

# NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

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There is a lot of talk these days about getting back to the "New Testament Church." But the real truth is, there are two things the "New Testament Church" did not have: A "New Testament" and a "Church". The believers of the "New Testament Church" met in synagogues (Acts 15:21; James 1:1; 2:2) and had no book known as the "New Testament" because it had not been written and compiled yet. Thus when a believer from the "New Testament Church" referred to "The Scriptures" he was speaking of the Tanak ("Old Testament") for they were the only Scriptures he had. Thus when Paul wrote to Timothy:

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly when Paul spoke to the Bereans in Acts 17:11 we are told of them:

These were more noble than those at Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

Paul was saying that the Bereans were noble because they did not believe what Paul said simply on the authority of Paul. They were looking to see if what Paul was teaching could be found in the Scriptures. Remember, they were looking in the Tanak, the only Scriptures they had at the time. Paul said that it was noble of them to only accept his teaching if it lined up with the Tanak. That means that whenever we study the New Testament we should ask ourselves this question: "Can you get here from there?" (There being the Tanak). If you think you understand something in the New Testament in such a way that it contradicts the Tanak, then you need to realize that you are misunderstanding it.

As we read the NT we should be a noble Berean. We should look in the Tanak to see if what Paul and the other New Testament writers teach is found there. We should seek to understand what the New Testament says in light of what the Tanak says.

The word "TORAH" is commonly translated in our Bibles as "Law", but

...it shall be a statute forever to him and his seed after him.  
(Ex. 28:43)

...a statute forever...  
(Ex. 29:28)

...it shall be a statute forever to them, to him and to his seed throughout their generations.  
(Ex. 30:21)

It is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever.  
(Ex. 31:17)

There is no shortage of passages in the Torah which specify that the Torah will not be abolished but will be for all generations forever. (For more see: Lev. 6:18, 22; 7:34, 36; 10:9, 15; 17:7; 23:14, 21, 41; 24:3; Num. 10:8; 15:15; 18:8, 11, 19, 23; 19:10 and Deut. 5:29)

Moreover the Psalmist writes:

Your word is truth from the beginning: and every one of your righteous judgments endures forever.  
(Psalm 119:160)

Furthermore the Tanak tells us that the Torah is not to be changed or taken away from:

You shall not add to the word which I command you, neither shall you diminish a thing from it, that you may keep the commandments of YHWH your God which I command you.  
(Deut 4:2)

Whatever thing I command you, observe to do it: you shall not add thereto, nor diminish from it.  
(Deut. 12:32)

So if we are "Noble Bereans" we will find that the Tanak teaches that the Torah will not be abolished but will endure for all generations forever.

This teaching from the Tanak is profitable to us for doctrine, for reproof and for correction.

The Messiah echoes this teaching:

Do not think that I have come to destroy the Torah or the Prophets. I have not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one yod or one mark will by no means pass from the Torah till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, he will be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven; but whoever does and teaches them will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.  
(Matt. 5:17-19 see also Lk. 16:17).

As does Paul:

Do we then abolish the Torah through trust? Absolutely not! We uphold the Torah!  
(Rom. 3:31)

Despite the fact that David was saved by faith alone (Rom. 4:5-8) he loved the Torah and delighted in it (Ps. 119: 97, 113, 163). Paul (Paul) also delighted in the Torah (Rom. 7:22) and called it "holy, just and good." (Rom. 7:12). There is nothing wrong with the Torah that God should want to abolish or destroy it, in fact both the Tanak and the New Scriptures call the Torah "perfect" (Ps. 19:7; James 1:25).

The Torah is even called in the New Testament "the Torah of Messiah" (Gal. 6:2). To say that the Torah was not forever and is not for all generations, is to call God a liar.

Another popular teaching in the church is a teaching that God only gave the Torah to Israel to prove that they could not keep it. For example one book states:

...Israel, in blindness and pride and self-righteousness, presumed to ask for the law; and God granted their request, to show them that they could not keep his law...  
(God's Plan of the Ages; Louis T. Tallbot; 1970; p. 66)

Now let's think this through for a moment. God gives Israel the Torah. He says he will place curses upon Israel if they fail to keep the Torah (Lev. 26 & Deut 28-29). He sends prophets to warn Israel of pending destruction because of their continual failure to keep Torah. Eventually God allows Babylon to invade Jerusalem and the Jews to be taken into captivity, because of their failure to keep Torah. Then he comes along and says "Nah, I was only fooling. I just gave you the Torah to prove you could not do it." What kind of God would that be? Of course as noble Bereans we can simply look in the Tanak to see if this popular teaching is true. Let us see what the Tanak says on this issue:

For this commandment which I command you this day it is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say: "Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us, and make us to hear it, that we may do it?" Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say: "Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it to us, and make us hear it, that we may do it?" But the Word is very near to you, in your mouth, and in your heart, that you may do it.  
(Deut. 30:11-14)

The fact that the Torah can be kept is confirmed as well in the New Testament which tells us that Yeshua was tempted in all things just as we are and he did keep the Torah (Heb. 4:15).

### **PAUL MISUNDERSTOOD**

Paul is greatly misunderstood as having taught that the Torah is not for today. I have met a great many who feel uncomfortable with his writings.

Some of these have even, like the Ebionites of ancient times, removed Paul's from their canon (Eusebius; Eccl. Hist. 3:27:4). This belief that Yeshua may not have abolished the Torah, but that Paul did, has been propagated since ancient times. The "Toldot Yeshu" for example, an ancient hostile Rabbinic parody on the Gospels and Acts, accuses Paul of contradicting Yeshua on this very issue (Toldot Yeshu 6:16-41; 7:3-5). At least one modern Dispensationalist, Maurice Johnson, taught that the Messiah did not abolish the Torah, but that Paul did several years after the fact.

He writes:

Apparently G-d allowed this system of Jewish ordinances to be practiced about thirty years after Christ fulfilled it because in His patience, G-d only gradually showed the Jews how it was that His program was changing.... Thus it was that after G-d had slowly led the Christians out of Jewish religion He had Paul finally write these glorious, liberating truths.

(Saved by "Dry" Baptism!; a pamphlet by Maurice Johnson; pp. 9-10)

Kefa warns us in the Scriptures that Paul's writings are difficult to understand. He warns us saying:

...in which are some things hard to understand, which those who are untaught and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.  
(2Pt. 3:15-16)

Paul knew that his teachings were being twisted, he mentions this in Romans, saying:

And why not say, "Let us do evil that good may come"? -- as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say."  
(Rom. 3:8)

Paul elaborates on this slanderous twist of his teachings, saying:

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not!..."

(Rom. 6:1-2)

and What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the Torah but under grace? Certainly not!"

(Rom. 6:15).

So then, Paul was misunderstood as teaching that because we are under grace, we need not observe the Torah.

Upon his visit to Jerusalem in Acts 21 Paul was confronted with this slanderous twist of his teachings. He was told:

You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are who believe, and they are all zealous for the Torah; but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs.

(Acts 21:20-21)

In order to prove that this was nothing more than slander, Paul takes the nazirite vow and goes to make offerings (sacrifices) at the Temple (Acts 21:22-26 & Num. 6:13-21) demonstrating that he himself kept the Torah (Acts 21:24). Paul did and said many things to prove that he both kept and taught the Torah.

He:

circumcised Timothy (Acts 16:1-3)

took the nazirite vow (Acts 18:18; 21:17-26)

taught and observed the Jewish holy days such as:

Passover (Acts 20:6; 1Cor. 5:6-8; 11:17-34)

Shavuot (Pentecost) (Acts 20:16; 1Cor. 16:8)

fasting on Yom Kippur (Acts 27:9)

and even performed animal sacrifices in the Temple (Acts 21:17-26/Num. 6:13-21; Acts 24:17-18)

Among his more notable statements on the subject are:

- "Neither against the Jewish Torah, nor against the Temple, nor against Caesar have I offended in anything at all." (Acts 25:8)
- "I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers." (Acts 28:17)
- "...the Torah is holy and the commandment is holy and just and good." (Rom. 7:12)
- "Do we then nullify the Torah through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we maintain the Torah." (Rom. 3:31).

Was Paul a Hypocrite?

Being confronted with the various acts and statements of Paul which support the Torah, many of the "Torah is not for today" teachers accuse Paul of being hypocritical. Charles Ryrie, for example, footnotes Acts 21:24 in his Ryrie Study Bible calling Paul a "middle of the road Christian" for performing such acts. Another writer, M.A. DeHaan wrote an entire book entitled "Five Blunders of Paul" which characterizes these acts as "blunders." "These teachers of lawlessness" credit Paul as the champion of their doctrine, and then condemn him for not teaching their doctrine.

If Paul was really a hypocrite, could he honestly have condemned hypocrisy so fervently (see Gal. 2:11-15). Consider some of his own words:

For do I now persuade men, or G-d? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a servant of the Messiah.  
(Gal. 1:10)

For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain. But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated in Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our G-d to speak to you the Good News of G-d in much conflict. For our exhortation did not come from deceit or uncleanness, nor was it in guile. But as we have been approved by G-d to be entrusted with the Good News, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but G-d who tests our hearts. For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness-- G-d is witness.  
(1Thes. 2:1-5)

If Paul was a hypocrite, he must have been one of the slickest con-men in history!

"Works of the Torah" and "Under the Torah"

Much of the confusion about Paul's teachings on the Torah involves two scripture phrases which appear in the New Testament only in Paul's writings (in Rom. Gal. & 1Cor.). These two phrases are "works of the Torah" and "under the Torah", each of which appears 10 times in the Scriptures.

The first of these phrases, "works of the Torah", is best understood through its usage in Gal. 2:16. Here Paul writes:

knowing that a man is not justified by WORKS OF THE TORAH but by faith in Yeshua the Messiah, even we have believed in Messiah Yeshua, that we might be justified by faith in Messiah and not by the WORKS OF THE TORAH; for by the WORKS OF THE TORAH no flesh shall be justified.

Paul uses this phrase to describe a false method of justification which is diametrically opposed to "faith in the Messiah". To Paul "works of the Torah" is not an obsolete Old Testament system, but a heresy that has never been true.

The term "works of the Torah" has shown up as a technical theological term used in a document in the Dead Sea Scrolls called MMT which says:

Now we have written to you some of the WORKS OF THE TORAH, those which we determined would be beneficial for you... And it will be reckoned to you as righteousness, in that you have done what is right and good before Him...  
(4QMMT (4Q394-399) Section C lines 26b-31)

The second of these phrases is "under the Torah". This phrase may best be understood from its usage in Rom. 6:14, "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not UNDER THE TORAH but under grace." Paul, therefore, sees "under grace" and "under the Torah" as diametrically opposed, one cannot be both. The truth is that since we have always been under grace (see Gen. 6:8; Ex. 33:12, 17; Judges 6:17f; Jer. 31:2) we have never been "under the Torah". This is because the Torah was created for man, man was not created for the Torah (see Mk. 2:27). "Under the Torah" then, is not an obsolete Old Testament system, but a false teaching which was never true.

There can be no doubt that Paul sees "works of the Torah" and "under the Torah" as categorically bad, yet Paul calls the Torah itself "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), certainly Paul does not use these phrases to refer to the Torah itself.

## **THE BELT OF TRUTH**

There is a spiritual battle taking place. A battle between light and darkness. A battle between truth and deception. Paul writes:

Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. (Eph. 6:11-13)

Paul goes on to describe the parts of this armour as:

The Belt of Truth

The Breastplate of Righteousness

The Shoes of the Good news of Peace (Shalom)

The Shield of Faith

The Helmet of Salvation

The Sword of the Word

Now Paul is making a play on words here. The Aramaic word for "Armour" is ZAYNA while the Aramaic word for "wiles" is TZEN'TA. Paul is contrasting the ZAYNA with the TZEN'TA. The four fixed (non mobile) pieces of armour correspond to the four wiles of HaSatan which are depicted in the Tanak:

- Deception/Lies (Gen. 3) vs. (Belt of Truth)
- Temptation/Pride (1Chron. 21:1) vs. (Breastplate of Righteousness)
- Oppression vs. (Job)(Shoes of Peace)
- Accusation (Zech. 3:1-5) vs. (Helmet of Salvation)

Now we will not cover each of the items here, instead we will concentrate only on the belt of truth. Now it should be understood that the armour Paul is speaking of is not Roman armour, it was not inspired by Roman Soldiers. The armour was originally inspired by the book of Isaiah (Isaiah 11:5; 52:7 and 59:17) as well as the apocryphal Wisdom of Solomon (5:17-20). Therefore the subject of this passage is ancient Hebrew

armour and not Roman armour at all. Now ancient Hebrews wore a skirt like garment. Before going into battle a Hebrew warrior would gird himself with the a belt, he would gather his skirt-like garment up and tuck it up under his belt to allow free movement.

This prevented him from getting tripped up in his own garment while trying to fight.

Now when he was on trial before Pilate Yeshua said:

For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness of the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice.  
(John 18:37-38)

To this Pilate asked the all important question:

What is truth?  
(John. 18:38)

Let us look back to the Tanak to find the answer to Pilate's question:

Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and your Torah is truth.  
(Psalm 119:142)

You are near, O YHWH, and all your commandments are truth.  
(Psalm 119:151)

This definition explains many phrases in the New Testament:

"Obey the truth"  
(Gal. 3:1)

"But he that does truth..."  
(Jn. 3:20)

And I rejoice that I found your children walking in the truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.  
(2Jn. 1:4)

The Tanak definition of truth gives whole new meaning to Yeshua's words:

For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness of the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice.  
(John 18:37-38)

Yeshua came to bear witness of the Torah, those who hear the Torah hear his voice. This leads us to another important saying from Yeshua:

Then Yeshua said to those Jews who believed on him, if you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.  
(John 8:31-32)

Paul, however, speaks of those "who changed the truth of God into a lie" (Rom. 1:25) Now if Messiah came to bear witness of the truth then what has HaSatan to bear witness to? The scriptures tell us:

He [the devil] was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not the truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.  
(John 8:44)

...HaSatan, who deceives the whole world...  
(Rev. 12:9)

When HaSatan speaks a lie, he is merely speaking his native language.

Now if the Torah is truth, then what is HaSatan's lie? His lie is that there is not a Torah, that the Torah has been done away with. There is a Greek term for this teaching. This term is ANOMOS (Strong's Greek #459).

ANOMOS is made up of the Greek prefix A- (there is not/without) with the Greek word NOMOS (Torah). ANOMOS means "without Torah" or "Torah-less ness." While Messiah came to bear witness to the Torah, HaSatan comes to bear witness of ANOMOS (Torah-less ness). Two entire books of the New Testament (2Kefa and Jude) are dedicated to combating this false ANOMOS teaching. Yeshua tells us that these teachers will be called "least" in the Kingdom (Mt. 5:19).

Now lets take a look at how the Bible uses this term ANOMOS:

...I [Yeshua] will profess to them, I never knew you, depart from me, you that work ANOMOS.  
(Mt. 7:23)

...and they [angels] shall gather out of his Kingdom all things that offend, and them which do ANOMOS.  
(Mt. 13:41)

And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because ANOMOS shall abound, the love of many shall grow cold.  
(Mt. 24:11-12)

For the mystery of ANOMOS does already work... And then shall the ANOMOS one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, ...whose coming is after the working of HaSatan with all power and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness... because they received not the love of truth... That they might be damned who believed not the truth...

(2Thes. 2:7-12)

Many people have been taken in by the ANOMOS teaching. In fact two of Christendom's largest theological sub-sets, Dispensationalism and Replacement Theology, submit detailed theories to explain why they teach that the Torah is not for today.

Dispensationalism is a form of Pre-Millennialism which replaces the eternal "covenants" with finite "ages". Two of these finite ages are "The Age of Torah" which basically encompasses "Old Testament times", and "The Age of Grace" which basically encompasses "New Testament times". According to these Dispensationalists, during "Old Testament times" men were under Torah, but during "New Testament times" men are under grace. Some Dispensationalists, called "Ultra-Dispensationalists", even teach that men were saved by Torah in "Old Testament times," but are saved by grace in "New Testament times." As a result, Dispensationalists teach that "the Torah is not for today" or "we have no Torah." Replacement Theologians teach that G-d has replaced Israel with the Church; Judaism with Christendom; The Old Testament with The New Testament;

and Torah with grace. As a result, they too teach that "the Torah is not for today" or "we have no Torah."

Now you may be saying to yourself: "Ok, so they teach Torah-less ness, but don't the Torah-less teachers of 2Peter & Jude go so far as to teach sexual immorality? Surely the Torah-less teachers of within the church would never use their "the Torah is not for today" teaching to promote sexual immorality."

Wrong! Some of Christendom's teachers have already carried the "the Torah is not for today" reasoning to its fullest and logical conclusion. A sect of Christendom known as "The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches" has published a tract which does just that. The nameless author of the tract writes:

Another Scripture verse that is used to show that the Bible condemns the gay lifestyle is found in the Old Testament Book of Leviticus, 18:22, "Thou shalt not lie with a man as thou would with a woman." Anyone who is concerned about this prohibition should read the whole chapter or the whole Book of Leviticus: No pork, no lobster, no shrimp, no oysters, no intercourse during the menstrual period, no rare meats, no eating blood, no inter-breeding of cattle, and a whole host of other laws, including the law to kill all divorced people who remarry.

As Christians, our Law is from Christ. St. Paul clearly taught that Christians are no longer under the Old Law (for example in Galatians 3:23-24); that the Old Law is brought to an end in Christ (Romans 10:4); and its fulfillment is in love (Romans 13:8-10, Galatians 5:14). The New Law of Christ is the Law of Love. Neither Jesus, nor Paul, nor any of the New Testament Scriptures implies that Christians are held to the cultic or ethical laws of the Mosaic Law.

(Homosexuality; What the Bible Does and Does not Say; Universal Fellowship press, 1984, p. 3)

Thus Christendom's teaching that "the Torah is not for today" is already being used to "turn the grace of our God into perversion." (Jude 1:4; see also 2Pt. 2:18-21)

There is indeed a spiritual battle taking place. It is a battle between the truth and a lie. It is a battle between light and darkness. It is a battle led by the one who came to bear witness to the Torah, and the one who comes to bear witness to Torah-less ness. The Torah is truth. The belt of truth is the belt of Torah. Gird yourselves with the belt of Torah that you may withstand the Torah-less one.

## **FREEDOM FROM BONDAGE**

In the last installment it was shown that:

the Torah is Truth  
(Ps. 119:142)

and that Yeshua said:

... if you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.  
(John 8:31-32)

Therefore the Torah brings freedom. This is completely contrary to what most people have been taught. The common wisdom is that the Torah is bondage and that "freedom in Christ" means freedom from Torah. For example one author writes:

Many Christians today would return to Sinai. They would put upon the church the yoke of bondage, the Law of Moses.

(God's Plan of the Ages; Louis T. Tallbot; 1970; p. 66)

However as we shall see the scriptures teach that exactly the opposite is true.

The central story of Judaism is that of the Exodus from Egypt. The children of Israel were in bondage in Egypt. God promised to bring them out of bondage and give them freedom. Upon leading the children of Israel out of Egypt, YHWH led them to Mt. Sinai where he delivered the Torah to them. Note that the theme of this central story is that God promised freedom from bondage and gave the children of Israel Torah. Now why would YHWH lead the people out of bondage in Egypt, lead them to Mt. Sinai, and deliver them right back into bondage again? And why would he at the same time promise them freedom. God is no liar. He promised the people freedom and he gave them Torah because the Torah is freedom from bondage. The Torah is truth (Ps. 119:142) and the truth will make you free (John 8:31-32).

This truth is proclaimed by the Psalmist:

So shall I keep your Torah continually forever and ever, And I will walk in freedom: for I seek your precepts.

(Psalm 119:44-45)

As well as by Ya'akov HaTzadik (James the Just) who called the Torah "the Torah of freedom" (James 1:25; 2:12).

However the ANOMOS teachers today teach that the Torah is bondage and that Torah-less ness is freedom. They have exchanged the truth (Torah) of God for a lie (Torah-less ness) (Rom. 1:25). Of these 2Peter 2:19 states:

While they promise them freedom, they themselves are servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage.

According to Kefa these men "turn from the holy commandment delivered to them" (2Peter 2:21) they promise freedom but deliver bondage.

By contrast Yeshua said:

Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my load is light.

(Mat. 11:28-30)

Now many of the teachers of Torah-less ness use this this passage as a proof text. To them this passage refers to freedom from the bondage of Torah.

However notice the boldfaced portion. This boldfaced portion of Yeshua's statement is a quotation from the Tanak. A quotation which gives a great deal of context to Yeshua's statement. Lets look at this Tanak passage:

Thus said YHWH, stand you in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and you shall find rest for your souls. But they said, we will not walk therein.

(Jer. 6:16)

Notice that this "way" which gives "rest" is "the old path". Now lets read a little further down in Jer. 6 to obtain more context:

But they said, we will not walk therein (Jer. 6:16)... ...they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my Torah, but rejected it.  
(Jer. 6:19)

Notice that the "old path" that brings "rest for your souls" to which they said "we will not walk therein" (Jer. 6:16) is identified by YHWH as "my Torah". This takes us up a bit further in the text of Jeremiah:

...they are foolish, for they do not know the way of YHWH, the requirements of their God. So I will go to the leaders and speak to them; surely they know the way of YHWH, the requirements of their God." But with one accord they too had broken off the yoke and torn off the bonds.  
(Jer. 5:4-5 see also Jer. 2:20)

Here we find that the "yoke" which brings rest is the yoke which was being rejected. The yoke of Torah. Now lets look again at Yeshua's saying:

Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my load is light.  
(Mat. 11:28-30)

The yoke that Messiah asks us to take on ourselves, the yoke that will give us rest for our souls is the Torah. The Torah is freedom from the bondage of Torah-lessness. The freedom of Torah is freedom from the bondage to sin that results without Torah. Without Torah there is no true freedom, only bondage. True liberty does not include a license to sin (Rom. 3:8; 6:1-2, 15)

### **WALKING IN THE LIGHT**

As we said earlier there is a spiritual battle taking place between light and darkness. Paul writes:

...what communion has light with darkness? And what concord has Messiah with Belial...  
(2Cor. 6:14b-15a)

Throughout the New Testament there are extended metaphors revolving around light and darkness. Believers are called "sons of light" (Lk. 16:8; Jn. 12:36; Eph. 5:8; 1Thes. 5:5). The full armour of God is also called the "armour of light" (Rom. 13:12). The New Testament speaks of those "who walk in darkness" (Jn. 8:12; 12:35).

But what does this idiomatic use of the terms light and darkness mean? For the answer let us turn to the Tanak:

For the commandment is a lamp; and the Torah is light...  
(Prov. 6:23)

Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.  
(Psalm 119:105)

To the Torah and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.  
(Isaiah 8:20)

...for a Torah shall proceed from me, and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people.

(Isaiah 51:4)

So according to the Tanak the Torah is a light for our paths. Those that walk in the Torah walk in the light. This is why the New Testament speaks of those who walk in darkness (Jn. 8:12; 12:35; 1Jn. 1:6; 2:11). These are those who do not walk by the light of Torah. Of these John writes:

And if we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we are liars and we do not walk in truth.

(1Jn. 1:6)

Notice that John equates "walking in truth" with walking in the light. As we noted previously "the Torah is truth" (Ps. 119:142) thus if "walking in the light" means "walking in truth" then both phrases refer to walking in the Torah. This takes us back to our passages from the Tanak given above. John also confirms this by writing the parallel statements:

...walking in truth.

...walk according to his commandments.

(2Jn. 1:4, 6)

Now lets look back at a moment to the full armour of God. As we have noted Paul also calls this armour the "armour of light" (Rom. 13:12). According to Paul we are involved in a spiritual battle with "the rulers of the darkness of this world." (Eph. 6:12) and thus he instructs us to put on this "armour of light" (Eph. 6:13 & Rom. 13:12) Now several of the items of the "armour of light" also tie in with the Torah:

- The Belt of Truth

Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and your Torah is truth.

(Psalm 119:142)

You are near, O YHWH, and all your commandments are truth.

(Psalm 119:151)

- The Breastplate of Righteousness

What great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole Torah which I am setting before you today?...

(Deut. 4:6)

- The Shield of Faith

Remove the false way from me, and graciously grant me your Torah. I have chosen the way of faith; I have placed your ordinances before me.

(Psalm 119:29-30)

- The Sword of the Word

...For the Torah will go out from Zion; and the word of YHWH from Jerusalem.

(Isaiah 2:3)

Thus the Armour of Light is the armour of the Torah which lights our path.

There are two paths before us, one of darkness and one of light. On the one hand one may "walk in darkness" on the other hand one may "walk in the light" of Torah. The "sons of light" put on the "armour of light" and walk in the light of Torah, while the "sons of darkness" walk in the Torah-less ness which is the darkness of this dark world.

### **FAITH, GRACE AND TORAH**

A misunderstanding common in the church today is the concept that Torah and Grace are mutually exclusive ideas.

For example one author writes:

A believer cannot be under law and under grace at the same time.  
(God's Plan of the Ages; Louis T. Tallbot; 1970; p. 83)

Now let us be noble Bereans to see if this is true. Let us ask ourselves: "How were people saved in 'Old Testament' times? Were they saved by works or by grace? The fact is that often when Paul speaks of how we are saved by grace through faith he often cites the Tanak to prove his point.

Two of his favorite proof texts for this concept are from the Tanak:

And he believed in YHWH; and he counted it to him as righteousness. (Gen. 15:6 = Rom. 4:3, 22; Gal. 3:6)

...the just shall live by his faith.  
(Hab. 2:4 = Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11)

So Paul is arguing from the Tanak that one is saved by faith alone apart from works. In fact the real truth is that men of the "Old Testament" times were just as under grace as we are today:

Noah found grace in the eyes of YHWH.  
(Gen. 6:8)

...you have also found grace in my sight.... ...for you have found grace in my sight...  
(Ex. 33:12, 17)

...and now I have found grace in your sight...  
(Judges 6:17)

The people... found grace in the wilderness...  
(Jer. 31:2)

Thus as noble Bereans, we learn from the Tanak that people in "Old Testament" times were saved by grace through faith. They could not have earned their salvation any more than we could today, as Paul writes:

Knowing that a man is not justified by works of the law, but by the faith of Yeshua the Messiah, even we have believed in Yeshua the Messiah, that we might be justified by the faith of Messiah,

and not by works of the law; and by the works of the law shall no flesh be saved.

(Gal. 2:16)

In fact the "New Testament" contains more commandments than the "Old Testament". The New Testament contains 1050 commandments [as delineated in Dake's Annotated Reference Bible; By Finnis Jennings Dake; N.T. pp.313-316] while the "Old Testament" Mosaic Law contains only 613 (b.Makkot 23b; see Appendix). Thus faith and grace are in the "Old Testament" and law and works can be found in the New Testament. People in Old Testament times were saved by grace through faith just like people in New Testament times.

Now many anomians will agree to this fact on the surface, but let's follow this thought through to its fullest conclusion. Let's go beyond the surface and really think this through. If what we have shown to be true is true, then the people in the wilderness in the days of Moses were saved by grace through faith.

Now let's look at the full impact of that statement. That means that people were under grace, and saved by faith alone and not by works, when Moses was stoning people to death for violating the Torah! Obviously then being saved by grace through faith in no way affects Torah observance. So if grace and faith do not negate the observance of Torah, then what is the true nature of faith and grace? What is faith? What is grace?

Let us once again turn to the scriptures for answers. Now part of the reason that many people have come to think that there is more "grace" in the New Testament than in the Old Testament is a translation bias in the KJV and many other English versions.

There are two words for "grace" in the Hebrew Tanak. The first word is CHEN (Strong's 2580/2581) which means "grace or charm". The other word is CHESED (Strong's 2616/2617) which carries the meaning of "grace, mercy or undue favour."

These two words closely parallel the meanings of the two Greek words used for grace in the Greek Bible. These are CHARIS (Strong's 5485/5463) which means "grace or charm" and ELEOS (Strong's 1651/1653) meaning "grace, mercy or undue favour."

Obviously Hebrew CHEN = Greek CHARIS and Hebrew CHESED = Greek ELEOS. Now the KJV tends to translate CHEN/CHARIS as "grace" but tends to translate CHESED/ELEOS as "mercy".

Now when we think of "grace" in biblical terms we are usually thinking of the concept of CHESED/ELEOS "undue favour". Now if we follow with the KJV translation scheme then it appears that there is much more grace in the New Testament than the Tanak, since CHEN only appears 70 times in the Tanak while CHARIS appears 233 times in the New Testament.

But remember, the concept of "undue favour" is actually CHESED/ELEOS. CHESED appears 251 times in the Tanak, while ELEOS appears only 50 times in the New Testament. If anything there is far more "grace" in the Tanak than in the New Testament.

Now let us turn to the Tanak to get a better understanding of what grace really is. According to the Scriptures there is a close connection between "grace" and the "fear of YHWH":

For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his grace (CHESED) toward those who fear him.  
(Psalm 103:11)

Oh let those who fear YHWH say, "His grace (CHESED) is everlasting.  
(Psalm 118:4)

By grace (CHESED) and truth iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of YHWH one keeps away from evil.  
(Proverbs 16:6)

And the fear of YHWH, according to the Tanak, includes Torah observance: ...that he may learn the fear of YHWH his God, to keep all the words of this Torah and these statutes, to do them:  
(Deut. 17:19)

...that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear YHWH your God, and observe to do all the words of this Torah.  
(Deut. 31:12)

Therefore there is clearly no conflict between grace and Torah. In fact the Torah is closely connected to grace. The next word we need to examine is "faith". The Hebrew word is EMUNAH. EMUNAH can mean "belief, faith or trust" and is best translated "trusting faithfulness". When we speak of "faith" in YHWH we are not merely speaking about "belief" but "trusting faithfulness". If someone were to ask you if you are faithful to your spouse, you would not reply by saying "Yes, I believe my spouse exists." That is because it is clearly not an issue of what you believe but in whether you are faithful. Imagine a man who stays out late at night every night committing adultery with various women. Each night he comes home to his wife and tells her how much he loves her, and insists that since he believes in her existence that he therefore is faithful to her. Is this man faithful to his wife? Absolutely not!

This understanding is confirmed to us in the Scriptures as follows:

Remove the false way from me, and graciously grant me your Torah. I have chosen the way of faith; I have placed your ordinances before me.  
(Psalm 119:29-30)

Now I want to make it clear that we are not saying that one earns ones salvation by keeping Torah. At times I have been asked "Do I have to keep Torah to be saved?". I reply by saying "Of course not.... do you have to get cleaned up to take a bath?" You may ask, "Well if we don't keep the Torah for salvation, then why do we keep the Torah?" First of all, keeping the Torah SHOWS our faith (Titus 3:5-8; 1Jn. 2:3-7; James 2:14-26). Secondly there are rewards for keeping the Torah (Titus 3:8). The Psalms tell us that it "restores the soul" (Ps. 19:7). Yeshua promises that those who keep the Torah and teach others to do so will be called first in the Kingdom of Heaven (Mt. 5:19). Additionally, Jews who keep the Mosaic Torah are given a long list of other promises (Deut. 28). Now if the Torah is good and everlasting then it stands to reason that it should be observed. Paul tells us that we should not use grace as an excuse to sin (Rom. 6:1-2, 15) and that the only way to know sin is through the Torah (Rom. 7:7).

Yeshua tells us that if we love him we will keep his commandments (Jn. 14:15, 21, 23-25; 15:10). The fact that we are saved by faith is all the more reason that we should keep the Torah, as the Scriptures tell us:

„not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us abundantly through Yeshua the Messiah our Saviour, that having been justified by his grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying, and I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.

(Titus 3:5-8)

And by this we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He who says, "I know him," and does not keep his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps his word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in him ought himself to walk just as he walked. Brothers, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning.

(1Jn. 2:3-7)

(to be continued)

***Dr. James Trimm***