

# Torah & Covenants

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## Torah

The basic premise behind the Hebrew Roots Movement is the belief that God has given a single code of conduct or set of commands for all mankind for all time, called "Torah." This is the Hebrew word often translated "law" or "command." It is generic in that it is used many times for a single command,<sup>1</sup> which is why it is frequently found in the plural in Scripture. It is used also of the entire set of laws that God gave Israel through Moses. "Torah" eventually also became a technical term for "the Book of the Law," the five books of Moses.<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew word itself comes from the root verb "yarah" which means to flow, throw, or shoot, and figuratively was used for pointing with the finger, and consequently to teach.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the basic concept is the "teaching."

*"The word tôrâ means basically "teaching" whether it is the wise man instructing his son or God instructing Israel. The wise give insight into all aspects of life so that the young may know how to conduct themselves and to live a long blessed life (Prov 3:l f). So too God, motivated by love, reveals to man basic insight into how to live with each other and how to approach God. Through the law God shows his interest in all aspects of man's life which is to be lived under his direction and care. Law of God stands parallel to word of the Lord to signify that law is the revelation of God's will (e.g. Isa 1:10). In this capacity it becomes the nation's wisdom and understanding so that others will marvel at the quality of Israel's distinctive life style (Deut 4:6). Thus there is a very similar understanding of the role of teaching with its results in the wisdom school, in the priestly instruction, and the role of the law with its results for all the people of the covenant. Specifically law refers to any set of regulations; e.g., Exo 12 contains the law in regard to observing the Passover, Some other specific laws include those for the various offerings (Lev 7:37), for leprosy (Lev 14:57) and for jealousy (Num 5:29). In this light law is often considered to consist of statutes, ordinances, precepts, commandments, and testimonies."<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> For example in Exodus 12:49, the specific command that all males who partake of the Passover must be circumcised is called a "torah."

<sup>2</sup> Deut. 31:26

<sup>3</sup> Strong's Hebrew Lexicon #H8451

<sup>4</sup> Gleason L. Archer & R. Laird Harris, The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWOT), "torah" (electronic version)

The Septuagint and New Testament translate the Hebrew word “torah” as the Greek word νόμος (nomos). In Greek culture, νόμος was initially used of what was considered the will or commands of the pagan gods, whatever was considered proper within the pagan religion and practices of a particular city-state. *“In the earliest period, νόμος is a creation and revelation of Zeus.”*<sup>5</sup> But as kings increasingly claimed divine authority for their rule over various city-states, *“...νόμος no longer rules as king in the {city}. The will and person of the {king} has itself become νόμος.”*<sup>6</sup> This led to the legal meaning of νόμος as “law,” referring to any human governmental law in the legal sense.

The Jewish historian Josephus used νόμος for Israel’s legal system many times, and the plural form in reference to specific commands. However, he used the same term for *“the laws of other nations, sometimes in comparison with the Jewish Law.”* *“There are also laws of war.”*<sup>7</sup> And the same term was used for laws of nature in Greek literature. Both the Hebrew word “torah” and the Greek word νόμος used in the LXX and New Testament imply that the authority for the specific commands originated with God.

## Covenants

However, the Hebrew Roots critical error is in failing to understand the concept of torah / νόμος within the confines of God’s special covenants with specific people groups. The term “covenant” (Heb. “briyth”; Greek “διαθήκη”) refers to a league, compact, or treaty. It is found 284 times in the Old Testament, even more than “torah” (219 times). It is a legal term describing an official binding agreement between two parties, being entered voluntarily.<sup>8</sup>

***“Covenant precedes law; and the law was given only to the nation which had entered into covenant with God. ... The law specifically is the stipulations of the covenant.** But in the broad sense of law, namely God’s teaching, covenant plays the central part. Law and covenant may parallel one another (e.g. Psa 78:10), Since they are so closely tied together, to break one is to break both. Their interconnection is further witnessed to in that the tables of the testimony were placed in the ark of the covenant and a copy of the book of the law placed beside it as a perpetual witness to the covenant between God and his people (Exo 40:20; Deut 31:26).”*<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Kittle, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. IV, p. 1025

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 1032

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p. 1050

<sup>8</sup> Exod. 23:32; Deut. 7:2; Josh. 9:15-16; 2 Sam. 5:3

<sup>9</sup> Gleason L. Archer & R. Laird Harris, The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWOT), “torah” (electronic version)

As with any legal contract, there are many specific requirements and responsibilities imposed on the parties. In God's Covenants in Scripture, the specific terms that are binding on the human signatories of the contract are referred to as "torah." That is, each of the major terms or conditions of the covenant are called "torah" or "νόμος" (law). For example, "Command Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is **the law** [Heb. torah / LXX νόμος] **of the burnt offering**: The burnt offering shall be on the hearth upon the altar all night until morning, and the fire of the altar shall be kept burning on it."<sup>10</sup> When multiple terms or conditions of a specific covenant are in view, the plural form is used. "You came down also on Mount Sinai, And spoke with them from heaven, And gave them just ordinances and true **laws**, Good statutes and commandments."<sup>11</sup> All of the conditions or terms collectively of a specific covenant can be called "torah" or "νόμος" (Law), becoming synonymous with the covenant itself. However, it is always important to distinguish to which covenant a particular "torah" belongs, just as it is important to distinguish terms and conditions of a human covenant as being limited to that particular contract.

Every "covenant" had a specific goal which may not be the same goal for a different covenant. For example, the covenant that God made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob involved the permanent inheritance and ownership of the Promised Land unconditionally.<sup>12</sup> "And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession."<sup>13</sup> There were no conditions (torah), only God's unconditional promise, "because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws."<sup>14</sup> The covenant God made with Israel at Mt. Sinai 430 years later was conditional. It too involved possession of the Promised Land, but this was only a temporary lease of the Land that God promised Abraham as his permanent inheritance. "The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and **you reside in my land as foreigners and strangers**."<sup>15</sup> God only allowed possession of the Promised Land as long as they continued to abide by the terms (torah) of the Lease, the Mt. Sinai Covenant.<sup>16</sup> "You shall therefore keep all My statutes and all My judgments, and perform them, that the land where I am bringing you to dwell may not vomit you out. And you shall not walk in the statutes of the nation which I am casting out before you; for they commit all these things, and therefore I abhor them. But I have

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<sup>10</sup> Lev. 6:9

<sup>11</sup> Neh. 9:13

<sup>12</sup> Gen. 13:14-15; Gen. 17:7-8; Gen. 26:1-4; Gen. 28:3-4; Gen. 28:12-14; Gen. 35:9-12; Acts 7:2-5; Gal. 3:16-18

<sup>13</sup> Gen. 17:8 KJV

<sup>14</sup> Gen 26:5

<sup>15</sup> Lev 25:23 NIV

<sup>16</sup> Lev. 25:23; Deut. 28-29

*said to you, 'You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey.' I am the LORD your God, who has separated you from the peoples.*"<sup>17</sup>

Consequently, the specific "torah" of one covenant is not necessarily the same as another covenant, even though there may be some overlap in the torah of each covenant. God always holds the signatories of a particular covenant accountable to the torah of that particular covenant, the covenant they agreed to abide by and the torah they agreed to obey.

Keeping the Passover was a torah of the Mt. Sinai Covenant.<sup>18</sup> It was not possible to keep this particular torah prior to the exodus when it originated. Yet, Scripture says of Abraham: *"And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; **because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws [torah].**"*<sup>19</sup> Obviously, Abraham did not go to Jerusalem to observe the Passover every year on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan.<sup>20</sup> It is clear that the term "torah" in reference to Abraham's obedience to God does not concern the terms and conditions of the Law of Moses, but rather concerns the terms and conditions that God had with Abraham when they entered into the Abrahamic Covenant,<sup>21</sup> and the previous torah that had jurisdiction over Abraham as a descendant of Noah.

Adam enjoyed a covenant relationship with God in Eden. This covenant included many blessings including year-round food. However, there was only one 'torah' – do not eat of the Tree of Knowledge.

When Adam sinned and was expelled from Eden, a new covenantal relationship began which included the shedding of blood,<sup>22</sup> Adam's being forced to till the soil by the sweat of his brow for his food,<sup>23</sup> and his eventual death as a result from being cut off from the Tree of Life.<sup>24</sup> The descendants of Adam through Seth were called "sons of God,"<sup>25</sup> a term reserved for people who are in a covenant relationship with God.<sup>26</sup> God was called

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<sup>17</sup> Lev 20:22-24

<sup>18</sup> Exodus 12:49

<sup>19</sup> Gen. 26:4-5

<sup>20</sup> Lev. 23:5

<sup>21</sup> Gen. 15

<sup>22</sup> Gen. 3:21; Gen. 4:3-7

<sup>23</sup> Gen. 3:17-19

<sup>24</sup> Gen. 3:22-24

<sup>25</sup> Gen. 6:2 (see: [www.4windsfellowships.net/articles/Sons\\_of\\_God.pdf](http://www.4windsfellowships.net/articles/Sons_of_God.pdf))

<sup>26</sup> Isaiah 43:6; Isaiah 45:11; Rom. 8:14; 2 Cor. 6:18; Gal. 3:26

by His covenant name, YHVH,<sup>27</sup> and Seth and his descendants “called themselves by the name of the LORD.”<sup>28</sup> The descendants of Seth knew to refrain from intermarrying with “the daughters of men.” Thus, these descendants of Adam were in a covenant relationship with God, even though this particular covenant was not specifically named by Moses.

God’s dietary torah for Adam and his descendants was strictly vegetarian.<sup>29</sup> However, after the flood, God made a new covenant with Noah because the circumstances had radically changed. Under the Noahic Covenant, God granted permission to eat all kinds of animals, both clean and unclean, in addition to fruits and vegetables.

Genesis 9:2-10

2 “And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move on the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand.

3 “Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs.

4 “But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.

5 “Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man’s brother I will require the life of man.

6 “Whoever sheds man’s blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man.

7 And as for you, be fruitful and multiply; Bring forth abundantly in the earth And multiply in it.”

8 Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying:

9 “And as for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your descendants after you,

10 “and with every living creature that is with you: the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you, of all that go out of the ark, every beast of the earth.

The Noahic Covenant included both dietary torah as well as the death penalty for unjustly killing any man, including by beasts. Under the previous covenant, murder was not a capital crime.<sup>30</sup> This was partly why violence flourished prior to the flood.<sup>31</sup> Under the Noahic Covenant, Noah and his descendants could kill and eat any beast.

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<sup>27</sup> Gen. 4:1; Gen. 9:26

<sup>28</sup> Gen. 4:26 KJV marg. & LXX, cf. 2 Chron. 7:14

<sup>29</sup> Gen. 1:29-30

<sup>30</sup> Gen. 4:14-15

<sup>31</sup> Gen. 6:11-13

However beasts were forbidden from killing a man, and must be put to death for doing so. And murder was a capital crime.

Noah understood the difference between “clean” and “unclean” animals, since he was required to bring aboard the ark different number of each, and he only sacrificed to God of the “clean” animals.<sup>32</sup> However, the torah for sacrificing animals to God was not the same as the torah for what Noah and his descendants were allowed to eat. The Hebrew word translated “*every moving thing*” includes reptiles, as the LXX clearly shows, translating it as *πᾶν ἔρπετόν*. This term referred to all of the land animals that Noah brought into the ark, both clean and unclean.<sup>33</sup> It is the same word used for unclean animals which the Israelites were forbidden to eat.<sup>34</sup> Yet Noah was told that he could kill and eat all of them, both clean and unclean, minus the blood. This particular “torah” given to Noah as part of the covenant that God made with him and his descendants is incompatible with the dietary torah that God made with the nation of Israel which He rescued out of Egypt over eight-hundred years later.<sup>35</sup>

It was for this reason that the Jerusalem Council refused to impose the kosher torah of the Mt. Sinai Covenant upon Gentile Christians who had entered the New Covenant. They had not been included in the Mt Sinai Covenant, and were explicitly excluded.<sup>36</sup> Instead, in the absence of specific torah concerning food for Gentiles under the New Covenant, the Jerusalem Council referred them back to the Covenant God made with Noah, from whom all of the Gentiles descended.<sup>37</sup> Paul also concluded that Gentile Christians need not observe the kosher torah contained in the Mt. Sinai Covenant. “*For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.*”<sup>38</sup>

The significant differences in diet that God commanded these different groups of people who were under different covenants prove that there is not a single “Torah” for all mankind and all time. Rather, God provided His specific “torah” as His conditions within the framework of a very specific covenant. It is therefore essential to identify the

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<sup>32</sup> Gen. 8:20

<sup>33</sup> Gen. 1:24-30; Gen. 6:7,19-20; Gn. 7:8,14,21,23; Gen. 8:1,17,19 LXX

<sup>34</sup> Lev. 11:29,31,41-44 LXX

<sup>35</sup> Lev. 11

<sup>36</sup> Exod. 19:4-8

<sup>37</sup> Acts 15:29

<sup>38</sup> 1 Tim. 4:4-6

covenant to which particular torah apply, to define the people group who entered into that particular covenant with God, and the limits and boundaries of that covenant.

### **The Abrahamic Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant, and the New Covenant**

As stated previously, the Abrahamic Covenant promised the permanent inheritance and possession of the Land to Abraham,<sup>39</sup> to Isaac,<sup>40</sup> and to Jacob,<sup>41</sup> and to their 'Seed.' It is clear from the New Testament that the fulfillment of the Abrahamic inheritance will be realized in the resurrection.<sup>42</sup> Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did not have the specific torah of the Mt. Sinai Covenant. There was no human priesthood, no official place of worship, no specific torah concerning animal sacrifices except what had been handed down from Noah – sacrificing clean animals only,<sup>43</sup> and no dietary restrictions except as given to Noah and his descendants, of which Abraham was one.

The Covenant that God made with Israel at Mt. Sinai, after delivering them from Egypt, had many more torah, 613 in all. This Covenant, and all of the included torah, were the terms and conditions under which God would allow Israel to live in the Promised Land. This covenant had nothing to do with the Abrahamic Covenant.

*Deuteronomy 5:1-4*

*1 And Moses called all Israel, and said to them: "Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your hearing today, that you may learn them and be careful to observe them. 2 The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. 3 **The LORD did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, those who are here today, all of us who are alive.** 4 The LORD talked with you face to face on the mountain from the midst of the fire."*

The Mt. Sinai Covenant provided the terms and conditions under which the twelve tribes of Israel could remain as God's "tenants" in the Promised Land. The two exiles from the Land, the first under the Babylonians and the second under the Romans, clearly demonstrate the radical difference between the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants. At the time of the first exile to Babylon, God told Jeremiah that He was going to eventually bring about a "New Covenant."

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<sup>39</sup> Gen. 13:14-15; Gen. 17:7-8

<sup>40</sup> Gen. 26:1-4; Gen. 28:3-4

<sup>41</sup> Gen. 28:12-14; Gen. 35:9-12

<sup>42</sup> Acts 7:2-5; Heb. 11:13,39-40

<sup>43</sup> Gen. 7:2-3; Gen. 8:20; Gen. 15:9-10,17

*Jeremiah 31:31-34*

31 *“Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah –*

32 *“not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.*

33 *“But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law<sup>44</sup> in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.*

34 *“No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”*

The clause, “not according to the covenant ...” (οὐ κατὰ τὴν διαθήκην – LXX) literally means “not in accord with the covenant.” Being “new” this Covenant has different “torah.” In particular, since “I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more,” the New Covenant involves a different sacrificial system and different requirements for obtaining the remission of sins.

Jesus inaugurated the New Covenant with His disciples. “For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.”<sup>45</sup> The book of Hebrews quotes this entire prophecy from Jeremiah, making it clear that Israelites who have embraced Christ and the New Covenant are no longer under the torah of the Mt. Sinai Covenant, which for them has become “obsolete.” “In that He says, ‘A New Covenant,’ He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.”<sup>46</sup>

The New Covenant is the means through which the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant can be realized – the permanent Land inheritance and immortality (eternal life) that is necessary to inherit it. Paul made this point crystal clear in his epistle to the Galatians. He drew a sharp contrast between the Abrahamic Covenant and the Mosaic Covenants, showing clearly that one cannot be under both covenants at the same time (it is one or the other), and that the ‘Seed’ of Abraham to whom the permanent Land promise was made was Christ Himself. The permanent inheritance is realized through

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<sup>44</sup> The LXX has “laws” (plural)

<sup>45</sup> Matt. 26:28-29

<sup>46</sup> Heb. 8:13



Christ and the New Covenant, not the Mt. Sinai Covenant, which served God's purposes only for an interim period.

Paul began by showing that Abraham was not justified by keeping the Law of Moses, but by faith in God's promises to him.

*Galatians 3*

*6 just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."*

*7 Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.*

*8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed."*

*9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.*

In Romans 4, Paul emphasized the fact that God had declared Abraham righteous before he was circumcised, and this was a sign that the Gentiles would be saved by faith and not by the Law of Moses. Paul then adds that those who are under the jurisdiction of the Mt. Sinai Covenant are under the curse contained in the Law of Moses.<sup>47</sup>

*Galatians 3*

*10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them."<sup>48</sup>*

The reason all who are under the torah of Moses are cursed is due to the fact that it must be kept perfectly, no exceptions. Paul then quotes the prophecy of Habakkuk.

*Galatians 3*

*11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith."<sup>49</sup> 12 Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them."*

Here Paul pointed out a radical difference between the Mt. Sinai Covenant and the New Covenant. As shown in vs. 6-7, the inheritance of the Abrahamic promise (which included immortality – life through resurrection) was by faith, not by keeping specific torah. However, in the Mt. Sinai Covenant, "life" was through perfect obedience to all of the specific torah of that covenant. The last statement in verse 12 is from Leviticus

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<sup>47</sup> Deut. 28-29

<sup>48</sup> Quoting Deut. 27:26

<sup>49</sup> Hab. 2:4

18:5, "You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, ***he shall live by them***: I am the LORD." The clause, "live by them" does not refer to making them a part of every-day life. Rather, it refers to attaining "eternal life," that is immortality, and partaking in the permanent inheritance. This is why Jesus told the rich young ruler who asked him, "What must I do to inherit eternal life," to keep the commandments of the Law of Moses.<sup>50</sup> Jesus' words were meant to create guilt in him, since the Law requires perfect obedience, illustrating the dilemma of all who depend on the Law of Moses for righteousness. But the New Covenant provides forgiveness and thus righteousness that cannot be achieved by the Mt. Sinai Covenant.

*Galatians 3*

*13 Christ has 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 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*

All who are under the Law of Moses are under the curse because no one has kept it. Yet, Christ's becoming a "curse for us" (Israelites) and opened the way for Gentiles to have immortality also through the Abrahamic Covenant.

Next, Paul shows that neither the Abrahamic nor Mosaic Covenants can be modified, appended, or altered. That is, the Mosaic Covenant was not an ADDITION to the Abrahamic Covenant, but a completely separate contract. He illustrated this by using a human covenant for comparison.

*Galatians 3*

*15 Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man's covenant, yet ***if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it.****

His point was that since the Abrahamic Covenant was unconditional, based on specific promises that God made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob without conditions, once it was confirmed<sup>51</sup> God could not modify it by adding the specific torah of the Mt. Sinai Covenant. This also precludes God from altering the Mt. Sinai Covenant, such as replacing the Levitical priesthood with the Melchizedek Priesthood while keeping the other conditions and terms in place. Changing the priesthood necessarily requires an entirely new covenant and new torah.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Luke 18:18-25

<sup>51</sup> Gen. 22:15-18; Heb. 6:13-19

<sup>52</sup> Heb. 7:12-13

Paul then proved that the 'Seed' in the Abrahamic land promise was not the whole nation of Israel, but one person – Christ.

*Galatians 3*

*16 Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ.*

The clause, "and to your seed" καὶ τῷ σπέρματί σου is a direct word-for-word quote from Genesis 13:15 LXX: "For all the land which you see, to you I will give it, and to your seed (καὶ τῷ σπέρματί σου) forever." The Land promise was to Abraham to Christ, his 'Seed.'

Paul then explained that the Mt. Sinai Covenant, with all its 'torah' as conditions on the Land inheritance, cannot alter the promise of the previous covenant with Abraham. As he stated in verse 15, a covenant cannot be modified or terms (torah) added to it or deleted from it after it has been confirmed.

*Galatians 3*

*17 And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect.*

*18 For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.*

Here Paul shows clearly the tension between the Mt. Sinai Covenant and the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant through Christ. This tension is between an unconditional promise of inheritance (promise) vs. a conditional provision (by works). He then asked the obvious question:

*Galatians 3*

*19 What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, until the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.*

*20 Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one.*

The Mt. Sinai Covenant served as an interim contract with Israel until the specific 'Seed' (who is Christ – vs. 16) should come. The word "until" ἄχρις is "a particle indicating the

*terminus ad quem.*"<sup>53</sup> It therefore points to the end of the jurisdiction of the Law of Moses over those who embrace the 'Seed.' Paul then asked the obvious question:

*Galatians 3*

21 *Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.*

22 *But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.*

This point is clearly explained in Romans, that the failure of all Israelites to keep the Law of Moses necessarily condemns Gentiles who are far worse. "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."<sup>54</sup> Paul was clear that the Law of Moses only specifically condemned those under its jurisdiction – Israel. However, Israel's failure to keep it even with God's presence among them, His miracles, and blessings, left the Gentiles helpless and hopeless. "[A]t that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise,<sup>55</sup> having no hope and without God in the world."<sup>56</sup> Paul then explained further what he meant by the statement in verse 19, that the Law of Moses was given "until (ἄχρις) the Seed should come to whom the promise was made," that is Jesus Christ.

*Galatians 3*

23 *But **before faith came**, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.*

24 *Therefore **the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ**, that we might be justified by faith.*

25 ***But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.***

Paul did not say that the Law was abolished when Christ came. Rather, he said that it was provided to keep Israel under guard "until" Christ should come. However, when FAITH comes to an Israelite who is under the Law, then that particular Israelite is no longer under the tutor – the Law of Moses. Note that Paul, a Jew, repeatedly used the first person plural, "we," including himself as one no longer under the Law of Moses. That is, by embracing Christ and the New Covenant as the means to inherit the promise

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<sup>53</sup> Thayers Greek Lexicon, ἄχρις (electronic version)

<sup>54</sup> Rom. 3:19

<sup>55</sup> The "covenants of promise" does not include the Law which Paul had just said was not according to promise. Rather, the "covenants of promise" are those covenants that contain unconditional promises, such as the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants.

<sup>56</sup> Eph. 2:12

to Abraham, Paul and his fellow Israelite Christians have been released from the jurisdiction of the Mt. Sinai Covenant when “faith” in Christ came to them. That unbelieving Israel remains under the Law of Moses is clear from the use of present tense verbs in verse 10. *“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.’”* As a nation, Israel remains under the curse of the Law, exactly as God threatened them in Deut. 28-32.

Next, Paul showed the position of Christians, both Jew and Gentile, who have been baptized into Christ.

*Galatians 3*

*26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.*

*27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*

*28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

*29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

Since Paul stated that Christ was the ‘Seed’ to whom the promise of the inheritance was made through Abraham, being baptized into Christ means being clothed with Christ. Thus, His resurrection, His immortality, and His inheritance become our resurrection, our immortality, and our inheritance.

Consequently, neither Jewish nor Gentile Christians are under the jurisdiction of the Mt. Sinai Covenant or its terms and conditions (torah). The household of Christ is not the household of Moses. They are completely distinct entities.<sup>57</sup> Those who enter the household of Christ necessarily must leave the household of Moses. The unity of both Jew and Gentile in the household of Christ absolutely demands the cancelling of the torah of the Mt. Sinai Covenant for those Christians. Without the cancelling of the former covenant for Israelite Christians, there can be no unity of the assembly, the Temple of God in this age. It automatically creates division and discord.

*Ephesians 2:11-22*

*11 Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh – who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands – 12 that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.*

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<sup>57</sup> Heb. 3:1-6

13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, 15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, 16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. 17 And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. 18 For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

In the above passage, Paul pointed out the plight of the Gentiles, as being “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.” As “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel,” Gentiles had no national promises or national blessings. Being “strangers from the covenants of promise” points only to those covenants that are based on God’s unconditional promises – the Abrahamic Covenant and the Davidic Covenants – both which find fulfillment in the Kingdom, and are realized through Christ in the Resurrection of the Just. It is to these covenants that the Gentiles have now been “brought near” by the blood of Christ. We have not been brought near to the Mt. Sinai Covenant which Paul contrasts with the “promises.”

When Hebrew Roots ministries attempt to reintroduce the torah of the Mt. Sinai Covenant into the Christian assembly, they are destroying the unity that God has achieved between Jew and Gentile by setting up again what God has “broken down,” that is “*the law of commandments contained in ordinances.*”

## The Law of Christ

In Deuteronomy 18, Moses predicted a new Lawgiver (Torah-Giver), a “Prophet like unto me.”<sup>58</sup> No Old Testament prophet was like Moses, in that as a prophet, Moses brought a new Covenant and its corresponding torah. The only Prophet similar to Moses was Jesus Christ.<sup>59</sup> Like Moses, He fasted forty days and afterward delivered His Law (Torah) to His disciples, contained in the Sermon on the Mount. All of the other Old

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<sup>58</sup> Deut. 18:15,18-19

<sup>59</sup> Acts 3:19-23

Testament prophets pointed Israel back to the former covenant. But Jesus Christ brought a New Covenant.

Like Moses and Jeremiah, Isaiah also prophesied of the new Lawgiver and the New Covenant:

*Isaiah 8*

*13 The LORD of hosts, Him you shall hallow; Let Him be your fear, And let Him be your dread.*

*14 He will be as a sanctuary, But **a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense** To both the houses of Israel, As a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.*

*15 And many among them shall stumble; They shall fall and be broken, Be snared and taken."*

*16 Bind up the testimony, **Seal the law** [torah] **among my disciples**.*

*17 And I will wait on the LORD, Who hides His face from the house of Jacob; And I will hope in Him.*

*18 **Here am I and the children whom the LORD has given me!** We are for signs and wonders in Israel From the LORD of hosts, Who dwells in Mount Zion.*

In verse 14, the "stone of stumbling and rock of offense" refers to Christ according to the New Testament.<sup>60</sup> The underlined statement in verse 18 is quoted and applied as the words of Christ Himself in Hebrews 2:13. Note the first person pronouns. Therefore, the first person pronouns in verse 16 must also apply to Christ. Consequently, "My disciples" refers to Jesus' disciples. Verse 16 refers to the Law (Torah) of Christ, the terms and conditions of the New Covenant.

Isaiah again referred to the New Covenant, and its corresponding new Law (Torah), in another passage that is applied to Christ in the New Testament.<sup>61</sup>

*Isaiah 42:1-6*

*1 "Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.*

*2 He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, Nor cause His voice to be heard in the street.*

*3 A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth.*

*4 He will not fail nor be discouraged, Till He has established justice in the earth; And **the coastlands shall wait for His law [Torah].**"*

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<sup>60</sup> Rom. 9:32-33; 1 Cor. 1:23; 1 Pet. 2:8

<sup>61</sup> Matt. 12:18

5 Thus says God the LORD, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, Who gives breath to the people on it, And spirit to those who walk on it:

6 "I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness, And will hold Your hand; **I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people**, As a light to the Gentiles,

Christ was to be given as a "Covenant" to the people, and as a "light to the Gentiles."<sup>62</sup> This is certainly the New Covenant, which allowed the Gentiles to partake in the Abrahamic promises. Verse 4 refers to "His [Christ's] Law [torah]," as distinct from the Law of Moses. The New Covenant is not a revival of the Law of Moses. The New Covenant has a "better hope"<sup>63</sup> since it was established on "better promises."<sup>64</sup> It is synonymous with "the Law of Christ,"<sup>65</sup> and "the Law of Liberty,"<sup>66</sup> and "the Law of the Breath of life in Christ Jesus."<sup>67</sup>

The Hebrew Roots Movement usually appeals to the Sermon on the Mount in their attempt to show that Jesus was simply a revival preacher for Moses.

*Matthew 5:17-20*

17 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.

18 "For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.

19 "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

20 "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

Verse 17 is used to claim that Jesus came to reinforce the Law of Moses. But that is not what He said. The word "fulfill" is used a multitude of times in Matthew,<sup>68</sup> always in reference to the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, particularly concerning what Christ Himself would do. And a great deal of the Law and the Prophets concerns Christ, particularly as the subject of the symbolism of the festivals, including Passover.

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<sup>62</sup> Acts 13:47

<sup>63</sup> Heb. 7:19

<sup>64</sup> Heb. 8:6

<sup>65</sup> Gal. 6:2

<sup>66</sup> James 1:25; James 2:12

<sup>67</sup> Rom. 8:2

<sup>68</sup> Matt. 1:22; 2:15,17,23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14,35; 21:4; 26:54,56; 27:9,35



The Prophets also spoke of Him many times. Therefore, to “fulfill” the Law and the Prophets should be understood in the same way that Matthew used the term elsewhere – that all which the Law and the Prophets predicted will come to pass in every detail.

Verse 18 is used by Hebrew Roots advocates to show that the Law of Moses will remain in force until “*heaven and earth pass away*,” a reference to the arrival of the Kingdom.<sup>69</sup> This is of course true, since as stated earlier, Israel remains under the curse of the Law even now, which is evident by the second (current) exile and desolation of the Temple. The Law of Moses also prophesied of Israel’s eventual repentance, and the terms for national repentance and restoration are laid out in the Law.<sup>70</sup> The prophets also predicted this national repentance of Israel according to the terms of the Mt. Sinai Covenant,<sup>71</sup> which occurs at the end of the age. It is therefore evident that the Mt. Sinai Covenant is still in force concerning the nation of Israel. This, however, says nothing about Israelite or Gentile Christians who have embraced Christ, the New Covenant, and the Law of Christ. Jesus’ point in vs. 18 was that all of the terms and conditions, the blessings and the curse of the Mt. Sinai Covenant, will absolutely be fulfilled with national Israel down to every jot and tittle. This includes the entire prophesied length of the second (Roman) exile,<sup>72</sup> and the prophesied national repentance that follows. This is the reason for the coming of Elijah, the Temple sacrifices during the tribulation,<sup>73</sup> and why God will “*strengthen the covenant for one week*.”<sup>74</sup> Jesus did not come to abolish these things, but to ensure that all comes to pass.

But the key to the Hebrew Roots’ argument is in verse 19, the claim that “*these commandments*” refer to the specific torah of the Mt. Sinai Covenant, and that it is necessary to inherit the Kingdom. But that covenant is only one of several spoken of in “*the Law and the Prophets*.” The words “*these commandments*” are alleged to refer exclusively to the Law of Moses. Yet, no “commandments” had been referenced thus far in order to provide an antecedent for the pronoun “these,” only a generic reference to the Old Testament Scriptures. Reference to specific “commandments” only comes into play in what follows, in all the “*you have heard ... but I say to you*” statements,<sup>75</sup> contrasting the Law of Moses with the Law of Christ. And it is obvious in Jesus following sermon that the obedience required is to the words of Jesus, not Moses.

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<sup>69</sup> See Isaiah 65:17-19

<sup>70</sup> Lev. 26; Deut. 30

<sup>71</sup> Dan. 9:24; Mal. 4:4-6

<sup>72</sup> Lev. 26

<sup>73</sup> Rev. 11:1-3

<sup>74</sup> Dan. 9:24

<sup>75</sup> Matt. 5:22,28,32,34,44

The little word “these” in the clause “*these commandments*” requires plural referents in the immediate context. The Greek word is τούτων, genitive feminine plural form of the **NEAR** demonstrative pronoun οὗτος. In Greek, as in English, there is a near and far demonstrative pronoun. In English the near demonstrative pronoun is “this / these” and the far demonstrative pronoun is “that / those.” In Greek, οὗτος is the NEAR referent pronoun and ἐκεῖνος is the FAR referent pronoun.<sup>76</sup>

If Jesus was referring to the commandments in the Law of Moses in verse 19, we would expect Him to use the far referent pronoun – those commandments (τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐκεῖνων). This is especially true given the fact that He immediately provided His own commandments, **which are necessarily the near referent**, much closer than the commandments given to Moses.

The referents for the demonstrative pronoun need not point to something already mentioned. It can just as easily point to something that immediately follows the demonstrative pronoun. Here are a few examples:

- In Genesis 2:4, the LXX reads: **αὕτη** ἡ βίβλος γενέσεως οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς (“**this** is the account of the origination of the heavens and the earth”). “This” refers to the account that follows.
- In Leviticus 6:9 the LXX reads: **οὗτος** ὁ νόμος τῆς ὀλοκαυτώσεως (“**this** is the law of burnt offering”), which is detailed immediately after this statement.
- In 1 John 1:5 the Greek reads: Καὶ ἔστιν **αὕτη** ἡ ἀγγελία ἣν ἀκηκόαμεν ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀναγγέλλομεν ὑμῖν, ὅτι ὁ θεὸς φῶς ἐστὶν καὶ σκοτία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδεμία (“and **this** is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all”).

Jesus again used the near demonstrative pronoun οὗτος after His sermon.

*Matthew 7:24-27*

24 “Therefore whoever hears **these** sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock:

25 “and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

26 “But everyone who hears **these** sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand:

27 “and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”

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<sup>76</sup> <http://www.ntgreek.net/lesson18.htm>

Consequently, Matthew 5:19 and Matthew 7:24,26 provide bookends for the Law of Christ. Jesus' series of commandments between "these commandments" in 5:19 and "these sayings of Mine" in 7:24,26 form some of the terms and conditions of the New Covenant, and constitute the "Law of Christ."

Finally, Hebrew Roots proponents point to Matthew 5:20, "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." The "righteousness" of the scribes and Pharisees was dependent on the Law of Moses. It is therefore assumed that a righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees must also concern the Law of Moses. However, Paul constantly taught that righteousness cannot come through the Law. Therefore, obtaining a greater degree of righteousness within the Law of Moses cannot make one "righteous," and therefore cannot be the criteria for entering the Kingdom. Paul's point was that the "righteousness" of the Law cannot bring one to the inheritance. Instead, there is a "righteousness" that is "apart from the Law" of Moses.

*Romans 3:21-22*

*21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference;*

The Hebrew Roots interpretation of Matthew 5:20 makes Paul contradict Jesus. It is evident here why Jesus referred to the fact that every jot and tittle of the Law must be fulfilled, including the prophecies concerning the "righteousness of God apart from the Law" which Paul said was "witnessed by the Law and the Prophets." Again, the Old Testament Scriptures (the Law and the Prophets) demonstrate this kind of "righteousness" that Abraham and David possessed.

*Romans 4:2-8*

*2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."*

*4 Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. 5 But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, 6 just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: 7 "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered; 8 Blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin."*

When comparing Paul's words to Jesus' statement about the need for a "righteousness" that exceeds the scribes and Pharisees it is easily apparent that Jesus was referring to the "righteousness" that is apart from the Law of Moses, the "righteousness" that comes through faith in Jesus Christ alone. It is therefore evident that observing the Law of Moses more faithfully, more strictly, more perfectly, or even with purer heart attitude than the scribes and Pharisees, cannot be the ticket into the Kingdom of God. The "righteousness" that exceeds even the strictest adherence to the torah of the Mt. Sinai Covenant is that which comes through faith in Jesus Christ, and in following His commandments contained in the Law of Christ. This is the New Covenant, through which Jeremiah said God would write His laws<sup>77</sup> in the hearts of His people.

Do not be fooled by those who introduce a pseudo-humility<sup>78</sup> into the teachings of Christ, and who destroy the "unity of the Breath,"<sup>79</sup> creating division once again in the local assembly, making food requirements, fabric requirements, participation in the festivals, Sabbath requirements, or the pseudo-piety of using Hebrew names and words. Many denominations seek to set themselves above the simple "Christian" by their pretense of superiority with a phony "priesthood," claims of Apostolic Succession, claims of supernatural spiritual gifts, special election, wearing special clothing, and using special titles. The Hebrew Roots crowd is no different. Imposing the Law of Moses on Christians is exactly what Peter declared at the Jerusalem Council: "*Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.*"<sup>80</sup> Paul made it perfectly clear that even Jewish Christians are no longer under the jurisdiction of the Mt. Sinai Covenant, after entering into the New Covenant. "*But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.*"<sup>81</sup> And he warned the Gentile Christians: "*Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised,<sup>82</sup> Christ will profit you nothing. And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.*"<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> The Hebrew text has "law" (torah) singular, while the LXX has "laws" (plural). Hebrews 8:10 quotes the LXX, showing that the plural form is the original. This is the commandments of Christ.

<sup>78</sup> Col. 2:8-19

<sup>79</sup> Eph. 4:3

<sup>80</sup> Acts 15:10-11

<sup>81</sup> Gal. 3:23-25

<sup>82</sup> Circumcision (like baptism) was the act necessary for entering the Mt. Sinai Covenant (Ex. 12:42-43).

<sup>83</sup> Gal. 5:2-5