even the ability to procure signs and wonders, attempted to lead the community away from the truth of Torah. In our day we may be swayed to abandon the Torah by the influence of an intellectual or theologian, the attraction of a charismatic leader or the performance of false signs or miracles - just as is prophesied at the end of the age. As one hears and observes, one must always be discerning and ask, “What is this event or experience validating?” “Who is being magnified, glorified and exalted?” Whatever or whoever draws us away from obedience to the clear and loving instructions of Abba must be rejected like the false prophet of old.

Moshe warned Bnei Yisrael that when confronted by the siren song of the false prophet, the seducer who would lead them away from the Torah, they were to “. . . follow YHVH your Elohim and fear Him; and you shall keep His *mitzvot* (precepts), listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him.” **Devarim 13:4**

It’s All about Doing

Devarim 26:16 “This day YHVH your Elohim charges you to do these *chukim* (impressions) and *mishpatim* (declarations). You shall therefore be careful to do them with all your heart and with all your soul. “

Moshe uses that little two-letter word that so many people try to avoid in their lives - “do.” Doing is what obeying the Torah is all about. It is not about mental assent to the words of YHVH and their acceptability for good living. It is not about hearing the instructions and then forgetting them. It is not about following the traditions of men, whether Jewish, Christian or pagan, thinking that keeping of traditions is the same as obeying the Torah. Obeying the Torah is all about doing what our loving Father asks, doing the loving instructions he gave expressly for our benefit – which brings rewards to the faithful “doers” of the Torah from the One who is honored by their demonstrations of love.

An Intimate Relationship from Obedience

Devarim 26:17-19 “You have today declared YHVH to be your Elohim, and that you would walk in His ways and keep His *chukim* (impressions), His *mitzvot* (precepts) and His *mishpatim* (declarations), and listen to His voice. 18 YHVH has today declared you to be His people, a treasured possession, as He promised you, and that you should keep all His *mitzvot* (precepts); 19 and that He will set you high above all nations which He has made, for praise, fame, and honor; and that you shall be a consecrated people to YHVH your Elohim, as He has spoken.”

Mutual declarations of great importance are made in these verses. First, Bnei Yisrael declared YHVH to be their Elohim. They declared they would walk in his ways, keep his instructions, and listen to his voice. Second, YHVH declared he had chosen Bnei Yisrael to be his people, a treasured possession, based on their declaration that they would obey the Torah. YHVH further declared to make his beloved people supreme over all the nations so they would be a holy people to YHVH.

This important passage reveals a great deal about the relationship between Yisrael and YHVH. These mutual declarations demonstrate how we may have the intimate relationship with YHVH he promised to Bnei Yisrael. Cause and effect are involved. The cause of the relationship is trusting, faithful obedience with all our hearts and souls. Obeying the Torah distinguishes YHVH as the one, true and living Elohim whom we sanctify, or set apart. This confesses to the rest of the world that we love, follow and obey the Elohim of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov. The effect is the blessing of being declared by YHVH as his beloved whom he showers with blessings each day. Y'shua promised that those who confess him before the world will be confessed by him before YHVH.

Torah - The Unity of Instructions

Devarim 27:1 Then Moses and the elders of Israel charged the people, saying, “Keep all the commandments which I command you today.”

Once again we are misled by the translators. Most English versions mistranslate this verse by using the plural “commandments” while the Hebrew word is actually the singular, *mitzvah*, and not the plural form, *mitzvot*. So this verse is better translated as,

Devarim 27:1 Then Moshe and the elders of Yisrael charged the people, saying, “Keep (observe, do) all the Precept - the Instruction - the totality of - what I charge you today.”

The Torah instructions of Abba are a unity rather than a multiplicity of single instructions from which one may pick and choose. They are like a picture puzzle that is fully assembled. The instructions are not to be considered as scattered, disorganized pieces before assembly into the completed whole but rather as the unified assembled puzzle. Abba asks us to obey “*kol*” (all) his instructions, like one observes the picture puzzle as a hole, the sum of its parts.

Certainly Abba understands that we must learn to obey one instruction at a time just like a puzzle is assembled one piece of the time. But we must rely upon the Ruach HaKodesh to guide us step-by-step toward the goal of obeying Abba's Torah instructions as a unity. If we pick and choose which ones we want to follow and which ones we want to ignore, the sovereignty of Abba is diminished. Rather, we elevate and place ourselves into the position of authority – deciding what is good for us and what is not. We supplant YHVH as our Creator and Father who knows what is best for us.

Ya'akov (James), the brother of Y'shua, confirms the unity of Torah that prevents one from selectively obeying the instructions of Torah. He wrote,

For a person who keeps the whole Torah, yet stumbles at one point, has become guilty of breaking them all. 11 For the One who said, "Don't commit adultery," also said, "Don't murder." Now, if you don't commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the Torah. 12 Keep speaking and acting like people who will be judged by a Torah which gives freedom. 13 For judgment will be without mercy toward one who doesn't show mercy; but mercy wins out over judgment. **Ya'akov (James) 2:10-13**

We must never forget the grace, mercy and lovingkindness of YHVH our Abba saves us. At the same time we must utterly reject the perversion by those who proclaim that legalistic obedience to the "Law" was what the Yisraelites really believed provided their salvation.

Confirm the Torah

Devarim 27:26 'Cursed is he who does not confirm the words of this Torah by doing them.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'

No clearer declaration exists of the status of one who does not do the loving instructions of Torah. Cursed is that one!

Likewise, by implication, Bnei Yisrael declared they would confirm the words of Torah by doing them. That needs to be the declaration of all who would honor YHVH and demonstrate their love for him as the one who first loved us. We will obey the Torah by doing his loving instructions.

Blessings and Curses

Devarim 28:1-2 "Now it shall be, if you diligently obey YHVH your Elohim, being careful to do all His *mitzvot* (precepts) which I charge you today, YHVH your Elohim will set you high above all the nations of the earth. 2 "All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you obey YHVH your Elohim."

In chapter 28 we have one of the more well known and solemn sections of the whole Torah: the Blessings and the Curses. The blessings (vv. 3-14) occupy very little space when compared to the curses (vv. 15-68). Yet the blessings encompass every aspect of one's life. They are rather poetic in their promises of fruitfulness and protection, both for the city dweller and for the farmer. Unlike other religions which promise only reward in the World to Come, only the Torah promises rewards in this world -- blessings of food in your storehouse, peace from your enemies, healthy offspring – in reward for obedience to the Torah of Abba.

How wonderful is the promise of YHVH that “all these blessings will come upon you and overtake you, if you obey YHVH” - if you listen to the voice of YHVH and act in proper response to his voice. Indeed, the blessings will not only come upon one who is faithful and obedient but the blessings will even chase down and overtake such a one. Imagine the Father, as the source of all blessings, running after his cherished child to throw even more blessings on this beloved child.

The Blessings are Conditional

Verses 1 through 14 describe a number of conditions that YHVH expects to be fulfilled by his people if they are to be blessed by him.

- v. 1 **“If you diligently obey** YHVH, your Elohim, being careful **to do all** of his *mitzvot* (precepts).”
- v. 2 “. . . **if you obey** YHVH, your Elohim.”
- v. 9 “. . . **if you keep** the *mitzvot* (precepts) of YHVH, your Elohim, and you **walk in his ways.**”
- v. 13 “. . . **if you listen** to the *mitzvot* (precepts) of YHVH your Elohim”
- v. 14 “. . . and **[if] you do not turn aside** from any of the words which I charge you today”

Thus we clearly understand that the blessings listed in this passage were and are conditioned on trusting, faithful obedience to the loving instructions of YHVH.

Curses for Failing to Obey

Devarim 28:15-69

Following the list of blessings, the Torah takes about five times as many verses to list the curses from disobedience as it did to list the blessings for obedience. These curses will befall those who do not meet the conditions for the blessings, those who turn away from the Torah. Here is a sample.

“So all these curses shall come on you and pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed, because you would not obey YHVH your Elohim by keeping his *mitzvot* (precepts) and his *chukim* (impressions) which he commanded you. 46 They shall become a sign and a wonder on you and your descendants forever. 47 Because you did not serve YHVH your Elohim with joy and a glad heart, for the abundance of all things; 48 therefore you shall serve your enemies whom YHVH will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in the lack of all things; and he will put an iron yoke on your neck until he has destroyed you.” **Devarim 28:45-48**

Rejecting Torah is Disastrous

Devarim 29:14, 18-21 “Now not with you alone am I making this covenant and this oath, . . . 18 so that there will not be among you a man or woman, or family or tribe, whose heart turns away today from YHVH your Elohim, to go and serve the gods of those nations; that there will not be among you a root bearing poisonous fruit and wormwood. 19 It shall be when he hears the words of this curse, that he will boast, saying, ‘I have peace though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart in order to destroy the watered land with the dry.’ 20 YHVH shall never be willing to forgive him, but rather the anger of YHVH and His jealousy will burn against that man, and every curse which is written in this book will rest on him, and YHVH will blot out his name from under heaven. 21 Then YHVH will single him out for adversity from all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant which are written in this book of the Torah.”

The delusion of walking in one’s own way without the Torah may be paraphrased as “peace will be with me, so I can do as I wish without fear; calamities can only befall other people.” Such delusion is the source of disaster for so many people. The world today seems to be driven by the motto “I’m going to do my own thing. Leave me alone.” Even the church is full of people who have proclaimed this delusion and suffered the disastrous consequences. And through the ages of its evolution, Christianity seems to have adopted this position. It has abandoned the clear, loving instructions of their loving Heavenly Father to do things their own way – all the while thinking the peace and blessings of YHVH will follow them even when they choose to ignore the simple request of Abba to obey his Torah.

At the extreme of this self-delusion, the Chofetz Chaim used to say that many seem to base their lives on the foolish notion that certain kinds of people are prone to die, but not them -- they are immune from physical or spiritual death. This is especially true today with young people who act extremely, putting their lives, and the lives of others, in jeopardy because of this self-delusion that others die, not them.

In verses 20 and 21, YHVH through Moshe makes it abundantly clear that he does not condone the choices or actions of one who walks as his heart sees fit. He declares extreme consequences for such disobedience. YHVH declares that he “shall never be willing to forgive him, but rather the anger of YHVH and His jealousy will burn against that man, and every curse which is written in this book will rest on him, and YHVH will blot out his name from under heaven. 21 Then YHVH will single him out for adversity from all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant which are written in this book of the Torah.”

This clear warning has been ignored by those who declare the whole of Torah as “old” and “unnecessary” and who believe the “new” has abolished the “old.” YHVH may have a big surprise in store for those who would do their own thing in spite of the clear call of YHVH. He simply asks all his human creation to be trusting, faithful and obedient to him by doing all the instructions contained in his holy scriptures, from B’reshit to Revelation.

The Prophecy of Return to the Torah

Devarim 30:1-10 “So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all nations where YHVH your Elohim has banished you, 2 and you return to YHVH your Elohim and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I charge you today, you and your sons, 3 then YHVH your Elohim will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where YHVH your Elohim has scattered you. 4 If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there YHVH your Elohim will gather you, and from there He will bring you back. 5 YHVH your Elohim will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. 6 Moreover YHVH your Elohim will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love YHVH your Elohim with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live. 7 YHVH your Elohim will inflict all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you. 8 And you shall again obey YHVH, and observe all His *mitzvot* (precepts) which I charge you today. 9 Then YHVH your Elohim will prosper you abundantly in all the work of your hand, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your cattle and in the produce of your ground, for YHVH will again rejoice over you for good, just as He rejoiced over your fathers; 10 if you obey YHVH your Elohim to keep His *mitzvot* (precepts) and His *chukim* (impressions) which are written in this book of the Torah, if you turn to YHVH your Elohim with all your heart and soul.”

In this wonderful passage, YHVH through Moshe prophesies the return of Bnei Yisrael to the Torah in all the lands to which they have been banished through the centuries. They and their children, with all their hearts and souls, will obey YHVH and his Torah as Moshe first instructed their forefathers. YHVH, with great compassion, will bring back his Torah observant ones (the doers) from all parts of the earth into Eretz Yisrael to possess it. He will prosper and multiply them more than their forefathers who occupied the land. He will circumcise hearts and souls so they will love him and live. Although hated and persecuted, Bnei Yisrael (the doers not hearers) will obey YHVH by obeying the Torah resulting in abundant prosperity. But such prosperity in Eretz Yisrael will be conditional on continued obedience to YHVH, demonstrated by keeping all of his loving instructions written in the books of Moshe with all their hearts and souls.

Torah is Near You

Devarim 30:11-14 “For this *mitzvah* (Precept - the whole unity) which I charge you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach. 12 It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?’ 13 ‘Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?’ 14 But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it.”

In his closing address, Moshe emphasized that Torah, the loving instructions of Abba, are not hard to find, not difficult to follow; not hard to grasp, not beyond our ability to obey. We do not have to search the

heavens or cross the seas to find them. We do not have to wait for an angel to come from heaven to make us hear them. We don't have to wait for a special person, prophet, preacher or teacher, to come from around the world, or across the nation, to teach us these instructions. We don't have to possess supernatural faith or great wisdom or understanding to obey Torah.

The entire Torah can be near to us, within our ability to observe and do it. It can be so near to us as to be in our very mouths and hearts. But the Torah does not get there by magic, by an outpouring that mysteriously overwhelms and infuses us. No, it gets into our mouths and hearts as we study and speak and obey the Torah under the direction of the Ruach HaKodesh who leads us into all truth. Abba expects us to learn and do the instructions of Torah one at a time. The more we study, speak and obey the Torah, the more it will be in our mouths and in our hearts. And the more we love Abba, the more we will want to observe and do all he asks us to do – as he so clearly reveals to those who will but seek him.

As we learn the Torah and are faced with obeying another instruction, we have the power to choose to obey and are held responsible for that choice. If we choose to obey, Abba provides all we need to accomplish the task at hand, one instruction at a time.

Chose Life

Devarim 30:19-20 “I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, 20 by loving YHVH your Elohim, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which YHVH swore to your fathers, to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov, to give them.”

These verses are the clearest and most powerful statement in the Torah about the purpose of life and the existence of free will; *chai* (life) and choices. Our lives are always full of conditions or choices. The primary choices facing man are between life and death, good and evil. Abba encourages us, “So choose *chai* (life) . . .” Why? “In order that you may live, you and your descendants.” Why? “Because he (Abba) is your *chai* (life).” What kind of life -- physical or spiritual? Both! As an old song says, “You can't have one without the other.” They are inextricably intertwined in a symbiotic relationship, each influencing the other. Abba says to choose *chai*, spiritual life in him, so that you may have physical life as well.

Our true focus is really not *chai* but rather “to love Abba and cleave to him.” He wants to be our “first love,” the one to whom we cling and to whom we turn for everything. Choosing to love and obey Abba is real *chai*, both physical and spiritual. When we choose Abba and obey him, he gives us his *chai*, which in turn enables us to really live, to fully hear and obey his voice, and to cling to him in trusting, faithful obedience thus demonstrating our love.

The Obedience of Bnei Yisrael

Devarim 34:9 Now Yehoshua the son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom, for Moshe had laid his hands on him; and Bnei Yisrael listened to him and did as YHVH had charged Moshe.

Immediately after recounting the death of Moshe and the time of mourning for him, the book of Devarim closes with the affirmation of the obedience of Bnei Yisrael to the Torah as YHVH had charged Moshe who charged Bnei Yisrael to do all that Abba had asked them to do, his loving instructions, the Torah.

Confirmation and Charge to Yehoshua

Immediately thereafter, as recorded in the first verses of Yehoshua (Joshua), YHVH confirms the entire Torah to Yehoshua and charges him with obedience to all his loving instructions. His words to Yehoshua should be written on our hearts along with his Torah.

Yehoshua 1:1-2, 7-9 Now it came about after the death of Moshe, servant of YHVH, that YHVH said to Yehoshua the son of Nun, Moshe's attendant, saying, 2. "Moshe My servant has died: . . . 7. Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the Torah which Moshe My servant charged you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. 8 This book of the Torah shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. 9 Have I not charged you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for YHVH your Elohim is with you wherever you go."

Yehoshua later confirmed the Torah by repeating what YHVH had confirmed and charged him to teach to the warriors of the two tribes and a half tribe of Bnei Yisrael who were returning to their families on the east side of the Yarden River after all of Bnei Yisrael had conquered Eretz Yisrael.

Yehoshua 22:1-2, 5 Then Yehoshua summoned the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, 2 and said to them, "You have kept all that Moshe the servant of YHVH charged you, and have listened to my voice in all that I charged you. ... 5 "Only be very careful to observe the *mitzvot* (precept) and the Torah (instructions) which Moshe the servant of YHVH charged you, to love YHVH your Elohim and walk in all His ways and keep His *mitzvot* (precepts) and hold fast to Him and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul."

OBEY THE TORAH IN THE BRIT CHADASHAH

Y'shua and his talmidim who wrote the Brit Chadashah repeatedly called on Bnei Yisrael of their time to obey the Torah. This portion will follow the order of the Brit Chadashah scriptures to present and examine the statements of Y'shua and his talmidim as the additional witnesses who confirmed instructions of Moshe to obey the Torah.

Y'shua Confirmed and Lived The Torah

Mattityahu 5:17-19 JNT “Don't think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete. 18 Yes indeed! I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a *yud* or a stroke will pass from the Torah - not until everything that must happen has happened. 19 So whoever disobeys the least of these *mitzvot* and teaches others to do so will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whoever obeys them and so teaches will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

In Hebraic thought, “abolish” the Torah meant to wrongly interpret it. To “complete” or “fulfill” Torah meant to properly interpret it. How does one abolish the Torah? By misinterpreting it. How does one complete the Torah? By correctly interpreting it and being obedient to its instructions. From the Hebrew, the passage could be translated, “Think not that I am come to misinterpret, or to misapply, the Torah. Rather, I have come to correctly interpret and, thereby, cause the Torah to stand upright on a firm foundation.”

Y'shua came to properly interpret the Torah and live it as the perfect example. And that is what Y'shua intended when he said in

Mattityahu 28:19-20 JNT “Therefore, go and make people from all nations into talmidim, immersing them into the reality of the Father, the Son and the Ruach HaKodesh, 20 and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember! I will be with you always, yes, even until the end of the age.”

As YHVH in the flesh, Y'shua provided first-hand instructions and guidance in Torah observance - knowing YHVH as a loving Heavenly Father and doing what he asks - to his Talmidim, the disciples that walked with him daily. These instructions and his example were passed on by the first Talmidim to their Talmidim, from generation to generation.

In **Mattityahu 5:19** Y'shua warned of the consequences to those who would disobey the least of the instructions of the Torah and teach others to do so – they “will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven.” And he promised a reward – “whoever obeys them and so teaches will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.”

Y'shua Taught Obedience Like a Child

Abba's instructions include some actions that he asks us to perform without giving us any reason. He just wants us to do them. These instructions have traditionally been labeled *chukim*. *Chukim* may be translated as impressions, imprints, images.

The coins in your pockets should be good reminders of Abba's *chukim*. They are created when a shiny, round piece of metal is placed between two dies and these dies are brought forcefully together with great pressure. What is left are *chukim* (impressions, imprints, images) on both sides.

Abba's *chukim* are not instructions that man accepts and does because Abba explained to him the purpose or because man reasoned that there is a purpose of his obedience. Rather, *chukim* are what Abba impresses on his loving children, the things he asks them to do without explanation or reason. We must accept and do these instructions of Abba like little children without question or doubt.

To reinforce this approach to all the loving instructions, even those we don't understand, Y'shua instructed his talmidim,

“Yes! I tell you that unless you change and become like little children, you won't even enter the Kingdom of Heaven! 4 So the greatest in the Kingdom is whoever makes himself as humble as this child.”
Mattityahu 18:3-4 JNT

To further confirm this approach, Y'shua also said,

“Let the children come to me, don't stop them; for the Kingdom of G-d belongs to such as these. 15 Yes! I tell you, whoever does not receive the Kingdom of G-d like a child will not enter it!” **Mark 10:14-15 JNT**

In his discourses with his Talmidim, Y'shua has emphasized the need for righteousness, walking uprightly before YHVH and with those he has created, in order to enter his Kingdom. The righteousness he requires is not self-righteousness such as proclaimed by the *P'rushim* (Pharisees). It is not a misplaced sense of righteousness that comes from legalism (as hypocritically proclaimed and imposed by the teachers of Torah in Y'shua's day). Rather, the righteousness Y'shua desires is that of a young child who lovingly, obediently does what his Father asks him to do because he is eager to please the one who loves him and gave him life and not because he has figured out the purpose of his Father's instructions. So we should be as eager as young children to obey Abba, our Father, as the Ruach HaKodesh teaches and leads us. YHVH is the One who loved us so much that he gave himself in human form so that we might have this life eternally. So we should be motivated to love and obey him who first loved us and gave himself for us.

A number of years ago, preachers proudly proclaimed from their pulpits a statement that was also memorialized as a bumper sticker: “G-d said it. I believe it. That settles it!” What is wrong with that

statement? The second sentence is totally irrelevant! When G-d says something, that settles it! When G-d says to do something, it does not matter whether you believe it or not.

So it is with all the loving instructions of Abba. Whether we believe them or not, whether our reasoning ability accepts them or not, whether we understand their purpose or not, and whether we like them or not, Abba simply asks us to be obedient. Our response to the one who first loved us is to be obedient, motivated by love in response to his. Obedience was designed by the Creator, the Covenant Maker, to enrich the life of any child of his who follows his instructions, to give greater productivity to his labors, more joy and fulfillment in his life, and to provide peace and blessing to his home as well as to his community at large.

Another way to respond to the loving instructions of Abba is like military service members. They have submitted themselves to the higher authority of their government through the officers who supervise and direct them. They do as they are told. When I was in the Navy, we had a saying that summarized the responsibility of everyone in military service. “Mine is not to reason why; mine is but to do and die.” Our response in submission and service to Abba, our Father, the Creator and the King of the Universe, should not be any less than our submission and service to our government. If we are true servants of the King of Kings, we will willingly submit and serve him.

The Greatest *Mitzvot* of Torah

Mattityahu 22:33-40 JNT When the crowds heard how he [Y’shua] taught, they were astounded; 34 but when the *Tz’dukim* (Sadducees) learned that he had silenced the *Tz’dukim*, they got together, 35 and one of them who was a Torah expert asked a *sheilah* (question) to trap him: 36 “Rabbi, which of the *mitzvot* in the Torah is the most important?” 37 He told him, “‘You are to love YHVH your G-d with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.’ 38 This is the greatest and most important *mitzvah*. 39 And a second is similar to it, ‘You are to love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 All of the Torah and the Prophets are dependent on these two *mitzvot*.”

In this discourse, Y’shua used a well-known rabbinical teaching technique of the time called *remez*. Speaking specific phrases recalled to the minds of the audience (who had the Scriptures memorized) the totality of the passage with all of its meaning and implications for their lives.

By quoting the simple call of Moshe to Bnei Yisrael found in **Devarim 6:5** to love YHVH, Y’shua was effectively incorporating and confirming all of the Torah instructions regarding loving YHVH by obeying his instructions, just as Moshe had proclaimed through Devarim as we presented above. Then by quoting the simple instruction to love your neighbor from **Vayikra (Lev.) 19:18**, Y’shua was incorporating and confirming all of the Torah instructions regarding the interpersonal relationships Bnei Yisrael had with one another, their friends, companions, fellow Yisraelites, neighbors, and even strangers.

To wrap up this concept and his confirmation of Torah, Y'shua expressly states, "All of the Torah and the Prophets are dependent on these two *mitzvot*." So Y'shua was not issuing any new instructions but was confirming and reinforcing the totality of the Torah that he, as YHVH, had given to Bnei Yisrael for their own good.

How can one love YHVH with all one's heart, soul and strength except to be obedient to his loving instructions? Living in love with YHVH is living in eager obedience to the instructions he lovingly gave for our benefit.

How can one love his friend, companion, fellow Yisraelite and neighbor as himself without obeying the very One who is love, YHVH? To fulfill this second instruction of Y'shua, we must first love ourselves so that we will know how and what it means to love our neighbor as ourselves. And to love ourselves, we must first obey the simple instructions Abba gave us for our personal benefit.

In a nutshell, with two simple phrases, Y'shua asks his followers to obey the entirety of the loving instructions of Abba in order to love YHVH and to love others as themselves.

Y'shua's Parents Were Obedient to the Torah

Luke 2:39-40 JNT When Yosef and Miryam had finished doing everything required by the Torah of Adonai, they returned to the Galil, to their town Natzeret. 40 The child grew and became strong and filled with wisdom – G-d's favor was upon him. 41 Every year Yeshua's parents went to Yerushalayim for the festival of Pesach. 42 When he was twelve years old, they went up for the festival, as custom required.

Y'shua's parents, Yosef and Miryam, were obedient to the Torah of YHVH, as described in the context of these verses in which they brought Y'shua as a baby to redeem him as the firstborn son. After returning home, Y'shua was brought up observing and obeying the Torah instructions – becoming strong and filled with wisdom and YHVH's favor.

The obedience of Y'shua's parents is further confirmed by their pilgrimage each year to Yerushalayim for Pesach (Passover). And Y'shua, as an obedient son of his parents, also learned to be obedient to the Torah of his Father, YHVH, by their example. So when Y'shua became a man, he continued in his perfect obedience, filling full the instructions of his Heavenly Father, the instructions that he as YHVH had charged his children to observe and do. So we are not surprised that as YHVH now living in the flesh, seen by Bnei Yisrael as a Rabbi, he called his people back to the Torah and taught them to obey his loving instructions and receive the blessings he had promised as YHVH.

So committed to this message was Y'shua that he said those who hear and obey his instructions were far more blessed than his own mother who brought him into the world in the flesh!

As Yeshua was saying these things, a woman in the crowd raised her voice to call out, “How blessed is the mother that gave birth to you and nursed you from her breast!” 28 But he said, “Far more blessed are those who hear the word of G-d and obey it!” **Luke 11:27-28 JNT**

Y’shua Was Zealous For The Torah

Indeed, Y’shua as the Living Torah demonstrated his zealousness for obedience to the Torah by his strong statements. In this passage Y’shua responds to the accusations of the Judeans that he did not keep the Shabbat. He closes by warning them.

“But don’t think that it is I who will be your accuser before the Father. Do you know who will accuse you? Moshe, the very one you have counted on! 46 For if you really believed Moshe, you would believe me; because it was about me that he wrote. 47 But if you don’t believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?” **Yochanan (John) 5:45-47 JNT**

Like the Judeans at the time of Y’shua, today, for most who call themselves Christians, accepting and obeying the loving instructions of Abba is a real problem. They do not believe what Moshe wrote. They do not observe and do what Abba asked them to do in the Torah. They sing “Trust and Obey” but they don’t do it. They don’t obey! So the big issue that Y’shua raised in his day is still valid today.

This issue may be asked as, “How are you going to believe what Y’shua said?” Will you begin by believing and doing what Y’shua himself as YHVH revealed through Moshe to Bnei Yisrael? Or will you ignore the Torah and believe only what is written in the Brit Chadashah? Will you only say you believe and have faith in YHVH, expecting only your words to be your testimony? Or will you really believe and demonstrate your belief in what Y’shua said by obeying the entirety of his loving instructions, first revealed through Moshe and then amplified and filled full by Y’shua during his life, as reported by the obedient writers of the Brit Chadashah?

To paraphrase Moshe, the choice is life or death, blessings or curses. Choose wisely. **Devarim 30:19-20**

If You Love Me, Obey the Torah

Yochanan (John) reported that Y’shua, on several occasions, called for his talmidim to obey the Torah in order to demonstrate their love for him.

“If you love me, you will keep my commands.” **14:15 JNT**

“Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me, and the one who loves me will be loved by my Abba, and I will love him and reveal myself to him.” **14:21 JNT**

“If you keep my commands, you will stay in my love – just as I have kept my Abba’s commands and stay in his love.” **15:10 JNT**

“You are my friends, if you do what I command you.” **15:14 JNT**

To reinforce these statements of Y’shua to his talmidim, Yochanan later wrote to believers in his first letter,

The way we can be sure we know him [Y’shua] is if we are obeying his commands. 4 Anyone who says, “I know him,” but doesn’t obey his commands is a liar the truth is not in him. 5 But if someone does what he says, then truly love for G-d has been brought to its goal in him. This is how we are sure that we are united with him. 6 A person who claims to be continuing in union with him ought to conduct his life the way he did.” **I Yochanan (John) 2:3-6 JNT**

How did Y’shua conduct his life? He lived, obeyed and taught the Torah of YHVH, his Abba.

And Yochanan wrote further --

Everyone who believes that Yeshua is the Messiah has G-d as his father, and everyone who loves a father loves his offspring too. 2 Here is how we know that we love G-d’s children: when we love G-d, we also do what he commands. 3 For loving G-d means obeying his commands. Moreover, his commands are not burdensome. **I Yochanan (John) 5:1-3 JNT**

How much plainer can this get? In these passage Yochanan confirms that loving G-d is obeying his Torah. And if one does not obey the Torah, he cannot say that he loves G-d. The love of G-d and obeying his Torah are identical and inseparable.

Our Relationship with YHVH

Loving YHVH our Abba and obeying his Torah are the foundation of the relationship Abba intends to have with his children as Y’shua described --

“I am the real vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 Every branch which is part of me but fails to bear fruit, he cuts off; and every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes, so that it may bear more fruit. 3 Right now, because of the word which I have spoken to you, you are pruned. 4 Stay united with me, as I will with you - for just as the branch can’t put forth fruit by itself apart from the vine, so you can’t bear fruit apart from me. 5 I am the vine and you are the branches. Those who stay united with me, and I with them, are the ones who bear much fruit; because apart from me you can’t do a thing. 6 Unless a person remains united with me, he is thrown away like a branch and dries up. Such branches are gathered and thrown into the fire, where they are burned up. 7 If you remain united with me, and, my words with you, then ask whatever you want, and it will happen for you. 8 This is how my Father is glorified - in your

bearing much fruit; this is how you will prove to be my talmidim (disciples). 9 Just as my Father has loved me, I too have loved you; so stay in my love. 10 If you keep my commands, you will stay in my love - just as I have kept my Father's commands and stay in his love. 11 I have said this to you so that my joy may be in you, and your joy be complete." **Yochanan (John) 15:1-11 JNT**

Y'shua himself teaches that we are part of the Tree of Life. If we are not abiding in him as he abides in the Father and if he is not in us, then we will be removed from the tree, as a dead branch is cut off when it serves no other purpose than to hurt the body of the tree. If we do not abide in Y'shua HaMashiach and serve YHVH and obey the Torah, honoring his Word with trusting, faithful obedience, then we will be cut off. Only those who contribute to the life of the tree and to the life of the body of Y'shua HaMashiach will remain in the tree or in the body.

The foundation for the relationship YHVH wants to have with us through Y'shua is found in verse 10. "If you keep My commands, you will stay in My love – just as I have kept My Father's commands and stay in his love." What commands is he talking about?

They could not have been those found in the Brit Chadashah (New Testament) because it did not exist in the time of Y'shua, so he could not be referring to them. The only words from Abba the talmidim (disciples) had to live by were the Torah, the prophets, and the writings (Torah - Nevi'im - Ketuvim from which we get TaNaKh) – what Christians call the Old Testament. The Brit Chadashah was not fully compiled until decades after Y'shua died and was resurrected. All the Apostles and early disciples lived their lives and based their faith on and in the words of Abba in the Tanakh. This was the foundation for their lives and their faith and there was no separation between their lives and their faith. They were one unit and treated as such.

Today, we tend to separate our faith from our lives – one becomes our religion and the other becomes our secular life. Such a separation is not Biblical and is not pleasing to our Father. He desires to be Adonai, L-rd and Master, of all of us – both faith and secular – and there is no separation between them in his eyes. We appear before YHVH as one complete unit, just as YHVH is *echad* (one, unity) though made up of the Father, Y'shua and the RuachHaKodesh. We have distinct characteristics and aspects of our humanity that make us the individuals we are. But in the eyes of our Father, we appear as one complete individual. This is how YHVH should appear to us, no matter how complex his nature or makeup might be.

Always remember that in order to love YHVH you must obey his loving instructions, his Torah. There is no other way to reach the heart of YHVH than to obey the Torah as evidence of our love. To paraphrase and apply Y'shua's statement in verse 10, "If you love YHVH, you will obey his Torah."

On several occasions, Y'shua called people to a relationship with him. His talmidim had such a close relationship it was as life with him. For example, Y'shua said, "If you obey what I say, then you are really my talmidim, 32 you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." **Yochanan 8:31-32 JNT**

Let us accept the charge of Moshe, recorded in the Tanakh, and of Y'shua, recorded in the Brit Chadashah, and choose life in Messiah Y'shua, the L-rd our G-d. Turn toward him and he will turn to you. As the brother of Y'shua wrote,

Therefore, submit to G-d. Moreover, take a stand against the Adversary, and he will flee from you. 8 Come close to G-d, and he will come close to you. Then you will be able to choose *chai*, which will enable you to obey his voice and walk in his commands. **Ya'akov (James) 4:7-8 JNT**

One G-d, One Father, One Torah

Romans 3:27-31 JNT So what room is left for boasting? None at all! What kind of Torah excludes it? One that has to do with legalistic observance of rules? No, rather, a Torah that has to do with trusting. 28 Therefore, we hold the view that a person comes to be considered righteous by G-d on the ground of trusting, which has nothing to do with legalistic observance of Torah commands. 29 Or is G-d the G-d of the Jews only? Isn't he also the G-d of the Gentiles? Yes, he is indeed the G-d of the Gentiles; 30 because, as you will admit, G-d is one [Devarim 6:4]. Therefore, he will consider righteous the circumcised on the ground of trusting and the uncircumcised through that same trusting. 31 Does it follow that we abolish Torah by this trusting? Heaven forbid! On the contrary, we confirm Torah.

RavSha'ul makes this clear. There is One G-d, one covenant; not two G-ds, two different covenants. We are all united in one G-d who is YHVH, the Father, Y'shua the Son, and the Ruach HaKodesh. Why is this so important? Because this makes us one people, Bnei Yisrael united not only in Y'shua but united in Torah, the loving instruction to which we respond with obedience from our heart not just from our flesh. Torah should live in the hearts, minds and souls of the children of Abba. As his faithful, trusting, obedient children, we are to be setting an example and showing the way for the rest of Abba's people, uniting as one in Y'shua and living out his Torah.

We confirm Torah just as Rav Sha'ul did. We do not destroy or set aside Torah by trusting but confirm it in all its magnificence and glory by obeying. Torah reveals the very heart of YHVH. Listen to the beating of his heart and look to the life of Y'shua to truly know Abba. Look to Y'shua your Messiah. Look to him, O Bnei Yisrael!

CAUTIONS ABOUT OBEYING THE TORAH - OR NOT

Beware of Disregarding the Torah

Messianic Jews (Hebrews) 10:28 JNT Someone who disregards the Torah of Moshe is put to death without mercy on the word of two or three witnesses.

The Greek word translated “disregards” has broad meaning in this passage. It means 1) do away with, set aside; 2) to thwart the efficacy of anything, nullify, make void, frustrate; 3) to reject, to refuse, to slight.

In this verse, the writer of the epistle to the Messianic Jews makes it very clear that anyone who disregards (makes invalid, rejects, or teaches against) the Torah of Moshe is executed on the sworn testimony to his conduct from the mouths of two or three witnesses. From the Greek language and the context, it is abundantly clear that this condemnation of such a one was a widely known and accepted fact at the time of the writing, probably about 30-40 years after the death of Y’shua. Messianic Jews reading this letter would have known this statement was a foundational truth and not a proposition to be ignored, debated or dismissed.

How can people claim to love YHVH our G-d and then proceed to carve down his Word, the very revelation of himself, until it fits their mold, disregarding and discarding what they don’t like, until they like what they see and worship what they have created? Is carving down the Torah to suit a personal theology and religion any different from carving an idol that appeals to its maker, worshiping it and replacing the One True and Living G-d, YHVH? And in judgment by YHVH, will the punishment be any different on such modern idolaters than it was on the idolaters who led Bnei Yisrael astray?

For nearly 2,000 years, churchmen have conveniently overlooked this important statement. The principle certainly has not been applied in the church. But YHVH will surely apply it at his coming.

“For the time has come for the judgment to begin. It begins with the household of G-d.” **1 Kefa (Peter) 4:17**

Is that condemnation of those who disregard Torah any less valid today than 2,000 years ago? Should we not embrace the whole revelation of the unfathomable, immeasurable, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent YHVH? Should we not study to show ourselves approved before him? After all, Rav Sha’ul wrote to Timothy,

“Do all you can to present yourself to G-d as someone worthy of his approval, as a worker with no need to be ashamed, because he deals straightforwardly with the Word of the Truth.” **2 Timothy 2:15**

Should we not know the loving instructions that were deeply impressed by Abba in the minds of Y'shua, his talmidim (disciples) and all who listened to him? If we did, we would better understand what Y'shua was saying to all his followers, even us.

Rav Sha'ul also warns us of another way of disregarding the Torah that is all too prevalent today. Some, by aiming amiss, have wandered off into fruitless discussion. 7 They want to be teachers of Torah, but they understand neither their own words nor the matters about which they make such emphatic pronouncements. 8 We know that the Torah is good, provided one uses it in the way the Torah itself intends. **1 Timothy 1:6-8 JNT**

May I suggest that the Messianic community is “messy” because of the actions of men today like those described by Rav Sha'ul to Timothy about 2,000 years ago. As Rav Sha'ul describes them, “they want to be teachers of Torah.” Some such self-proclaimed teachers are not satisfied to teach the Torah, the plain and simple instructions found in the Scriptures. Rather they embrace the traditions of men that proliferated since the death of Y'shua, who perfectly filled full the Torah by trusting, faithful obedience. They spend most of their time teaching about these traditions (usually of Jewish origin) and neglect to teach the Bible and lead their followers into the truth under the guidance of the Ruach HaKodesh.

Other self-proclaimed teachers only teach about the Torah, usually from the historical perspective, neither observing and obeying the Torah nor calling their followers to observance and obedience. Surely this is disregarding the Torah within the purview of **Hebrews 10:28**. Many such “teachers” still see the Torah as the “Law” that Y'shua came to bring to an end. They are quite likely to close their teachings about the Torah by telling their audience that they can follow the “Law” (usually meaning the Torah and the Jewish traditions) if they want to, but doing so is not necessary. The word “obey” does not appear often in their teachings and writings just like “loving instructions” are not described nor lived as examples.

Still other self-proclaimed teachers dare to teach that the Torah is only for the Jews. So they proclaim that gentiles are relieved of all the Torah except the specific commandments of the Apostles listed in Acts 15. Or they teach the Rabbinic fiction of the Noachide laws being established for gentiles as Bnei Noach, the Sons of Noah, in place of the Torah. (This is like the position of the Orthodox Jews who can stand condemned if they dare to teach Torah to a non-Jew.)

There is a common and sad result of the efforts of the various types of self-proclaimed teachers. As Rav Sha'ul describes, they enter “into fruitless discussion” with their followers. And then their followers often induce other believers to enter “into fruitless discussion” in an attempt to bring them into the fold of their misled teachers. Rightfully Rav Sha'ul called these “fruitless discussions” because they bear no fruit. Rather, they are serious distractions drawing believers away from studying the Scriptures, understanding the simple truths therein, and obeying the loving instructions of Abba. Would that these teachers would become true teachers of Torah who walk the walk and teach by example, observing and obeying the instructions of our loving Father.

May YHVH have mercy on those who would claim that a relationship with Y'shua is all they want and is more important than the very Word that reveals him. May YHVH have mercy on those who would throw his Word on the floor and claim that it is not as important as a personal relationship with Y'shua. May YHVH have mercy on those who would stumble over that Book of his Word as over a stumbling block and make light of it.

Obey the Torah - Not Traditions of Men.

Mattityahu 23:1-7 JNT Then Y'shua addressed the crowds and his talmidim: 2 "The Torah-teachers and the *P'rushim* (Pharisees)," he said, "sit in the seat of Moshe. 3 So whatever they tell you, take care to do it. But don't do what they do, because they talk but don't act! 4 They tie heavy loads onto people's shoulders but won't lift a finger to help carry them. 5 Everything they do is done to be seen by others; for they make their *t'fillin* (phylacteries) broad and their *tzitziyot* (fringes) long, 6 they love the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, 7 and they love being greeted deferentially in the marketplaces and being called 'Rabbi'."

Speaking to his Talmidim, Y'shua gives due honor to those who sit in the seat of Moshe. This was the designated place in the synagogue that symbolized the source and authority of Torah, YHVH through Moshe. The Rabbis sat in the seat of Moshe when they were declaring the Torah and interpreting its instructions. When the Rabbis spoke from the seat of Moshe, they were guided by the Ruach HaKodesh to teach truthfully and accurately. So Y'shua told his Talmidim to be obedient to what they said, but not to do what they did. Y'shua recognized and confirmed that the word they spoke was authoritative while warning that the actions and examples that they set were hypocritical. Y'shua gave this warning because the authorities imposed oppressive traditions on the people but did not obey the Torah themselves, doing everything to be seen of men and not to obey YHVH.

In too much of the widely diverse religious community that studies the whole of the Scriptures - from those who claims to be the Hebraic Roots movement to the most Orthodox Jewish observants - the traditions of men have become so prominent that Moshe's strong, clear call to obey the Torah has been drowned out.

On the one hand, some proclaim their desire to know the Hebraic roots of their faith and are adept at teaching these origins and about the Torah. But they continue to walk in the old paths of pagan-influenced Christianity while declaring to their followers that they are not under the "Law" and so obedience to some or all of Abba's loving instructions is optional - "You can do them if you want to but you don't have to."

On the other hand, self-proclaimed Rabbis, often without rabbinical credentials or their equivalent in education and sometimes with phony degrees, expound at great lengths about the traditions of Judaism that they impose on believers in the name of being "Torah observant." Seldom do they teach the pure Torah of YHVH delivered through Moshe. Instead, much of their teaching is derived from external sources in

Judaism such as the Talmud. As a result, the traditions of men, from the time after the life of Y'shua, are laid heavily on the shoulders of their followers with instructions that keeping these traditions in full is required to be "Torah observant."

As the loving instructions of our heavenly Abba, the Torah was delivered simply and clearly by Moshe in B'reshit (Genesis) through Devarim (Deuteronomy). Abba did not give instructions that required the constant interpretation and amplification and imposition by learned men. He knew that even his little children could learn and observe and obey the Torah as they were led by the Ruach HaKodesh and taught by parents and grandparents.

Today few people who are being drawn to the Torah have parents and grandparents who have been Torah observant. They have not been encouraged or taught to study the Torah for themselves under the guidance of the Ruach HaKodesh. As a result, they seek leaders (often the products of the typical Christian educational system) proclaiming themselves to be experts in Torah. Too many self-proclaimed experts think they must impress these seekers of truth with their great learning of Jewish tradition and teachings. They do not encourage their students toward direct study of the word of YHVH, following the leadership of the Ruach HaKodesh into all truth, but encourage reliance upon the study of their lessons, their books, and their teaching tapes. In some cases their endeavors blossom into quite profitable commercial enterprises. In the final analysis, these teachers too often burden the truth seekers with the vain traditions of men, insisting they all must be carefully followed to sanctify the truth seekers before YHVH. Such have never been the case.

The instructions of Abba's Torah have wonderful meaning and beneficial purposes. They deepen our relationship with our Father and Creator by revealing him and they strengthen the bonds of love nurtured by obedience. The instructions are so much more than a cultural thing or tradition. We must embrace these loving instructions one at a time as we are led and taught by the Ruach HaKodesh. And we must recognize that we are all at different places along the walk of obedience. Thus we cannot look at any other person and judge their level of obedience or their relationship with our Father. Only our Father knows the condition of our heart and the status of our obedience -- and that's the way it ought to be.

In addition, if we want, we can do the "Jewish thing" - following Jewish tradition and rituals - for a variety of reasons. But if we learn the Jewish blessings/prayers and the Hebrew language and the required traditions of men and do them as a cultural thing, as a matter of rote, as form without substance, or as some kind of pseudo-evangelistic tool, they will do absolutely nothing positive for us. Our efforts will be in vain. All these will have been distractions that have consumed much time and effort that could have been used better if we had been wise stewards of all Abba gave us.

Not until we obey the simple, loving instructions of Abba declared in Torah and we do them with the intention of drawing near to and loving YHVH, seeking to understand the revelation of YHVH, feeling the direct benefit of the instructions in our lives and on our relationship with YHVH, the world and the spiritual realm, will obeying the Torah have the full meaning in our lives that Abba intended. Only then will obeying

Abba's instructions result in the greater benefit, the matchless outpouring of the bounty of Abba on us and our family in all our ways in which we walk uprightly and obediently before him. At last the greatest benefit will be achieved when we know Abba in the majesty and glory and sovereignty of the One True and Living G-d, the Creator and King of the Universe, who loved his highest creation so much as to send his only Son in the flesh to both show us how to live by obeying his Torah and to redeem us from the slavery to sin so we may have eternal life in him.

Conclusion

YHVH called Moshe to lead Bnei Yisrael from the slavery of Egypt to the bountiful land of freedom to be his model nation to the whole earth. These chosen people were blessed with loving instructions from the mouth of YHVH given for their own benefit. Not only were they promised that if they obeyed their Abba's instructions they would benefit directly, but also their loving Abba would shower them with blessings beyond all they could imagine. They were also told that if they did not obey their Abba's instructions they would be disciplined severely. Before Moshe departed and Bnei Yisrael entered Eretz Yisrael, Moshe charged them in several speeches that comprise the book of Devarim. Throughout runs the central theme - Obey the Torah, the loving instructions given by your Abba for your own good.

Y'shua and his talmidim confirmed the truth of the Torah and called believers to obey the Torah as the means by which they would love their Abba and show their love in return for all of his.

In these last days at the end of times, Abba is once again drawing his faithful, chosen remnant, the Bride of Y'shua to himself and his Torah. The call is clear once again - Obey the Torah.

As you come to the end of the study with that call in your heart and spirit, how will you respond? You are response-able before Abba. He has lovingly provided you with the will and the way to obey his Torah. As Moshe told Bnei Yisrael, you have choices - Life or Death. May you choose Life - life in Abba by trusting, faithful obedience to his loving instructions. May you choose to obey the Torah!

May Abba bless you with all you need to study his word, seek his truth, be led into it by the Ruach HaKodesh, and obey the simple, loving instructions of the One who first loved us and is drawing us into an intimate, loving relationship with him, evidenced by obedience.

As with all studies, this study is a work in progress so your constructive criticism, comments, suggestions, and encouragements are welcome. You may address them to the author

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Your communications will be received with appreciation but may or may not be acknowledged in the discretion of the author who does not intend to become involved in “fruitless discussions” (1 Timothy 1:6; see above) about this study.

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APPENDIX 1

The Hebrew words that describe the various instructions of the Torah are better translated by words adapted from the field of education rather than the misleading words erroneously adapted from the field of law by the Bible translators.

This list provides the suggested word and the Hebrew word for which it is a good translation.

INSTRUCTIONS -- TORAH (pl. TOROT) [formerly laws or commandments]

The actual, or acts of, instructing; teaching, education; knowledge etc. taught; instructive rules; precepts; directions; orders to a person.

Instructions are what our Heavenly Father has given to us so this word constitutes an umbrella term encompassing all of his Torah.

PRINCIPLES -- TOROT [formerly laws or commandments]

That which is taught, doctrines, instructions, precepts; fundamental truths or propositions forming the basis of a system of belief etc. General rules adopted or professed as a guide to action; fundamental motives or reasons for action.

PRECEPTS -- MITZVOT [formerly commandments]

Orders to do particular acts; commands; general instructions or rules for action; maxims; injunctions, frequently divine commands regarding moral conduct.

Included in the instructions of Torah are certain *mitzvah* (pl. *Mitzvot*). This Hebrew word is usually translated as command or commandment. *Mitzvah* is from the root *tzaveh* that means to lay charge upon, or to give a charge to someone. Thus a *mitzvah* is a direct order from our Father to do a particular thing. As examples of precepts we would consider the Ten Words (Devarim) Abba gave in Sh'mot (Exodus) 20 as precepts. But we need to recognize that most of the instructions of Abba do not constitute precepts or commands but rather some other form of instruction.

DECLARATIONS, UTTERANCES -- MISHPATIM [formerly regulation, rule or judgment]

The deliverance of words, declarations; utterances, enunciations; narrations.

The instructions of Abba were words delivered to his people, declared by him directly at Har Sinai, or enunciated and declared by Moshe as he heard them from Abba. Just because they were declared and uttered did not make them judgments, regulations or rules, as the word *mishpatim* has been generally

translated. There were no legal connotations to *mishpatim* in Hebrew and exist only in English because the translator added them from his own bias during translation.

IMPRESSIONS, IMPRINTS, IMAGES -- CHUKIM [formerly statute, ordinance or regulation]

Marks produced by pressure; lasting impressions or signs of some emotion, experience, action; influences; affects; representation of the form of a person or thing. A person or thing in which the appearance of another is reproduced.

Like a coin is struck with two dies causing *chukim*, we are created in the image and likeness of YHVH. He desires for his characteristics to be imprinted upon us. His Torah makes that impression when we willingly submit to and obey his loving instructions.

DIRECTIONS, WAYS -- D'RACHIM

The actions or functions of directing; guidance; management; instructions on what to do, how to proceed, or where to go.

Some of the instructions that our Father has given to us fall into the category of directions. For example, many of the instructions regarding the building and operation of the Mishkan and the functions of the priests fall into this category of directions. YHVH instructed Moshe who then directed the skilled craftsmen who built the Mishkan.

POINTERS -- EDOT

Hints, clues; pieces of information; testimonies - all of these relating to how things can be done. This Hebrew word is usually translated as "testimonies."

Sometimes Abba wants us to walk in his ways but allows us to use the mind and abilities he has graciously and generously given us. So he provides us with pointers that will not rise to the level of directions or precepts but which will point us along our path or will help us to better do what he requests. As we walk, grow and mature, our own experiences and testimonies will aid us, and others, building us up in faith and in our walk with Abba in obedience.

REQUESTS -- SHELOT

Actions asking or calling for something; petitions, especially written ones; expressed wishes or desires.

Definitions adapted with assistance of *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* and my dear friends and Hebrew scholars, Ephraim and Rimona Frank of Israel and Bob Sass of Chicago.

| <u>EDUCATIONAL WORD</u> | <u>HEBREW WORD</u> | <u>REPLACES LEGAL WORDS</u> |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|
| INSTRUCTIONS | TORAH (pl. TOROT) | laws or commandments |
| PRINCIPLES | TOROT | laws or commandments |
| PRECEPTS | MITZVOT | commandments |
| DECLARATIONS, UTTERANCES | MISHPATIM | regulations, rules or judgments |
| IMPRESSIONS IMPRINTS, IMAGES | CHUKIM | statutes, ordinances or regulations |
| DIRECTIONS, WAYS | D'RACHIM | |
| POINTERS | EDOT | testimonies |
| REQUESTS | SHELOT | |