

3-09-24 Message to Roeh Israel Abilene – VaYakhel (“and he assembled”)
Torah Portion: Exodus 35:1 – 38:20
Haftarah: 1 Kings 7:13-26
Suggested Acheron K’tuvim: Rev 3:1-6

Under the Law – Part 1 – Church Doctrine

Central question of this message: What does the normative church believe regarding whether Christians are “under the Law?”

Today we are in parasha *VaYakhel* (“and he assembled”). Its name comes from the first Hebrew word in the passage, and the third word in the English translation.

Ex 35:1-3

35 Then Moses assembled all the congregation of the sons of Israel, and said to them, "These are the things that the Lord has commanded you to do. 2 For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a holy day, a sabbath of complete rest to the Lord; whoever does any work on it shall be put to death. 3 You shall not kindle a fire in any of your dwellings on the sabbath day."

35:1

וַיִּקְהַל	מֹשֶׁה	אֶת־	כָּל־	עֵדָת		
And gathered together,	Moses		all	the congregation of		
<u>6950</u>	<u>4872</u>	<u>853</u>	<u>3605</u>	<u>5712</u>		
בְּנֵי	יִשְׂרָאֵל	וַיֹּאמֶר	אֵלֵיהֶם	אֵלֶּה	הַדְּבָרִים	
the children of	Israel	and said	unto them,	These	are	the words
<u>1121</u>	<u>3478</u>	<u>559</u>	<u>413</u>	<u>428</u>	<u>9999</u>	<u>1697</u>
אֲשֶׁר־	צִוָּה	יְהוָה	לַעֲשׂוֹת	אֲתָם:		
which	hath commanded,	the Lord	that ye should do	them.		
<u>834</u>	<u>6680</u>	<u>3068</u>	<u>6213</u>	<u>853</u>		
שֵׁשֶׁת	יָמִים	תַּעֲשֶׂה	מְלָאכָה	וּבַיּוֹם	הַשְּׁבִיעִי	יְהִי־
Six	days	shall be done,	work	but on day	the seventh	there shall be
<u>8337</u>	<u>3117</u>	<u>6213</u>	<u>4399</u>	<u>3117</u>	<u>7637</u>	<u>1961</u>
לָכֶם	קֹדֶשׁ	שַׁבָּת	שַׁבְּתוֹן	לַיהוָה	כָּל־	הַעֲשֶׂה
to you	an holy day,	a sabbath of	rest	to the Lord:	whosoever	doeth
<u>3807a</u>	<u>6944</u>	<u>7676</u>	<u>7677</u>	<u>3068</u>	<u>3605</u>	<u>6213</u>
בּוֹ	מְלָאכָה	יוֹמָת:				
therein	work	shall be put to death.				
<u>871a</u>	<u>4399</u>	<u>4191</u>				
לֹא־	תִּבְעֲרוּ	אֵשׁ	בְּכֹל	מִשְׁכְּתֵיכֶם	בַּיּוֹם	הַשַּׁבָּת: פ
no	Ye shall kindle	fire	throughout	your habitations	upon day.	the sabbath
<u>3808</u>	<u>1197</u>	<u>784</u>	<u>3605</u>	<u>4186</u>	<u>3117</u>	<u>7676</u>

In today's parasha we find a large number of very specific instructions to the people for the construction of the Mishkan. The first set of instructions, however, is not about the construction of the Mishkan, but rather a reminder of the holiness of the Sabbath.

I think that the L-rd wished to begin discussing the work that was to be done regarding the Mishkan by that admonition because He knew that

the people were so enthusiastic about this project that they would be sorely tempted to work on Sabbath.

Although this parasha has a number of very wonderful teachings within it, I am going to use the admonition of the Sabbath as a springboard into yet another teaching regarding some of the troubling topics that plague the normative church in this age. And that begins with whether Christians should honor the instructions found in G-d's Torah, as relevant instructions for living in this age.

As I begin this part of the series of messages, I wish to first establish some groundwork. I wish to first demonstrate where the normative Church is today on this topic, so that we can move into a deeper examination of that doctrine.

I have already touched upon the issue of the Sabbath, in a previous message, and how the Catholic church decided upon "its own authority" to abandon G-d's Sabbath [Saturday], and substitute for it a Sunday worship. I have demonstrated how almost all of the normative church now follows that Catholic doctrine, and likewise has abandoned G-d's holy day. I will not revisit that now.

But the overarching theme that seems to be deeply imbedded into normative Christian doctrines today is, “Christ came to put to death the Law, and we are no longer under the Law.” Today, this particular doctrine is regarded by Christian commentators, pastors, and Bible teachers as having been firmly established as far back as the crucifixion itself.

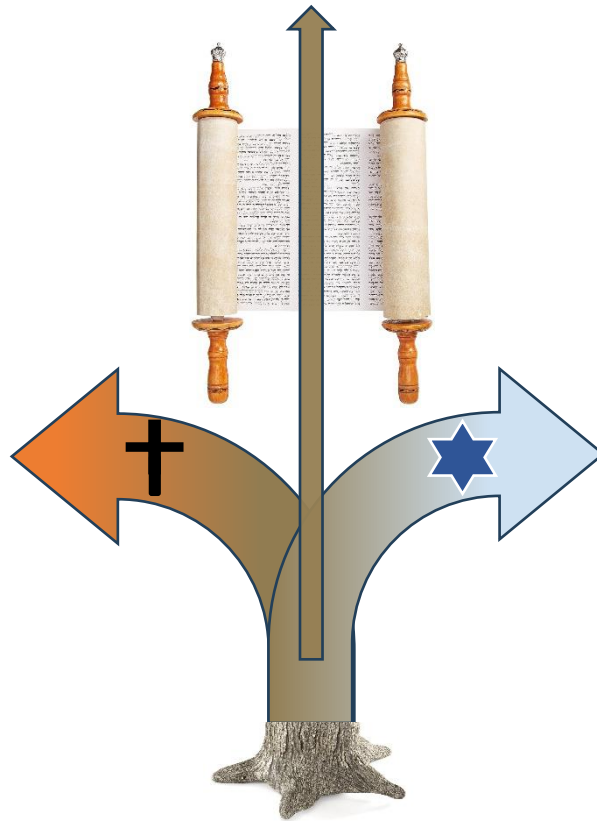
The truth, as seen through the writings of the Apostles themselves, makes it clear that during their lives the Torah was regarded with the same authority as it had been for the generations since Moses. The “good news” was that Messiah had come, and His blood on the cross provided payment for the failings of all mankind, conditioned on a repentant heart and acceptance of that sacrifice. It was only after many subsequent generations of doctrinal drift in the Christian community that an antinomian¹ theology took hold and flourished.

That doctrinal shift seems to have been the result of a successful work of Satan where he divided the cultivated olive tree into two parts: those who believed Yeshua as Messiah (and thus kept the Torah according to His teaching and life), and those who did not.²

¹ Antinomian – literally “against the Law.”

² The issue of Yeshua as Messiah was predicted by Him to be an issue dividing even families. See Mt. 10:34-39

The normative Christian church turned to one side, the normative Synagogue turned to the other. Both have acted in reaction to the doctrines of the other, and both point back, saying “We are not them!” The Messianics, made up of both ethnic Jews joined by people from among the nations (a modern version of the “mixed multitude” of the Exodus), were left in the middle. We disputed with both sides. With the Christians, we insisted that Torah is still good instruction in righteousness.³ With the Synagogue, we insisted that Yeshua is the awaited Messiah son of Joseph, who would be the suffering servant Who saves the world.



³ 1 Tim 1:5-11, 2 Tim 3:16.

Messianics, it seems, don't find green pastures in either camp at this point in time. But the good news is that a few in the Christian church and a few in the synagogue are examining the life of Yeshua the Jew, and starting to realize that a Messianic faith doesn't require you to abandon the truths of Scripture, nor to "convert" to become someone you are not.

The word "Torah" has all but disappeared from the conversation of the church. The word "Torah" simply means "instruction." We now hear in churches the word "Law" spoken of often. And each mention of it seems to be surrounded by words of disapproval if not disdain.

Christians often hear these kinds of statements:

"Those under the Law are under bondage, and Jesus has set us free from the Law of sin and death."

"No one could keep the commandments, and that is why Jesus had to come to die to free us from the Law."

"The Law was a curse, that Jesus did away with, nailing it to the cross for all time."

Some very respected theologians have written extensively in defense of this doctrine.

Dr. Charles Ryrie served as professor of systematic theology and dean of doctoral studies at Dallas Theological Seminary. After retiring from Dallas Theological Seminary he also taught courses for Tyndale Theological Seminary. Christians consider him to be one of the most influential American theologians of the 20th century. He was proponent of classic dispensationalism.⁴ He wrote:

Another important benefit of the death of Christ was the inauguration of the faith-righteousness principle to replace the law-works principle. However, Paul's statement in Romans 10:4, that Christ is the end of the Law, might be understood as either signifying termination or purpose. In other words, either Christ terminated the Law, or the purpose of Christ's coming was to fulfill the Law (Matt. 5:17). However, the termination seems clearly to be the meaning in this context because of the contrast (beginning in Rom. 9:30) between the Law and God's righteousness. Paul's argument that follows is not that the Jew was incomplete and needed the coming of Christ to perfect his position before God, but

⁴ In its essence, dispensational theology stands for the proposition that G-d changes His mind, or reverses His position, on a significant pillar of faith.

that his position under the law-works principle was absolutely wrong because it sought to establish righteousness by human effort rather than by accepting God's gift of righteousness. Though it is true that our Lord fulfilled the Law, this passage is not teaching that, but rather that He terminated the Law and provided a new and living way to God.⁵

In the interests of time, I will refrain from discussing in depth the error that the “faith-righteousness” principle was abrogated in favor of a new paradigm. Likewise, I will not now discuss his failure to recognize that the “end of the Law” as written in Romans 10 cannot mean anything like “termination” if one resorts to the clear Greek meaning of the words. Nor will I refute the idea that Jews believed then that righteousness was achieved simply by human effort. He simply assembles a “straw man” and then easily defeats him, in a demonstration of that logical fallacy.

But he is not the only honored Christian theologian who has supported this errant theology with extensive writing.

Norman L. Geisler was the co-founder of Veritas International University, and Southern Evangelical Seminary. He wrote hundreds of

1. *Basic Theology - A Popular Systematic Guide To Understanding Biblical Truth*, Charles C. Ryrie, 1986, SP Publications Inc., Victor Books, Wheaton IL, pp. 302-303.

articles and authored (or coauthored) over 90 books, dealing with systematic theology, Calvinism, Roman Catholicism, Biblical inerrancy, Bible difficulties, and ethics. His main focus was on the inerrancy of Scripture. He wrote:

While Moses set up the moral and social structures that guided the nation, the Law could not save anyone from the penalty of their sins, which is death. As Paul says, 'By the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin' (Rom 3:20). The revelation which came through Jesus, though, was one in which the sins which the Law made known are forgiven, 'being justified as a gift by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus' (v. 24). Christ's revelation builds on the foundation of Moses by solving the problem of which the Law made us aware.⁶

I can't help but notice that Geisler attributes the Law [Torah] to Moses, and not to the wisdom of G-d Himself. He is correct that the Law could not save anyone from the death penalty for their sins, but he does not recognize that the "broken and contrite heart" is the key to that

⁶ *When Skeptics Ask*, Norman L. Geisler and Ronald M. Brooks, 1990, SP Publications Inc., Victor Books, Wheaton IL, p. 129.

forgiveness, even in the days of Moses.⁷ Further, there was no “sacrificial system” before the exodus, but somehow millions were “saved” by faith before that time.⁸ The circumcision of the heart has always been the cornerstone of faith.⁹

In the interests of time, I won’t now further discuss how the problem of sin did indeed *have a solution* well before Yeshua’s sacrifice. Without minimizing that sacrifice, Geisler’s words are to me far too dismissive of all that G-d has done before the Cross. His words seem to imply that in the fullness of time G-d “started over” with a new faith.

I will simply declare that my G-d has not wasted His time for generations of my people who have loved G-d and have clung to Him even before Yeshua walked the earth as a flesh-and-blood man among us.

In my experience, I find that when I suggest to normative Christians that I keep the Torah, the first thing that seems to pop into their minds (and often into their mouths) is that I must not *really* believe in Yeshua, and somehow I must feel the need to do something to “please G-d.” Or it

⁷ Ps 51:17; Heb 11

⁸ Exod 12:38

⁹ Deut 10:16-22

may be to them that I am still somehow stuck “in the Law” because I have not yet left Judaism to become fully “Christian.”

Their reaction is often far more severe, when I tell them that I actually teach Torah observance as part of my belief in Yeshua. The accusatory phrase I often hear is that I am “bringing people back under the Law.” The use of the word “back” is telling. It implies that they have bought-into the “Old Testament – New Testament” division advanced by the heretic Marcion, which division was happily adopted by the Catholic church as doctrine, and has now permeated into every Christian church.

Most Christians firmly believe that the Torah is “done away with” at the Cross, and to even try to keep it represents a heretical doctrine that they cannot abide, such being fatally inconsistent with faith in the redemptive work of Yeshua. I have endured more than one inquisition by highly regarded Christian theologians regarding this issue.

I believe that Yeshua did not come to create a new religion, nor even a new branch of Judaism. He came as Messiah of *the existing Judaism* of the day, and offered somewhat of a “course correction” for the parts of that faith which had strayed from the straight path that G-d ordained. I find Yeshua’s life and teaching to be perfectly consistent with Torah, and G-d’s heart.

The Church, as a rule, agrees that Yeshua kept Torah, and did so perfectly.¹⁰ But I have yet to hear a Christian theologian acknowledge that creating a new religion apart from what G-d had already well-established, *would itself* be a violation of Torah.¹¹

The Christian theologians of today have seized upon a number of verses which they insist support the abrogation of Torah. Here are only a few.

Rom 7:4-6

4 Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God. 5 For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. 6 But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

¹⁰ There are exceptions. I have had Christian theologians argue to me that Yeshua violated Sabbath as found in Mat 12, and the kosher rules in Mark 7. I have suggested to them that if Yeshua did indeed sin, He cannot then be the sinless sacrifice for them, and they need to find another savior. Also, they have by their accusation joined with those false accusers of Yeshua, and that alone should make them tremble.

¹¹ Deut 5:22, 18:18-20

Rom 10:4-10

4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. 5 For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness. 6 But the righteousness based on faith speaks thus, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring Christ down), 7 or 'Who will descend into the abyss?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)." 8 But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" — that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, 9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; 10 for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

Rom 14:1-11

14 Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. 2 One man has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats

vegetables only. 3 Let not him who eats regard with contempt him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats, for God has accepted him. 4 Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand. 5 One man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. 7 For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; 8 for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. 9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. 10 But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God.

Gal 3:1-14

3 You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?
2 This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? 4 Did you suffer so many things in vain — if indeed it was in vain? 5 Does He then, who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? 6 Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. 7 Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the nations shall be blessed in you." 9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer. 10 For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them." 11 Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "The righteous man shall live by faith." 12 However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, "He who practices them shall live by them." 13 Christ redeemed us

from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us —
for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree" —
14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham
might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the
promise of the Spirit through faith.

Gal 5:2-12

2 Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision,
Christ will be of no benefit to you. 3 And I testify again to
every man who receives circumcision, that he is under
obligation to keep the whole Law. 4 You have been severed
from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you
have fallen from grace. 5 For we through the Spirit, by faith,
are waiting for the hope of righteousness. 6 For in Christ
Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means
anything, but faith working through love. 7 You were
running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? 8
This persuasion did not come from Him who calls you. 9 A
little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough. 10 I have
confidence in you in the Lord, that you will adopt no other
view; but the one who is disturbing you shall bear his
judgment, whoever he is. 11 But I, brethren, if I still preach

circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished. 12 Would that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves.

Col 2:13-17

13 And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, 14 having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. 15 When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him. 16 Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day — 17 things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.

There are several more, but for now, these should suffice to make the point. I have never heard any of them, from the pulpit of a Christian church, being rightly interpreted within the context of the writings from which they come, or in the larger context of the culture in which they

were written, nor addressing the theological point they were intended to make with a focus on the particular audience to whom they were directed at that particular time in history.

Further, I have never heard from those who use these verses to support the “Torah is done away with” theology an explanation regarding how these verses are to be reconciled with other verses which would stand for the *very opposite* theological position, found in Torah. Add to those verses the ones written by the Apostles (including Paul himself), the pronouncements of the prophets, and the teachings (by word and by deed) of Yeshua Himself. Scripture cannot contradict itself.

Further, G-d does not contradict Himself, nor does He change His mind on what is holy or not, or what is right or wrong. If we cannot agree upon this simple declaration, then we cannot have a reasoned conversation regarding any part of Scripture, or doctrines.

Many Christians believe that since “the Jews rejected Jesus, G-d appointed the gentile church to carry the good news of the gospel to the nations in their place.” Thus, the “church” has now replaced “Israel” as the chosen people of G-d, and thus the church has become the beneficiary of all the “promises of G-d.” This is commonly called

“replacement theology.” This theology cannot stand in the face of many passages of Scripture to the contrary.¹²

I have never heard any proponent of “Torah is done away with” explain why if G-d changed His mind about what is right and wrong, what is sin and what is not, then why He cannot just as suddenly change His mind regarding whether what Christians believe is right and wrong will suddenly reverse as well.

But there is ample evidence, even among the reference works penned by Christian theologians of the fact that G-d cannot... and does not... change. We find in *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, the following:

God does not change. There are no shadows with the Father of Lights. It is impossible for God to change. He cannot change for the worse because He is holy; He cannot change for the better because He is already perfect.¹³

Simply put, when G-d declares something to be wrong, it remains wrong forever. When G-d declares something to be right, it remains right forever. G-d never turns aside a blessing or a promise to His people.

¹² Rom 11

¹³ *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Copyright 1989 by Chariot Victor Publishing, and imprint of Cook Communication Ministries.

However, G-d will turn aside from punishment, when the people repent and turn from their wicked ways.

2 Chron 7:13-15

13 If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people, 14 and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

If G-d changes His mind on what are “wicked ways,” then how would people in any age have certainty regarding how they should repent?

I have raised many unanswered questions and have focused mainly on the normative Church’s doctrines. This may have left many unsatisfied. Be assured I will offer the defense you need, in future messages.

But I wish now to leave you with a word of encouragement, from the Scriptures. One of the seven churches of Revelation had begun to drift away from Torah (what they had received and heard) and were instructed to repent so as to be worthy of the white wedding garment. It

is a warning to those in that congregation who had drifted away from G-d's ways as expressed in His Torah. But for those who have stayed faithful to G-d's ways of life, and not soiled their garments, they can be confident, even though they are oppressed on every side.

Rev 3:1-6

He who has the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars, says this: 'I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. 2 'Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. 3 'Remember therefore what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. If therefore you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you. 4 'But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white; for they are worthy. 5 'He who overcomes shall thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels. 6 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. '