

# **The Changing Face of Torah**

## **(Book of the Covenant -Vis- Book of the Law)**

### **Introduction**

There are many who would challenge a title such as this, so let us consider a few Scriptures,

*Do not add to the Word which I command you, and do not take away from it, so as to guard the commands of YHWH your Elohim which I am commanding you. (Deut.4:2, 12:32)*

*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.5:18).*

*For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the Torah (law). (Heb.7:12).*

Scripture is not contradictory, yet *prima facie*, the verse from Hebrews appears to contradict both Deuteronomy and Matthew but the apostle would never contradict his Master Yahusha Mashiach nor negate the Word of YHWH. So how are we to understand this anomaly? Clearly the apostle cannot be talking in the same vein as that of YHWH or Mashiach. I believe the apostle is referring to the administration of Torah which, post Mashiach has undergone a change, specifically from the physical aspect to the spiritual aspect of following YHWH's Word, whereas YHWH and Mashiach are referring to the essence of the Torah which is the maintenance of a correct relationship with YHWH. So we need to investigate exactly what the apostle is talking about and we should start by examining the structure of the Torah.

### **The Two Books of Torah**

Within the Torah two books are mentioned: the 'Book of the Covenant' and the 'Book of the Law. Both books were given to Israel by YHWH via Moshe at Mount Sinai. Each book contains different rules and regulations and the question arises, did Moshe intend for the two books to be considered synonymous or separate? Those supporting separation contend that before Sinai, humanity was under the Malkizedek priesthood which was YHWH's original intention. The argument presented is that the 'Book of the Covenant' contains all that YHWH gave from Gen.1:1 to Exod.24:11 and is therefore tied to the Malkizedek priesthood. Whereas, the 'Book of the Law' contains all that was given after Exod.24:11 which, because it includes *inter alia*, the inauguration of a different priesthood and priestly practices must be considered separate from the 'Book of the Covenant.' The argument continues that with Mashiach's sacrifice all believers return to the Malkizedek priesthood and therefore return to the 'Book of the Covenant.' The contention is that YHWH gave the second set of rules via the 'Book of the Law' wholly as a result of the golden calf disobedience and that it was never His original intention. What is unclear from this philosophy is how believers are to deal with the 'Book of the Law' and should they consider that returning to covenant annuls to some extent the Torah? The effect of this thinking is to create a division within the Torah and those supporting this philosophy will quote the following verse from 2 Timothy,

*Study to show yourself approved to YHWH, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2 Tim.2:15)*

If we divide the Torah we have in effect two Torah's and the result can only be confusion which inevitably leads to disagreement, exactly what we have today. The problem with the above verse is with the translation of the Greek *orthotomeō* as divide; Thayer provides the following definition;

To cut straight, to cut straight ways,

To proceed on straight paths, hold a straight course, doing right,

To make straight and smooth, to handle aright, to teach the truth directly and correctly.

There is no intimation of any division here. There are only two other occasions where we find divide in the Brit Hadashah (New Testament),

1Cor.12:11 where the Greek is *diaireō* meaning separation

Heb.4:12 where the Greek is *merismos* meaning separation

It is clear that something else other than separation was intended in 2 Timothy and it is hard to accept the apostle would advocate confusion and argument, so is the apostle really instructing the division of YHWH's Torah? The apostle would be well aware of YHWH's instruction given in Deut.4:2 - not to meddle with the Torah. It makes more sense for *orthotomeō* to mean manage and for the verse to finish, 'rightly manage the word of truth.' But we need to understand that the apostle is raising an issue for our attention and it is incumbent upon us to enquire what implications flow from this verse (discussed later).

Whilst this may take some of the fire from the argument for treating the two books separately, it is far from conclusive and we still have the anomaly created with what is said in Hebrews.

*For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the Torah (law).*  
(Heb.7:12).

As said earlier there can be no anomalies in the Scriptures and we should not interpret this verse in such a manner as to create contradiction. In fact we can only do this by isolating the latter part of the verse from the former part of the verse. It is not a verse separatists can rely on because it is clear what the subject of the verse is: the change in the priesthood. Thus, the change in the Torah to which the verse is referring, has to be the law associated with priesthood – and nothing more. It is a quantum leap to say change supports annulment and that the verse is advocating the indiscriminate return to the 'Book of the Covenant.' Yet it is clear that Heb.7:12 and 2 Tim.2:15 imply that something has changed and we need to identify what the change is and its effect on our observance of Torah – post Mashiach.

### **Do We Have a Split/Divided Torah?**

Are we to consider a split Torah as some would teach today? Jim Staley has, in my opinion, produced a strong argument against such a philosophy and the following points are taken from Mr. Staley's article, 'Malkizedek Two Book Theory – Refuted,' which I would recommend for those interested in this subject. The article is lengthy so I have abstracted some of the major arguments raised by Mr Staley in his rebuttal. Mr. Staley presents his rebuttal under the three headings presented below;

#### **No Historical Theological support from Extra Biblical Sources**

In the last 3400+years since the Torah was given, one would think that there would be at least a handful of ancient extra-biblical resources available where this theory was at least discussed by some credible Jewish source. By the mere absence of such discussion throughout the annals of time that the Book of the Covenant and the Book of the Law are two distinct books, this theory becomes extremely suspect at best and a modern day theological invention at worst. This alone is significant and should not be easily dismissed. If there is one group of people on earth who study the Old Testament more than any other group—slicing it, dicing it, and stretching its meaning beyond the text at times to meet every conceivable idea and doctrine imaginable—it is the Jews. Their skills and talents for digging every possible notion from the Scriptures has been proven throughout time, yielding volumes and volumes of commentary from ancient sages and modern alike, with the exhaustive Talmud as proof of their laborious study and discussion. Yet with countless thousands of commentaries, discussions, rabbinic dialogue and literature on every subject imaginable, there isn't a single

discussion anywhere from anyone mentioning the idea of the "Book of the Law" and the "Book of the Covenant" phrases being two separate books. You will find discussions on everything, from the two Yahweh's in heaven to why the Sanhedrin has the power of God on earth, to why people shouldn't walk on grass on the Sabbath, yet there is no discussion on this two-book theory.

Although an argument from silence is normally a weak argument, in this case it demonstrates the doctrine's suspicious nature, as there really is "nothing new under the sun." Any doctrine or proposed theory that has bypassed thousands of years of theologians, Bible students and ancient rabbis, is either totally new divine revelation, locked up only for the end days, or is simply not true.

## **Old Testament Proof**

It is important to disclose that proponents of this theory suggest the Book of the Covenant begins at Genesis 1:1 and ends at Exodus 24:11. This distinction is not made from any authentic exegetical (extracted from Scripture) principle but is instead eisegetically read back into the Scriptures to make their theory more plausible.

On the surface, this distinction appears valid; as Moses had the people take an oath to the "Book of the Covenant" in Exodus 24, complete with a blood sacrifice. To a linear western Greco-Roman mind-set, the evidence seems clear because with this western mind-set, the reader looks at things from a linear perspective. This is how books are written today. *But in ancient cultures, especially Hebrew, they often did not write every single detail in linear format. Instead, they would give a short synopsis and then go back and fill in the details later in other passages. For example, Genesis 1:28 tells us "Then God blessed them and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it...,'" yet in chapter 2 we find the details of how they were made and where they were placed in the Garden. In other words, it is a very traditional Hebrew writing style to give a macro view first and then fill in the details of that same story later in the text.* (I have emphasized this part because it is a critical we will refer to later).

This is exactly what is happening here. The macro short version of what Moses received in his first encounter with Yahweh on the mountain was told to the people from Exodus 20:1-23:33. He then went back up the mountain for the full forty days and received the rest of the Covenant (24:18). It is interesting to discover that in the first encounter Moses received instruction that dealt directly with the people and did not include any priestly laws or plans for the temple, which had little to do with the common Israelite. And it was the forty day encounter where the rest of the details were given, details that are more executive or administrative in nature. In modern language, Moses made the "employees" (the people) swear to the part of the Covenant that had to do mainly with them and then in the second encounter Yahweh gave him the details that dealt with the "managers" and administration.

Furthermore, when we look at the parallel passage to the Sinai encounters in Deuteronomy, we see that it is impossible for the Book of the Covenant to only be Genesis 1:1-Exodus 24:11. The reason is because from Deuteronomy 5 and foreword, Moses in one breath spoke to the people all of the terms of the Covenant that were given to their fathers forty years prior, and in this version Moses goes into far more detail than he did in the Exodus account, adding dozens of commandments that do not exist in the Exodus account. Why? Because this is Hebrew writing. The Exodus account of the "Book of the Covenant" is a macro account and

the Deuteronomy account fills in the rest of what was said. In other words, both accounts have to be taken together, just like the creation story in Genesis, in order to get the fuller picture.

From the Hebrew perspective, Moses viewed the Covenant rules for the people as well as all the instructions for the tabernacle, etc. as one book—the "Book of the Covenant"—which was also called the "Book of the Law" because the "Covenant" contained the "Laws." Moses uses the phrases "words of this Covenant" and "words of this Law" synonymously. In the mind of Moses and the people, the Covenant is made up of laws, no different than a marriage covenant made up of the vows (laws) or a contract made up of the laws within it. The "Book of the Covenant" is made up of the "words of this Law" and that is why the two are interchangeable.

Mr Staley then presents Scriptural evidence supporting the synonymy of the two books, the first from Joshua 8:30-31,

*“Now Joshua built an altar to the LORD God of Israel in Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the Book of the Law of Moses.”*

There are two things interesting about this passage. In the story line, this passage immediately follows the speaking of the commandments starting with Ten Commandments of Deuteronomy 5, which is undoubtedly referred to by those who teach the theory in question, as the "Book of the Covenant." This "Book of the Covenant" goes all the way through the rest of Deuteronomy and finds itself consummated and renewed, exactly like Moses commanded with Joshua here in Joshua chapter 8. The difference is that this time it is called the "Book of the Law."

The second, and far more profound fact about this passage, is the content of what these two verses say. It tells us that Joshua built an altar exactly as Moses commanded from THE BOOK OF THE LAW. The glaring problem is that the commandment to build an altar is found back in Exodus 20:25, in what both Moses and proponents of the two-book theory call the "Book of the Covenant." Here it is for reference:

*“An altar of earth you shall make for Me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen. In every place where I recorded My name I will come to you, and I will bless you. And if you make Me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stone, for if you use your tool on it, you have profaned it.”* Exod.20:24-25

This one scripture from Joshua proves without a shadow of any doubt that the original leaders of Israel considered the Book of the Covenant and the Book of the Law the same book, as this commandment is found in what Moses called the "Book of the Covenant" (Exodus 24:7) but Joshua refers to it as the "Book of the Law" in 8:31.

Examples from 2 Kings

*“But the children of the murderers he did not execute, according to what is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, in which the LORD commanded, saying, ‘Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their fathers; but a person shall be put to death for his own sin.’”(2 Kings 14:6)*

This commandment about the sins of the fathers is stated in this passage to be from the "Book of the Law" yet when we go back to where that commandment was actually given; it was given in the Book of the Covenant in Deuteronomy 24:16. And there can be no doubt that the words given in Deuteronomy 24 are part of the Book of the Covenant because Moses starts this entire monologue of commandments in chapter 5 with the giving of the Ten Commandments and continues through virtually the entire rest of the book of Deuteronomy. Note that in Deuteronomy chapter 29 it is called "the Covenant" multiple times,

*"These are the words of the Covenant which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the Covenant which He made with them in Horeb."*(Deut.29:1)

Not only does this prove that the entire set of commandments given in this book is called "the Covenant," but it also proves that there was more added to the Covenant than what was spoken to Moses in his first encounter in Exodus 24:7. This point is important because it proves that the Book of the Covenant, which is also called the Book of the Law, was not complete in the first acceptance by the people in Exodus 24:7.

A further example in 2 Kings

*"Then Hilkiyah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe, 'I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the LORD.'" (2 Kings 22:8).*

After finding the "Book of the Law" he takes it to King Josiah in verse 11 and the king tears his robes. But right after he finished calling it the "Book of the Law" he turned around and called it the "Book of the Covenant." Take a look:

*"...And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant which had been found in the house of the LORD."* (2 Kings 23:2)

Two-book theorists suggest that New Covenant believers are no longer under the Book of the Law but only under the Book of the Covenant. I will present only a few of the scriptures directly supporting the fact that the Book of the Law (aka "the Law") is still in effect.

### **New Testament Proof**

But before we continue we need to prove that the "Book of the Law" = "The Law of God" = "Law of Moses" = "The Law." In other words, we need to establish that all of them are interchangeable and synonymous terms.

Joshua 8:31 *"...as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the Book of the Law of Moses."*

The "Book of the Law" is equal to the "Law of Moses."

Joshua 24:26 *"Then Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God."*

The "Book of the Law" is equal to the "Law of God."

2 Chronicles 17:9 *"So they taught in Judah, and had the Book of the Law of the LORD with them; they went throughout all the cities of Judah and taught the people."*

The "Book of the Law" is the same as the "Law of the LORD."

*“Now all the people gathered together as one man in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate; and they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded Israel. So Ezra the priest brought THE LAW before the assembly of men and woman and all you could hear with understanding on the first day of the seventh month.”(Neh.8:1-2)*

In verse 1, it is called the "Book of the Law" and in verse 2 it is just called "the Law."

*“Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.”(1John 3:4).*

In other words, the only definition of sin in the entire Bible is breaking the Book of the Law. It does not say that sin is covenantlessness. It says "lawlessness" because to not keep the Law of God **was** the definition of sin.

*“Now 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.”(1John 2:3-4)*

And which commandments did John refer to because this is a pretty serious statement? There is no qualifier to which Book he referred to. Should I keep the commandments of the Book of the Covenant or the Book of the Law? The author gives not a hint about which one I should keep, yet says I'm a liar if I don't keep them. The reason is simple. There is only one Torah, the all-encompassing Book of the Covenant which is the Book of the Law.

End of abstract from Mr. Staley's article

As said earlier the whole article is worth reading and in my view Mr. Staley conclusively proves his point on the synonymy of the two books of Torah.

### **How Are We to Observe Torah – Post Mashiach?**

Well firstly, Mashiach introduced a new covenant for believers,

*For this is My blood, that of the new (Kainos) covenant, which is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins. (Matt.26:28)*

Some translations have *Kainos* rendered as renewed but it is clear from both Strongs and Thayer that the meaning is new. What is more, on the three occasions where renewed is found in the Brit Hadashah the Greek is either *Anakainoō* or *Ananēōō*, neither of which is used where new is intended. Further, the writer of Hebrews says Mashiach is the mediator of a better covenant (Heb.8:6) so how could it be a renewal of an earlier, weaker covenant. So what are the characteristics of this new covenant?

Clearly Mashiach's blood is integral to this new covenant and only by the power of His blood is there forgiveness of sin.

*In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. (Col.1:14).*

*But Mashiach, having become a High Priest of the coming good matters, through the greater and more perfect Tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation, entered into the Most Set-apart Place once for all, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood, having obtained everlasting redemption.(Heb.9:12).*

*In the body of His flesh through death, to present you set-apart, and blameless, and unprovable before Him, (Col.1:22)*

*For it is impossible for blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. (Heb.10:4).*

Under the new covenant we have everlasting redemption, we are blameless, that means our past transgressions are taken away – forgotten. Only the blood of Mashiach is able to remove sin so that it is forgotten – dead and buried. This being the case the covenant spoken of by Mashiach to His disciples has to be the same covenant YHWH promises Israel in Jeremiah,

*“See, the days are coming,” declares YHWH, “when I shall make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Mitsrayim, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them,” declares YHWH. For this is the covenant I shall make with the house of Israel after those days, declares YHWH: I shall put My Torah in their inward parts, and write it on their hearts. And I shall be their Elohim, and they shall be My people. And no longer shall they teach, each one his neighbour, and each one his brother, saying, ‘Know YHWH,’ for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares YHWH. “For I shall forgive their crookedness, and remember their sin no more.” (Jer.31:31-34).*

The writer of Hebrews concurs with this understanding when, discussing Mashiach’s priesthood in chapter 7, he continues into chapter 8, connecting Mashiach to YHWH’s new covenant promise in Jeremiah.

So the new covenant requires acceptance of Mashiach’s sacrifice, in other words, the new covenant is only available to those in the ‘Body of Mashiach’ and have YHWH’s Torah written on their hearts. This is another important aspect of the new covenant, for if we have Torah written on our hearts there is no necessity for the wearing of tzitziyot (fringes) to be a reminder that we are to observe Torah. The other fundamental change is, according to the apostle, in the priesthood but what are the implications of a change in the priesthood?

We are told that Mashiach being our Malkizedek high priest and not of Levi, entered into the Most Holy Place ‘once and for all time’ (Heb.9:12). The effect of this is to annul the Aharonic priesthood, animal sacrifice and its temple system. Mashiach is of a more ‘perfect tabernacle’ (Heb.9:11), YHWH does not go backwards we will not return to an inferior earthly temple system.

*But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first ~~covenant~~ had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for the second. (Heb.8:6-7)*

The second ‘covenant’ in the verse has been added and does not appear in the original manuscripts. Scholars agree that, taking the context of the preceding verses, indeed the preceding chapter, into consideration, what should be there is ‘priesthood,’ thus a correct rendering of the passage is,

*But now having obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first priesthood had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for the second. (Heb.8:6-7)*

So how is the Malkizedek ministry a better ministry? Hebrews chapters 7 through 10 provide a chronological account detailing how Mashiach’s ministry is superior to that of the earthly Levitical temple system. Without regurgitating everything that is given, the following are some of the salient points mentioned,

- *And indeed every priest stands day by day doing service, and repeatedly offering the same sacrifices which are never able to take away sins. But He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of Elohim, (Heb.10:11-12). For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are being set apart.(Heb.10:14)*

Unlike with the Levitical temple system which required the priest to offer the same sacrifices daily: sacrifices that could not take away sins, Mashiach offered Himself once and for all time, thus completing His priestly service by taking away sin and removing the need for a daily sacrifice/service, He was able to sit down/rest at the right hand of Elohim.

- *For the Torah, having a shadow of the good matters to come, and not the image itself of the matters, was never able to make perfect those who draw near with the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered? Because those who served, once cleansed, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those offerings is a reminder of sins year by year. For it is impossible for blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. (Heb.10:1-4).*

Why was it a shadow of that which is to come? Because YHWH knew the temple sacrificial system was inadequate and could never achieve His true objective given in verses 3-4. With Mashiach's sacrifice the 'good matters to come' have arrived, thus there is no longer a need for an earthly shadow.

- *But Mashiach, having become a High Priest of the coming good matters, through the greater and more perfect Tent (Ministry) not made with hands, that is, not of this creation, entered into the Most Set-apart Place once for all, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood, having obtained everlasting redemption. (Heb.9:11-12).*

Mashiach's sacrifice was a one off event and He took His blood to the heavenly throne of the Father (the true Most Set Apart Place), He will not repeat this as the Levitical Priests did yearly. Thus there is no need of another earthly Most Set Apart Place. Further, as said in Jer.3:16, there is no need of another 'arc of the covenant (which occupied the Most Set Apart Place). When we consider all that is said in Hebrews, it is clearly evident that under the new covenant all sins are forgiven, without exception, if this was not the case Mashiach would have to offer His blood continuously as did the Levitical priests and it could not be considered a better covenant.

YHWH wanted the removal of sin and a cleansed humanity which, in the first instance necessitated a better sacrifice achieved through Mashiach's blood and in the second instance, a change in the hearts of the people and a more devoted approach to worship. Hence YHWH's comment in Heb.8:10 referring to the replacement of Israel's past stony hearts with a new heart of flesh having the Torah engraved upon it.

But none of the above removes the principles behind temple sacrifice. The apostle tells us that our body is the temple (1 Cor.6:19) and our prayers are our sacrifices (Heb.13:15) thus, the sacrificial aspect of worship remains and the basis of Torah is maintained but Mashiach has changed the way we are to observe and Maintain Torah.

## Conclusion

Those favouring a split Torah point to what the apostle says in Galatians,

*Brothers, as a man I say it: a covenant, even though it is mans, yet if it is confirmed, no one sets it aside, or adds to it. (Gal.3:15).*



What they claim is that this verse confirms that with the 'blood sealing' of the Book of the Covenant in Exod.24:4-8, it is now a *fete accompli* and neither party could add any further conditions. Thus, all that follows in Exodus has to be considered extraneous to the 'Book of the Covenant' and completely separate. But this approach is borne of the linear western/Greek mindset and ignores Hebrew cyclical thought and presentation as earlier explained by Mr. Staley (refer to the highlighted section of his abstract).

The crux of the issue is, when is the 'Book of the Covenant' complete? Not supporting a split Torah philosophy I concur with Mr. Staley that it includes all of YHWH's rules from Gen.1:1 – Exod.34:32 and that this is the content to which YHWH refers when He instructs for nothing to be added or subtracted from His Word. However, Mashiach has elevated worship from an earthly physical level to a more spiritual level creating a change in the mechanics of observance: a change in the mode of worship with His sacrifice and the introduction of the new covenant under an eternal priesthood.

For those who may remain in doubt I would suggest prudence: it would be better, when standing before Mashiach for Him to ask, "Why did you keep the Book of the Law? Did you not realise I annulled the law and there was no longer any need for you to follow it?" Rather than Him ask, "Why didn't you keep the 'Book of the Law,' didn't your Father in heaven say not to subtract from His Word and didn't I say not one jot or tittle would pass from the law until all is fulfilled? Why have you transgressed Elohim?" Which question would you prefer?

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