

What is Torah – Part 2

Moving beyond a list of dos and don'ts

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Devarim [Deuteronomy] 31:24

And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished,

In part one of *What is Torah* we examined how Torah consisted of more than just the commandments, judgments, statutes, and ordinances written in the five books of Moshe. We saw how YHWH actually wants us to hear and obey His Voice. In Hebrew to “hear and obey” consists of only one word, שמע – “shema.” It is the aspect of hearing and obeying His Voice that we focused upon in part one. Once again we are going to move beyond the written Torah, but in a different vein, albeit, one intimately related to hearing and obeying His Voice (אֲשַׁמַּע בְּקוֹלוֹ).

The Book of the Covenant

Shemot [Exodus] 24:7

And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the hearing of the people; and they said, “All that YHWH has spoken will we do, and be obedient.”

There are a few passages in Scripture that refer to the “book of the covenant.” However, there are not very many. There are many more references to the “book of the law.” The question that this immediately brings to our minds is this: Is there a difference between the “book of the covenant” and the “book of the law”? And if there is a difference, what is it? Furthermore, what significance does this have for us today?

Let us remind ourselves what the historical reference entails, concerning the above reference to the book of the covenant found in the book of Shemot. YHWH had just brought Israel out of bondage from Egypt under the leadership of Moshe. He led them to the base of Mount Sinai where He came down on the mountain in the sight of all Israel and spoke to the entire nation. This caused the people to be afraid, and they asked for YHWH not to speak to them directly, but that they would speak to Moshe and then Moshe would tell them what to do.

YHWH began dealing with Israel while they were in Egypt, giving them the commandments concerning Pesach. YHWH continued to deal with Israel all the way up to this first reference to the book of the covenant as referenced above in Shemot 24:7.

In doing so, YHWH was keeping the covenant that He had made with Avraham.

B'reshit [Genesis] 15:13

And He said to Abram, "Know for sure that your seed shall be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;"

YHWH spoke this portion of the covenant to Avram, the second time in which He verified the covenant to Avram. Each time YHWH verified the covenant to Avram, He added more details in the covenant. Surely, each and every point YHWH added to the covenant, must be included in the book of the covenant.

It would seem that Moshe wrote the book of the covenant in stages, much the same way that a person would keep a diary. YHWH would reveal something new; then, Moshe would take the book and record it within. The book would not have been a book in the same way we think of a book today; rather it was a scroll. It would have been easy to add on more material in which to write YHWH's revelation upon.

There is a teaching that has surfaced recently, that puts forth the idea that the book of the covenant contained only that portion of Scripture from Shemot (Exodus) 20-23. As we see above, this does not seem to fit in with the concept of the covenant, nor of the covenant being written down in book form. Let us examine some more passages of Scripture to see what was contained in the book of the covenant.

There is another passage of Scripture that we should bring forward at this time to show what was in the book of the covenant.

Melakim Bet [2nd Kings] 23:21

And the king commanded all the people, saying, "Keep the Passover to YHWH your Elohim, as it is written in this book of the covenant."

As we see in this passage which references the book of the covenant, the king of Israel commands the people to obey the commandment to keep Pesach/Passover as one finds it in the book of the covenant. However, when one searches for the commandments concerning the Pesach, what one finds, is that there is no mention of these commandments in Shemot 20-23, as these commandments are found primarily in Shemot 12, and in a few verses in Devarim/Deuteronomy 16.

In these next few passages, we will find something quite revealing. The first passage makes a reference to the book of the law. We will deal with this in more detail shortly.

Divre HaYamim Bet [2nd Chronicles] 34:14-14

14 And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of YHWH, Hilkiyah the priest found the book of the law of YHWH given by Moshe.

15 And Hilkiyah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, "I have found the book of the law in the house of YHWH." And Hilkiyah delivered the book to Shaphan.

I would certainly encourage you, the reader, to take the time to read this entire chapter of Divre HaYamim Bet (2nd Chronicles) to follow the finding of this book, and what was done with it, and who did it. It is a beautiful story and has a very important truth in it that we will get to later on in this study.

Divre HaYamim Bet [2nd Chronicles] 34:30-31

30 And the king went up to the house of YHWH, and all the men of Yehudah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people, both great and small; and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of YHWH.

31 And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before YHWH, to walk after YHWH, and to keep His commandments, and His testimonies, and His statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book.

When we read the entire chapter of this book (chapter 34) we see that the book of the law had been misplaced and neglected. But when it was found, it was immediately brought to the king, and when he heard the words of the book of the law, he was greatly moved, and repented, and vowed to keep and obey the words of the covenant. Then the king had those same words read to the people; and now this same book which had been referred to as the "book of the law" earlier in the chapter, is now referred to as the "book of the covenant." It is the same book, only it is referred to with two separate and equally valid titles. This immediately raises the question of why? Why is this same book referred to in Scripture at times as the "book of the law" and at other times as the "book of the covenant"? Before we answer that question, let us give ourselves some additional Scriptural background for the book of the law.

The Book of the Law

Devarim [Deuteronomy] 28:61

"Also every sickness, and every plague, which is not written in the book of the law, them will YHWH bring upon you, until you are destroyed."

The first time that the book of the law is spoken of in Scripture, is in the book of Devarim (Deuteronomy) 17:18. The book of the law is directly referenced in Scripture 26 times. One of those is in the Brit Chadasha in Galatians 3:10.

It does not seem necessary for us to belabor the point, that the book of the law and the book of the covenant are speaking of the same book, as we have already shown from Scripture. However, there are a couple more passages that would benefit the reader to consider.

Devarim [Deuteronomy] 31:24

And it came to pass, when Moshe finished writing the words of the law in a book until they were complete.

This passage is confirmation of what we said earlier, that the book (scroll) Moses wrote in, was done so in stages. Here we see that he completed the book.

Devarim [Deuteronomy] 31:26

“Take this book of the law, and place it beside the ark of the covenant of YHWH your Elohim, that it may be there for a witness against you.”

After Moshe completed the writing of the book of the law, he then instructed the Levites to place this book beside the Ark of the Covenant as a witness against them. This is important for a couple of reasons. One of those reasons is dealing with why and how it was to get misplaced later on in the history of Israel, and had to be found by the priests as we saw in chapter 34 of Divre HaYamim Bet. The other reason that this is important, is because we need to understand what was actually in the Ark of the Covenant.

The Tablets of Stone

Shemot [Exodus] 34:28

And he was there with YHWH forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And He wrote upon the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.

We must digress a little at this point, to show that the book and the tablets of stone are not speaking of the same thing. Rather, the tablets of stone contained only the Ten Commandments (literally – the ten words - עֲשֶׂרֶת הַדְּבָרִים). This is what Moshe says later concerning these tablets of stone:

Devarim [Deuteronomy] 10:1-5

1 “At that time YHWH said to me, ‘Cut out two tablets of stone like the first, and come up to Me into the mount, and make an ark of wood.

2 And I will write on the tables the words that were on the first tablets which you broke, and you shall put them in the ark.’

3 So I made an ark of acacia wood, and cut out two tablets of stone like the first, and went up into the mount, having the two tablets in my hand.

4 And He wrote on the tablets, according to the first writing, the Ten Commandments, which YHWH spoke to you in the mount out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly; and YHWH gave them to me.

5 And I turned and came down from the mount, and put the tablets in the ark which I had made; and there they are as YHWH commanded me.”

As we see recorded here, what was written upon the tablets of stone were only the Ten Commandments, which consisted of what the entire nation of Israel heard YHWH speak to them on the day that they assembled at the foot of Mount Sinai on the day of Shavuot.

Moshe did not put the book of the covenant inside the ark, which, as we have seen, is also known as the book of the law.

Word Studies

There are a couple of words that would be helpful for us to understand in the context of this study and in the context of where they are found in Scripture. One of those words is “law” as we find in the *book of the law*. This word is the Hebrew word תּוֹרָה – “Torah”, which means *instruction*. This comes from the root word יָרָה – *arah*, which means *to throw* or *shoot*; by implication it means *to hit what one is shooting at, to hit the mark*.

What we find then, in the Scriptures of this study, is that when the Scripture speaks of the book of the law, it literally means the book of the Torah – the book of instructions.

This next word is rather ironic in that it shows a side of YHWH’s humor. It is the Hebrew word for “Covenant” which is בְּרִית – “b’rit,” which means “covenant”. This comes from the root word בָּרָא – which means *to rejuvenate* or *to restore physical health*.

It is interesting that the New Testament is known in Hebrew as הַבְּרִית הַחֲדָשָׁה – *hab’rit hachadasha, the New Covenant*; or for short as The B’rit. This new covenant is spoken of by the prophet Yermeyah.

Yermeyah [Jeremiah] 31:31

“Behold, the days come,” says YHWH, “that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah;”

This is a very important passage for several reasons. We will only discuss the one that is important to us in this study. Let us carefully take note what that new covenant will consist of!

Yermeyah [Jeremiah] 31:33

“But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” says YHWH; “I will put My law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their Elohim, and they shall be My people.”

Please note that the word for “law” here is the same Hebrew word that we have been dealing with: “Torah”. YHWH clearly states that He is going to take the Torah which had been written in a book (scroll) and He is going to write it upon our hearts and in our inward parts. This will be the new covenant!

Torah vs. B’rit

Earlier in this study, we said that we would examine the difference between why the Scriptures sometimes refer to His commandments as the book of the law and sometimes as the book of the covenant. Let us examine this now.

Devarim [Deuteronomy] 31:26

“Take this book of the law, and place it beside the ark of the covenant of YHWH your Elohim, that it may be there for a witness against you.”

We examined this passage earlier in our study. Notice that it is the book of the Torah (law) that witnesses against us. If a person fails to keep all the commandments in the book of the Torah (law), then this book will testify against them, showing every place where they came short of obedience to the Torah.

Furthermore, if a person only ever views the commandments of YHWH as a list of dos and don’ts, then it will only ever be the Torah to that person. Let us go back to the Divre HaYamim Bet and learn from this righteous king.

Divre HaYamim Bet [2nd Chronicles] 34:14-14

14 And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of YHWH, Hilkiyah the priest found the book of the law of YHWH given by Moshe.

15 And Hilkiyah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, “I have found the book of the law in the house of YHWH.” And Hilkiyah delivered the book to Shaphan.

Notice that it was the book of the Torah that was found in the temple. But look what happens and what the king does with that book of the Torah (law).

Divre HaYamim Bet [2nd Chronicles] 34:30-31

30 And the king went up to the house of YHWH, and all the men of Yehudah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people, both great and small; and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of YHWH.

31 And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before YHWH, to walk after YHWH, and to keep His commandments, and His testimonies, and His statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book.

This righteous king took that book of the Torah (law) and made it his own. He took personal responsibility and made the book of the law (Torah) into the book of the covenant. This brings us to the whole point of this study.

If we are going to walk before YHWH in an upright manner, then what He is calling each one of us to do in these days is to take His Torah (the book of the law) and enter into a covenant relationship with Him, making it not only the book of the Torah, but making it the book of the covenant as well. When we do this, when we each accept the responsibility to keep and obey all of His commandments, hearing and obeying His Voice, then the Elohim of Israel has become our personal Elohim!

Do not attempt to keep the Torah without making it your personal covenant with Elohim. Attempting to do so will only result in failure and death, because doing it in such a manner, one will be walking down the road of legalistic conformity to the Law. The only way that we can take the book of the law and make it into the book of the covenant, is to accept Yeshua as our personal Savior through repentance. Then, subsequently to this, we need to be filled with His Spirit. It is this act of filling us with His Spirit that writes His Torah upon our hearts and inward parts and brings us into a covenantal relationship with YHWH and makes Him our personal Elohim.

Otherwise, one is only attempting to keep a list of dos and don'ts, which cannot be done.

May YHWH the Creator of all things, bring each one of us into a covenantal relationship with Him!

Amein and Amein!