

Are Christians Obligated to Keep the Torah (Law)?

Christians and Salvation

Preface

Everyone will agree that sinners will not be saved but what is sin?

Whoever sins is guilty of breaking God's law, because sin is a breaking of the law. (1John.3:4).

If, as preached by the Church, we are not under the law we cannot break the law thus, according to this verse, we are incapable of sin. If we are incapable of sin, we do not need a redeemer and we have no need of Mashiach!!

Introduction

Father YHWH (Yahweh/Yahuwah) issued only one set of rules to be observed by everyone desirous of a correct relationship with Him. There is only one place in the Scriptures where YHWH's rules can be found: in Genesis through Deuteronomy. This section of the Scriptures is commonly referred to in Hebrew as the Torah, in English as the Law and in Orthodox circles as the 'books of Moshe' (Moses).

There is a common misconception that the Torah was presented to humanity through the descendants of Abraham, most specifically through the descendants of his grandson Ya'akov when they were gathered at Mount Sinai under the leadership of Moshe. This misconception has fuelled the Church philosophy that the Torah/Law is a wholly Jewish affair. However, Scripture shows that the Torah was given much earlier than the Sinai event, indeed 2Pet.2:5 infers that the Torah was given to the first man: Adam after he sinned. The verse states that Noah was righteous (unfortunately, this passage is poorly translated in most Scriptures and its true implication is lost.)¹ and the apostle confirms that only doers of the Torah are righteous (Rom.2:13). The book of Enoch tells us that after sin entered creation, humanity had to be taught righteousness, which from Rom.2:13 means being taught Torah, and YHWH appointed messengers/angels for this purpose. This was the duty of the fallen 'Watchers' mentioned in Enoch and Gen.6:2. What is more, we learn from the book of Enoch that Abraham spent many years learning the Torah from his ancestors, Noah, and Noah's son Shem. Thus, the Torah/Law was known and observed by righteous men long before the existence of Abraham and the twelve tribes of Israel. Hence, it is undeniable that the Torah/Law was given to man before the establishment of a Jewish community. Such awareness destroys any notion that the Torah is meant for the Jewish nation alone.

It is somewhat ironic that the Church teaches exclusion from the Torah/Law yet purports to accede to the authority of the Ten Commandments which are contained within the Torah/Law and will willingly enforce the law of tithing. Nowhere within the Scriptures is it advocated for the Ten Commandments themselves to be separated out from the Torah/Law itself. We can argue the Christian philosophy of 'grace not Law' from several different points.

- The true meaning of the Hebrew word 'Torah'
- Mashiach annulled the Torah, the Law
- Whether or not the apostles observed and taught the Torah
- Are Christians under a new Law
- The misconception grace has superseded the Torah/Law.

The Misnomer of the Term 'Law'

First let us be clear about what is the Torah, it is the first five books of the Scriptures; Genesis – Deuteronomy and is the only place in the whole of the Scriptures where you find the rules Yahweh commanded all humanity (not just Israel) to live by.

The Hebrew '*Torah*' does not mean 'Law.' To accurately define a Hebrew word, it is necessary to establish the root from which the word itself is derived. The word '*Torah*' comes from the root '*horah*,' causative verb '*arah*' which means 'to aim at' or 'to point to'. Thus, the root '*arah*' does not merely convey a legalistic list of dos and don'ts but **'to direct towards a particular result.** Whilst the Torah does comprise several legal elements; commandments, ordinances, and judgements, these must be understood in terms of the true concept embodied

¹ 2Pet.2:5 is discussed in detail in the separate article 'Understanding Romans 5:14'

within the Torah itself. It's true purpose was and remains the only means of maintaining a correct relationship with YHWH. One analogy is to compare the Torah with a suit of armour. The suit of armour protects its contents from external forces, in other words it is a means of preservation, protecting what is inside from possible degradation from the outside. This is very much the true concept of the Torah/Law; to protect/preserve those who are under its umbrella from the corruption of the outside world. It is YHWH's means of providing a safe environment for His people thereby preserving them until the time of their salvation.

But the Torah does not and cannot provide salvation it was never meant to. Salvation is only through the redemption offered via Mashiach's sacrifice (Grace). The apostle says, "all have sinned" (Rom.3:23) he could not have said this if there the Torah/Law was not relevant because sin is the transgression of the /Law (1John.3:4). Because the Law defines sin and the reward of sin is death, death is therefore the curse of the Law (Gal.3:10) from which we have been freed (Gal.3:13). The purpose of the Law is to keep us to keep us free from sin and its reward: death and keep us in a correct relationship with YHWH.

When the true concept of the Hebrew word Torah is understood in these terms, the translators could not find a suitable word in the Greek language which accurately conveyed such a concept embodied within a legal framework. The translators settled for the Greek 'nomos' which means to parcel with secondary meaning of law or regulation. Unfortunately, the law definition has been adopted in English translations with regrettable consequences. The Torah/Law is not an antiquated list of rules irrelevant to believers of today, as is preached by the Church. It is the only means of protection preventing us from straying into sin and death. It is a personal suit of armour provided by YHWH for all who wish to wear it. But to be effective the whole suit must be worn, if a piece is missing the armour is flawed. This concept is reinforced by James who says, "whoever breaks the law in one part is guilty of breaking the whole law (Jam.2:10).

Henceforth in this article we will be using the terms Torah and Law interchangeably.

When Christians say they are not under the law, what they are really saying is they are not under the Father's instruction, guidance or protection, this being the case, whose instruction and guidance are Christians under? The truth is Christians are under the authority of the Church, specifically the Vatican, not YHWH.

Mashiach Annulled the Torah: the Law

The Church teaches that Mashiach has removed the Law which is blatantly false. Mashiach Himself declared that man must live by every word that comes from the mouth of YHWH, (Matt.4:4). How could He say this and annul what YHWH decreed? It needs to be recognised that Mashiach had no authority to alter anything the Father decreed, and He knew this,

Of Myself I am unable to do any matter. As I hear, I judge, and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own desire, but the desire of the Father who sent Me. (John 5:30).

Because I have come down out of the heaven, not to do My own desire, but the desire of Him who sent Me. (John 6:38).

By His own admission Mashiach came to do the will of the Father and what is the Father's will?

Do not add to the Word (the Law) which I command you, and do not take away from it. (Deut.4:2, 12:32),

Let us consider another comment from Mashiach,

Do not think that I came to destroy/end the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil. For truly, I say to you, till the heaven and the earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall by no means pass from the Torah till all be done. (Matt.5:17-18).

This passage is categorical: fulfil cannot mean end, which is endorsed by Mashiach's following comment, not the smallest detail of the Law is to be ignored. The corresponding verse in the Gospel of Kaledy is even more definitive,

“There are two laws - the law of men and the law of the Father Who is in Heaven. When I speak of the law, I do not mean the law of men. I am the Light illuminating (fulfilling) Elohim’s law, so men see it more clearly, and though I fulfil the law, I do not change it.”

Collectively the above verses are absolute Mashiach had no authority to change anything YHWH has decreed, and Mashiach fully understood His position.

“It has been written in the prophets, ‘and they shall all be taught by YHWH. Everyone, then, who has heard from the Father, and learned, comes to Me,” (John 6:45).

In John 6:45 Mashiach plainly says we are to follow the Father’s teaching. From all the above passages the message is clear - the one in charge is the Father Later in John chapter 10, Mashiach says He and the Father are one, that is, they are of the same mind, in total agreement, this could not be the case if Mashiach was changing the Father’s rules.

But let us repeat the unequivocal quote from Mashiach, spoken during His rebuke of the devil,

But He answering, said, “It has been written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of YHWH.” (Matt.4:4).

Mashiach is quoting Moses, (Deut.8:3), how could He do this if the ‘books of Moses’ a.k.a. ‘the Law’ was to be annulled?

Finally, we cannot ignore what is said in Isaiah chapter 2. Scholars agree that this chapter remains prophetic and describes what will be the situation in the millennium. Verse 3 tells us that the Torah will be preached from Zion (the millennial city). This being the case when we consider Church philosophy, what we have is,

- Pre- Mashiach (Old Testament) – Torah/Law applicable
- Post Mashiach (Today) – Torah/Law not applicable
- Millennium (according to Isaiah) – Torah/Law applicable

So, aligning with Church philosophy we have, Torah - No Torah - Return to Torah! Does this make any sense? Can a perfect Elohim be this inconsistent?

What Mashiach did was bring an end to the temple system described in the Torah, but He did not remove the fundamental worship principles of Holy place (temple) and sacrifice, embodied within the Torah. Does not the apostle confirm this to be the case?

Do you not know that you are a temple of Elohim and that the Spirit of Elohim dwells in you? (1Cor.3:16).

Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, which you have from Elohim, and you are not your own? (1Cor.6:19).

By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to Elohim continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. (Heb.13:15-16).*

* The apostle is quoting from Hos.14:2 where the prophet talks in terms of ‘bulls of our lips’: an idiom for heartfelt, true worship.

As said above Mashiach had no authority to remove the worship principles set by YHWH, He had no authority to annul the Law: hence His comment in Matt.5:18, not a single jot or tittle of the Law shall pass away. What Mashiach did was to change the mechanics of worship He did not remove a single principle of the Law. Through Mashiach there is no longer any need for repetitive blood spilling or a temple structure. But the Holy Spirit still needs a home – our body is the substitute for the temple room where YHWH’s glory resided. Our prayers (bulls of our lips) are the substitute for the sacrificial system associated with the temple worship described in the Law. What we have today is a modification of the Law, not an annulment of the Law. The apostle verifies this,

*If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a **change** also of the law. (Heb.7:11-12)*

Note the apostle says change in the law not annulment of the law.

The Apostles Observed and Taught the Torah/Law

The apostle Paul confirmed he never transgressed the Torah (Acts 24:14 & 25:8). He observed all the festivals commanded by YHWH as described in Leviticus chapter 23: refer Acts 18:21. 20:6, 20:16, 1Cor.5:7-8. Indeed, in 1Cor.11:17-27 we have Paul chastising the Corinthians for celebrating the Passover improperly: why would they be celebrating Passover unless the apostles were teaching observance of the Torah/Law? Then there is the record of Peter refusing to eat the unclean foods in the heavenly sheets which appeared before him (Acts 10:9-17). Whilst this event had nothing to do with the dietary law in the Torah it proves the apostle was still observing the Torah commandments after the death and resurrection of Mashiach. Why was the apostle still abiding by the dietary law if it had been annulled by his master Yahusha HaMashiach? Then we cannot ignore Paul's confession to the Jewish elders in Acts,

*But this I do admit to you: I worship the God of our fathers in accordance with the Way (which they call a sect). I **continue** to believe everything that accords with the Torah and everything written in the Prophets. (Acts 24:14).*

While he answered for himself, "Neither against the Torah/law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended anything at all". (Acts25:8).

These comments were made after the demise of his master Yahusha HaMashiach. Church teaching infers Paul was hypocritical, teaching one faith and living his life according to another? Mashiach commanded for all to follow the example He set,

Then Yahusha Mashiach said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his stake, and follow Me. (Matt.16:24).

The phrase 'take up his stake and follow me' is idiomatic for 'follow my lifestyle' and the apostles would most certainly have followed in Mashiach's footsteps. This said, we are told that Mashiach was sinless (1Pet.2:22) and sin is a transgression of the Torah (1John.3:4) thus Mashiach must have been wholly Torah observant and there are many examples of Him implementing the Old Testament law. One such example is Luke 5:13-14 where Mashiach commands a Leper He had just healed to do as Moses commanded (idiomatic for complying with the Torah/Law). The law to which Mashiach is instructing the leper to follow, is that detailed in the Leviticus chapter 14. Why would He even mention this provision if it was no longer applicable?

Possibly the strongest passage supporting the validity of the Torah post Mashiach, is from Acts.15:20 were the apostles and the Jewish elders instructed for the Gentiles to observe four specific laws: to abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from fornication. All are from the Torah. The following verse explains that these four specific laws were meant purely to provide the gentiles entrance into the synagogue where each week they would hear and learn the rest of the Torah/ Moses. These four laws were to be the initial steps for their learning of the whole Torah.

To conclude this section, nowhere does Mashiach say the Law of Moses is dead, finished. As stated, earlier Mashiach Himself said He did not come to destroy the law or the prophets (Matt.5:17). The word destroy is from the Greek *kataluō* which means – *to bring to nothing – demolish - dissolve*. To be sure they understand what He is saying Mashiach continues telling them that not the smallest part of the law shall be ignored until the end of the age. When He talks of the law and the prophets Mashiach is referring to the Old Testament.

Clearly from the preceding section, if Mashiach ended the Law then He didn't tell His apostles. In his epistle Paul commands the Corinthians to properly honour the feast of unleavened bread as decreed in Lev.23:4-8,

Therefore cleanse out the old leaven, so that you are a new lump, as you are unleavened. For also

Messiah our Pesach (Passover) was slaughtered for us. So then let us celebrate the festival, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of evil and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (1Cor.5:7-8).

There is no festival called Passover this meal initiated the weeklong festival of unleavened bread: the two events are integral and one. This festival requires the removal of all leaven and leaven containing products from the home, bread, pastries, cakes, chocolate etc., for a complete week. What is more in Exod.12:38, YHWH decrees that no uncircumcised male may eat the Passover. Thus, in the above passage the apostle is, by default, also commanding Christian men to be circumcised in the flesh. Another Torah/Law requirement.

By way of a comment, there is the misconception that circumcision of the heart has superseded circumcision of the flesh, but this is erroneous. Moses commanded that the Israelites must be circumcised in both the heart and flesh. In Gen.17:11-14 YHWH decreed that all Israelite males must be circumcised in the flesh and later in Deut.10:16 Moses tells the Israelites they must circumcise their hearts. After Moses had said this YHWH commanded Joshua to circumcise the Israelites before settling in the Land (Jos.5:2). The order of these instructions denies any supersession.

Are Christians Under a New Law?

Let us consider a few passages quoted some in the Church,

And one of the scribes coming near, hearing them reasoning together, knowing that He had answered them well, asked Him, "Which is the first command of all?" And Yahusha answered him, "The first of all the commands is, 'Hear, O Israel, YHWH our Elohim, YHWH is one. And you shall love YHWH your Elohim with all your heart, and with all your being, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first command. And the second, like it, is this, You shall love your neighbour as yourself. There is no other command greater than these.'" And the scribe said to Him, "Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one Elohim, and there is no other besides Him. And to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the being, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbour as oneself, is more than all the burnt offerings and sacrifices." (Matt.12:28-33).

There are those who interpret this passage to mean that Mashiach has replaced the whole law of Moses with just two commandments. But what Mashiach is alluding to is that these two requirements form the whole foundation of the Torah/Law. Let us examine these two commands,

1. Love YHWH Elohim with all your being
2. Love your neighbour as yourself.

What is not appreciated is that these two commandments are the backbone of Torah. Firstly, to love Elohim is to worship Him and the purpose of the Torah is to teach us how to worship him correctly: to worship Him in the way He wants to be worshipped. For example, YHWH explicitly commands that pagan worship practices are not to be adopted in worship of Him (Deut.12:30-31). Secondly, Mashiach commands us to love our neighbour as ourselves but the Torah teaches us exactly how YHWH wants us to do this.

When we analyse the Ten Commandments, the first four concern the worship of YHWH and we express our love through our worship. Thus, Mashiach's first commandment is merely a reinforcement of YHWH Commandments 1-4. The remaining six of the Ten Commandments are concerned with taking care of others which Mashiach stated was the second greatest commandment. What needs to be realised is that the Ten commandments tell us what to do **but not how to do it**. How to keep the Ten Commandments is embodied within the rest of the Torah: Genesis through Deuteronomy. What Mashiach was explaining was that these two basic principles are the fundamentals for a righteous lifestyle and that is the sole aim of the Torah.

Incidentally, stating that these are two greatest commandments infers that there are other commandments, He did not say these are the only commandments. Then we have His statement in John,

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. (John.13:34).

Clearly, this cannot be new *per-se*, otherwise it would transgress YHWH command not to add to His Word. So how are we to understand this comment? The clue is in the phrase *'that you love one another, as I have loved you.'* and we need to consider a few other of Mashiach's comments,

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. (Mar.10:45).

No one has greater love than this: that one should lay down his life for his friends. (John15:13).

The Ten Commandments 5-10, tell us how we are to interact with one another, but Mashiach is raising the bar. He is explaining to the disciples how, because of His love for His people, He is willing to give His life as a ransom for them and this was to be the model and standard of their love for one another. This was merely a new feature of the existing commandments and not something transcending the Torah.

As said earlier Mashiach had no authority to change, remove or to add to, the Law decreed by the Father and the Father gave only one Law, both for the Jew and the non-Jew,

One law shall be to him that is a native, and to the stranger that sojourns among you. (Exod.12:49).

You shall have one law for him that sins through ignorance, both for him that is native among the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourns among them. But the soul that does presumptuously, whether he is a native, or a stranger, the same reviles YHWH; and that soul shall be cut off from among the people. Because he has despised the word of YHWH and has broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him. (Num.15:29-31).

When Mashiach said He did not come to destroy the Law and the Prophets which section of the Scriptures was He referring to? It was the Old Testament.

The Misconception Grace Has Superseded Law

Another unscriptural Church theology is that believers are under grace at the expense of the Torah/Law. The Church teaching that, with the advent of Mashiach's atonement, mankind is no longer under the Torah/Law but under grace, infers that if you are under grace, you are not under the Torah/Law.

It should be realised that grace has existed since the time of creation itself: it was by YHWH's grace that Adam and Eve continued after sinning against Him. From the following examples YHWH's grace was not introduced to mankind through the death and resurrection of Mashiach but existed long before,

But Noah found grace in the sight of Elohim. (Gen.6:8).

And the words of Lot to YHWH's messengers,

"Look please your servant has found favour (grace) in your eyes. (Gen.19:19).

It was by YHWH's grace that Israel's slavery under Pharaoh was ended. If YHWH's grace can be found in the first book of the Scriptures, do you not think it will be present throughout the whole of Scripture? Indeed, you will find examples of YHWH's grace in almost every book of Scripture. Undoubtedly grace and Torah have coexisted for millennia; one cannot replace the other because they are different. One is not a substitute for the other, on the contrary, the one is complementary to the other and that is, the Torah: the Law complements grace.

This unscriptural theology is rooted in the gross misinterpretation of what Paul has written, particularly in Romans and Galatians. It must be said that a superficial reading of some of the phrases used by Paul, would indeed lead a person to conclude that Paul is against Torah/Law. But as shown above that is incorrect.

It is true we are saved by grace not law, the Law was never meant to be the means of salvation. But YHWH does not give His grace to sinners – those who transgress His Law (1 John.3:4). We start of sinners, we find Mashiach and come to belief in His atoning sacrifice. Through this belief we find righteousness and are rewarded with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is from the Father (John,14:26) and as the verse says He will teach us all things of the Father. In other words, the Holy Spirit leads us to the Father's Law. He leads us towards an

obedient lifestyle and away from sin. It's quite simple, if the Holy Spirit leads us away from sin and sin is the transgression of the Law then the Holy Spirit must lead us **to** the Law.

Let us now examine some comments from the Apostle Paul.

Some Contentious Verses

To answer the issues raised by the following verses it has been necessary to repeat some of the above content.

Romans 6:14.

For sin shall not have dominion over you for you are not under law but under grace.

However, earlier in Romans the same apostle appears to say the opposite,

*For it is not by hearing the Law that people are put right with YHWH, but by **doing** what the Law commands. (Rom.2:13).*

Rom.2:13 raises the query, what does the apostle mean by 'not under the Law' he cannot mean exempt from the Law. Surely it is our destiny to be 'right with YHWH? What Paul is saying is that we can only be declared righteous if we live in obedience to God's Law. So, are these two verses in conflict? No! Scripture does not contradict Scripture.

And the sting of death is the sin, and the power of the sin is the Torah. (1Cor,15:56).

The Torah/law defines what sin is, it tells us what is right and what is wrong, it does not provide the answer to or the escape from sin, which is death. Only Mashiach can do that. YHWH's grace was that He provided a Son to pay the death penalty for us and allow us a means of escape. Paul says all have sinned (Rom.3:23), so we are all under the penalty of the law and that is what Rom.6:14 is about. Thanks to Mashiach we do not have to remain under this penalty- we do not have to remain under the effect (dominion) of the law. The verse has nothing to do with the abolition of the law. Paul confirms this later in chapter 3,

*Or is God the God of the Jews only? Is he not the God of the Gentiles also? Of course he is. God is one, and he will put the Jews right with himself on the basis of their faith, and will put the Gentiles right through their faith. **Does this mean that by this faith we do away with the Law? No, not at all; instead, we uphold the Law.** (Rom.3:29-31).*

To uphold the law is to obey the law. What this passage is saying is that faith (which is the root of grace) leads to obedience of God's law. Hence grace cannot annul the Law, it supports observance of the law. Let us repeat what is said above: we receive God's grace through our belief in the restitution offered by Mashiach's sacrifice. Belief in Messiah's sacrifice results in us receiving the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit leads us to a life of obedience to God's law. Thus, as highlighted above, faith upholds the law.

When we break His law, we become sinners again (1John.3:4) and the grace we received will be taken from us unless we repent and return to '*upholding the law*',

When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it. (Ezek.33:13).

This passage has two points to it. Firstly, the phrase '*trust to his own righteousness*', is idiomatic for believing that a person can become righteous by his own efforts. This belief is sinful hence '*committing iniquity*', it is salvation by works, specifically by keeping the law and not salvation through Mashiach. Secondly, whilst we may be considered righteous today if we fall into sin and do not repent will be die as a sinner and all our past righteousness will be forgotten. The essence of this point is that we are all capable of falling from grace at any time. Thus, we are not saved until we are saved: until we are in the kingdom. Today we have redemption through Mashiach we do not have salvation.

Romans 10:4

For Mashiach is the end (Gk Telos) of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. (Rom. 10:4).

It would take an acrobatic mind of some ability to find harmony between this presentation of Rom.10:4 and the decrees of the Father, Mashiach and the apostle Paul himself, listed earlier.

Not only does the above wording conflict with YHWH's command in Deut. 4:2 not to add to or take away from His Torah/Law but it is inconsistent with Mashiach's own statement in Matt. 5:17, where He categorically says He did not come to end the Law but to fulfil the Law. In the correct context fulfil means complete and in Luke Mashiach explains what He means by complete,

And he said to them, These are the words which I spoke to you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled (complete), which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. (Luke.24:44).

Luke clarifies that 'complete' in Matthew is not referring to the completion of the law but the fulfilment of the Messianic prophesies in the Old Testament. So, when we combine the verse from Matthew with that from Luke what we have is, the Law of Moses **points** to Mashiach, Mashiach is the aim of the Law. The translators did not consider these verses when they translated the Gk. 'Telos' which can have several meanings. Depending on the context of its usage, 'Telos' can mean termination, **the aim of, the goal or purpose of**. It can even have the meaning of tax. It is therefore important to establish a translation that does not conflict with other Scriptures.

In view of Matthew and Luke and many other verses, a more appropriate translation of 'Telos' would be goal or aim. In other words, Mashiach is the goal of the Torah/Law. Stern presents the following translation for Rom.10:4,

For the goal at which the Torah aims is the Mashiach, who offers righteousness to everyone who trusts.

A part of Stern's commentary on this verse is worth repeating,

The goal at which the Torah aims is acknowledging and trusting in the Mashiach who offers, on the grounds of this trusting, the very righteousness they (we) are seeking.

Translations free from Church influence such as, The Scriptures, the ET Cephher and the Aramaic Peshitta all translate 'Telos' as either 'aim' 'goal' or 'consummation,' never as 'end.'

Galatians 3:13

The apostle Peter warns how Paul's words are difficult to understand and will be misinterpreted (2Pet.3:14-17) and the whole book of Galatians is the most complete example of misinterpretation.

Mashiach redeemed us from the curse pronounced in the Law by becoming cursed on our behalf; for the Tanakh says, "Everyone who hangs from a stake comes under a curse.

Note it does not say Messiah redeemed us from the Law but from the curse of the Law. The curse of the Law is for those who break the Law i.e., sin. (Remember 1John.3:4 quoted above). The curse of sin is death and that is what we all deserve. However, through Messiah's sacrifice we have restitution through Him and, as the verse says we are redeemed from the curse of sin associated with breaking YHWH's Law. Today we can seek restitution only because Messiah was sacrificed on our behalf. The crux of it all is, if we are not under the law we cannot sin and therefore we have no need of redemption – no need of Messiah's sacrifice. The law teaches us what sin is and its curse: death. Paying the death penalty for us Mashiach frees us from the curse pronounced by the Torah.

Galatians 4:5

To redeem those who were under the law, in order to receive the adoption as sons.

This verse parallels Gal.3:13 above. The clue is in the word redeem. What are we redeemed from – the curse of the Law: death. The redemption we have is life. We cannot be freed from the Law, Mashiach commands us to 'take up the cross and follow Him', that is, to live as He lived. We are told He was sinless meaning He never transgressed the Law (1John.3:4), thus we also must aim to be sinless and not transgress the Law. What is meant

by being 'under the Law'? The phrase, 'under the Law' had several connotations for Paul. Firstly, he was arguing against the orthodox Jews telling the Gentiles that salvation was only via observance of the Law – justification by one's own effort i.e., justification by works. If you can achieve salvation by your own effort, you do not need Mashiach and the apostle was vehemently against this notion. Secondly Paul did not want the Gentiles to adopt the Jewish attitude of reducing observance of the Law to a ritual. Following the Law merely because it is there and ignoring its fundamental purpose of relationship. To follow the law just because it exists is legalism and Paul was teaching against legalism. The true believer has a heartfelt desire to follow YHWH's instruction. **The law provides the only means of achieving a right relationship with YHWH.** Remember Mashiach's words when rebuking HaSatan,

But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. (Matt.4:4).

He complemented this statement in the following chapter,

For I say to you, not until heaven and earth pass, not one jot or one tittle shall pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matt.5:18-19).

We can add Paul's comment to the above passage,

So then, the Law itself is holy, and the commandment is holy, right, and good. (Rom.7:12).

The apostle is referring to the same Law as his master in the passage quoted above. This single statement proves beyond all doubt that Paul never taught abrogation of the Law.

Galatians 5:1

The Messiah has set us free so that we may enjoy the benefits of freedom. So, keep on standing firm in it, and stop putting yourselves under the yoke of slavery again.

It is unwise to consider the first verse on its own. For a proper understanding of Paul's message, we must read down to verse 6. But first let us consider verses 1-4,

*The Messiah has set us free so that we may enjoy the benefits of freedom. So keep on standing firm in it, and stop putting yourselves under the yoke of slavery again. Listen! I, Paul, am telling you that if you allow yourselves to be circumcised, the Messiah will be of no benefit to you. Again, I insist that everyone who allows himself to be circumcised is obligated to obey the entire Law. **Those of you who are trying to be justified by the Law have been cut off from the Messiah.** You have fallen away from grace. (Gal.5:1-4).*

Firstly, Paul is not talking about physical circumcision. He is using this term as a euphemism for becoming Jewish. The Jewish leaders were teaching that salvation was only for the Jews that is, 'the circumcised' and Gentiles must therefore become 'Jewish'. We know this because of what he says in verses 5–6,

*Through the Spirit by faith we confidently await the fulfilment of our righteous hope, for in union with the Messiah neither circumcision (**being Jewish**) nor uncircumcision (**being non-Jewish**) matters. What matters is faith expressed through love. (Gal.5:5-6).*

Circumcision is a command of the Father and we must live by 'every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Father'. Thus, Paul cannot be referring to physical circumcision. So, what is Paul's message in verses 1-4? The Jews were teaching that keeping the law alone is sufficient for salvation, (Read Acts 15:1). But before salvation there must be redemption. We need to be freed from the effect of our sins which is spiritual death. The law cannot take away our sins the law cannot therefore free us from spiritual death. Only Messiah's sacrifice can do that – He died on our behalf. He redeemed us from our sins. That is why Paul says in verse 4, "If you are justified (saved) just by keeping the law you do not need Messiah". The Jews do not recognize Messiah thus they do not have redemption – even today. This was the message Paul was trying to get across.

Galatians.3:21-22 & 2:16

So is the Law in conflict with the promises of God? Of course not! For if a law had been given that could give us life, then certainly righteousness would come through the Law. But the Scripture has captured everything by means of sin's net, so that what was promised by the faithfulness of the Messiah might be granted to those who believe. (Gal.3:21-22).

Yet we know that a person is not justified by doing what the Law requires, but rather by the faithfulness of Jesus the Messiah. We, too, have believed in the Messiah Jesus so that we might be justified by the faithfulness of the Messiah and not by doing what the Law requires, for no human being will be justified by doing what the Law requires. (Gal.2:16).

As we said above the law cannot justify (save) anyone, only belief in Messiah's sacrifice – His death on our behalf can lead us to salvation. The law was never meant for salvation (Justification). It serves to tell us what sin is so we can recognise when we are doing wrong and through Messiah's sacrificial act we can ask for forgiveness. The law cannot provide forgiveness that is not its purpose. Every time we sin (break the law – 1John.3:4) we take ourselves off the road to salvation and put ourselves on the road to spiritual death. The only way back onto the correct road is by acknowledging the redemption offered by Messiah. But without the law we would not know we have sinned; we would not know we need redeeming.

Galatians 5:18 and Ephesians 2:8-9

'But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.'

'For by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of Elohim, not of works, lest anyone should boast.'

1. Considering Galatians, we receive the Holy Spirit **only** after acknowledging redemption through Mashiach. If we have acknowledged redemption then we are no longer under the Law that is, no longer under the curse of the Law. The Law offers death Mashiach offers life therefore as the verse says you cannot be led by the Spirit and be under the curse of the Law
2. Addressing the Ephesians, Paul is dealing again with the concept of 'justification by works', salvation by one's own efforts. As said earlier the Law was never meant to be the means of salvation. Consider the following comment,

*'Therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith **apart** from the deeds of the Torah. (Rom.3:28).*

In this passage Paul is explaining that justification (salvation) is something separate (apart from) the Torah/Law. The essence of his statement is that grace and the Law serve different purposes thus the one cannot supersede the other. Indeed, the apostle states the opposite,

'Do we then make void the Torah through faith? Certainly not, on the contrary, we establish the Law. (Rom.3:31).

Faith confirms the Law. We are saved by YHWH's grace which He extends to us through our faith in His Son. However, we cannot live a new life in Mashiach and not observe YHWH's Torah/Law. In essence the Law does not save, it is meant for those who have already received grace through faith and are on the road to salvation. Berkowitz explains it well,

The Torah describes what our changed life (through Mashiach) is to be. It does not cause our changed life. That is the miraculous work of Elohim's grace.

It is purely YHWH's prerogative who will enter His kingdom, who will receive His grace. But what is certain is that salvation will not be awarded to those who are living in disobedience to the lifestyle He has stipulated.

Everyone who keeps sinning is violating Torah—indeed, sin is violation of Torah. (1John.3:4).

John.1:17

God gave the Law through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

Although this is on the periphery of this issue, I have seen this verse used by advocates of the 'grace not law' philosophy. The statement is beyond argument: the Law was given 'to Israel' through Moses, but the Law was known and followed centuries before Moses. We know Noah observed the Torah and taught it to Abraham. What is more, YHWH's grace also can be found from the time of Adam. It was only through grace Adam was allowed to continue life after sinning against YHWH. Similarly, Noah and family survived the flood by grace. Both the Law and grace can be found throughout the Old Testament, both have coexisted for millennia. This fact alone defeats the argument of supersession of the one over the other. Grace Has never been at the expense of the Law. What came through Mashiach was the truth i.e., that sin leads to death and He paid the penalty for us (grace).

Salvation Is for Israel Not Gentiles

Salvation is only available to Israel! Try and tell this truth to the Church but truth it is. Mashiach Himself reiterated this truth during His conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well,

You people don't know what you are worshipping; we worship what we do know, because salvation comes from the Jews. (John.4:22).

This principle remains valid today. What the Church fails to teach is that the only form of relationship that YHWH knows is covenant relationship and He only made covenants with the patriarchs and their descendants. Nowhere from Genesis - Revelation will you find YHWH making a covenant with the Gentile nations. The apostle understood this premise, why else would he advocate the necessity for Gentiles to be grafted into Israel (the olive tree Jer.11:16) if they wish to achieve salvation (Rom.11:11-21). Therefore, the apostle can say there is neither Jew nor Gentile in the Body of Mashiach, (Gal.3:28, Col.3:11). In other words, redemption through Mashiach is for everyone but the is a condition all must become **as** seed of Abraham – all must be grafted into Israel,

And if you are of Mashiach, then you are seed of Avraham, and heirs according to promise. (Gal.3:29).

Only seed of Avraham can enjoy the benefits of a covenant relationship with YHWH. It is for this reason we are grafted into the olive tree (Israel) and if we are grafted into Israel our destiny must be the same as Israel's destiny – occupation of the Land in the millennium and living with Mashiach. Israel was only promised life in the Land, they were never promised new spiritual bodies and an eternal/heavenly life. One purpose of the millennium is the fulfilment of YHWH's covenant promise to Avraham. Because of their repeated failure Israel has never enjoyed what was promised but YHWH must keep His promise.

But Gentiles are not grafted into the physical Israel of today. The Israel of today follows orthodox Judaism which, by its own admission, is based on Pharisaic principles and Mashiach condemned the Pharisees. The Israel of today is not YHWH's Israel, the Jews do not accept Yahusha HaMashiach and acceptance of Mashiach is an integral element for a spiritual body. The point to be made, however is that if we are grafted into the promise, a.k.a. Israel, we cannot be different from Israel and live by a different set of rules. As stated, earlier YHWH has given only one set of rules: His Torah/Law for all of humanity.

Conclusion

To conclude, the New Testament endorses, not annuls the Law. 2Cor.6:17 not mentioned above prohibits touching unclean things- what is clean and unclean can only be found in the Law. Romans chapter1 is a section of the Scriptures that spells out what God considers right and wrong. In other words, the chapter reiterates His law. Specific attention should be given to the final verse,

They know that God's law says that people who live in this way deserve death. Yet, not only do they continue to do these very things, but they even approve of others who do them.

When seeking to understand Paul it is important to bear in mind a basic principle of hermeneutics: let Scripture explain itself. It is important to maintain the harmony of Scripture, that is, Scripture cannot contradict Scripture, Paul is clearly portrayed as a staunch follower of the Torah/Law, and he would not preach contrary to his lifestyle;

This would have rendered Paul a hopeless hypocrite. Paul taught that salvation requires both grace and Torah and that YHWH will not award His grace to those who ignore His instruction. Let's add a verse from Proverbs,

If a person will not listen to the Torah/Law even his prayer is an abomination. (Prov.28:9).

To complete this message let me refer to the Psalm of David,

YHWH is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures: he leads me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. (Ps.23:1-3).

The phrase 'paths of righteousness' has been translated from the Hebrew '*Be-ma'agalei Tzedek*' which more correctly means cycles or circles of righteousness. So, a more accurate translation would be 'He leads me in cycles of righteousness.' What are YHWH cycles – His annual festivals and His Sabbaths. That is, Passover, Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement and Tabernacles along with His weekly Saturday observance. There is no mention of Easter, Lent, Christmas, Sunday worship etc. anywhere within the Scriptures. These are the doctrines of man – Church doctrines and what did Jesus say about following the doctrines of man,

But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as teachings the commands of men. (Matt.15:9).

Clifford Fearnley 2019 (Revised 2022)