



TNT Restoration Class
6. Torah Challenges & Conclusions
June 9, 2015

FROM THE READING

(Quotes from Thomas Lancaster's *Restoration* Chapters 10-15)

Chapter 10: The Life of Torah

A. The Loss of Once-Precious Things

101-As a faith, we set out from Jerusalem 2,000 years ago on a long journey into all nations. God has been faithful and brought us to this place today. Along the way, we have lost many of the things that once were precious to us.

-Among the things we left in various stages on our journey were the celebration of the Sabbath and the biblical festivals. There are several other things as well. Now, as the restoration begins, we have an opportunity to claim them.

B. The Lunar Calendar

-Originally, believers followed a lunar calendar in determining the months, seasons and appointments because the lunar calendar is biblical.

102-In Judaism, when the new moon appears again, it is said to be "born again." As such, it serves as a monthly reminder spiritual rebirth.

-Just as the new moon must be observed before the festivals can be celebrated, spiritual rebirth must precede any of our ritual observances.

-God has synchronized the body of the typical woman to the lunar month; so long as her menstrual cycle is regular, she will begin menstruation at the same phase of the moon each month.

-During a woman's week of menstruation, she is technically regarded as 'unclean' by the Torah. In actual practice today, her uncleanness has no real relevance because there is no Temple. If the temples still stood, she would not be able to participate in the worship or sacrifices that took place there until menstruation ended and she levitically cleansed herself. To become ritually clean after menstruation, a woman need only immerse yourself in a ritual baptism.

-Abstinence for seven days following the onset of the menstrual cycle is a commandment that applies to us today.

103-A woman's body, like the Moon, is an ongoing picture of renewal and rebirth. Each month, a woman's body passes from life to death to life again. She passes from ritual, levitical uncleanness to levitical purity through the rite of immersion.

-Messiah Himself is our baptism. In Him we are purified and renewed, allowing His life to come forth through us. Each woman becomes a monthly reminder of our spiritual renewal.

-Our very bodies are tuned to God's biblical (lunar) calendar.

C. Traditional Immersions

-Baptism originally began as a purification ritual in the days of Moses, but according to Jewish apocrypha, even Adam and Eve immersed themselves in the Euphrates River to symbolize their penitence after being expelled from the garden.

104-In the days of the apostles, Jews practiced ritual baptism frequently, sometimes daily. From the days of Moses, all of Israel regularly participated in ritual purification immersions. Anyone who became ritually unclean needed to undergo an immersion before they could enter the temple. The priests immersed every day. After a woman completed menstruation, she needed to immerse herself before she could rejoin her husband or participate in the temple. Those who had become contaminated in any way needed to go through immersion before they were deemed ritually pure again.

-Worshippers going up to the temple immersed themselves before entering. Modern day visitors to Jerusalem can see the remains of the mikvahs at the foot of the temple steps. The 3000 new believers who were baptized on Pentecost in Acts 2 almost certainly were baptized in the mikvahs of the Temple Mount.

-According to Judaism, a Gentile who wants to become Jewish must undergo several ritual requirements. For men, the two main requirements are circumcision and immersion. For a woman, immersion is the entire conversion ritual... Gentiles who pass through the immersion pool are symbolically said to be reborn as Jews (or born-again as Jews, if you prefer).

D. Biblical Reminders

1. The Tassels

105-The tassels (tzitzit) consist of four sets of knots and strings that hang off the corners of the ritual prayer shawl and a smaller ritual garment worn underneath one's shirt. Even the Master wore the tassels, and they became an important component of his healing ministry. (Matthew 9:20; Mark 6:56)

-The commandment of the tassels works in two directions. First, the person wearing the tassels is reminded that he represents God in the world. The tassels symbolize the commandments; by wearing the tassels, a man is accepting responsibility for keeping the Commandments. Second, people who see him wearing the tassels are reminded of God. They will hold that individual to a higher level of accountability. The tassels are a conspicuous sign of faith.

2. The Mezuzah

106-The Torah tells us that we are to write God's Commandments on the doorframes of our houses. (Deuteronomy 6:9)

3. Tefillin

-Similarly, Moses said we are to bind God's word to our hands and foreheads. (Deuteronomy 6:8)

Traditional Jews keep this commandment by strapping leather boxes (tefillin) containing relevant passages of Scripture to their hands in for heads during morning prayer. This ancient custom was universal among the mainstream of observant Jews of Yeshua's day.

E. The Dietary Laws

-Another thing that Christianity lost on the way is biblical dietary laws. These laws are meant to sanctify his people, setting them apart. They are also meant to keep his people healthy, sparing them certain health problems that arise from eating unclean animals.

107-Yeshua kept the dietary laws, as did all the apostles.

-The distinction between clean (tahor) and unclean (tamei) animals did not originate in Leviticus or the Sinai covenant. Noah knew the difference between clean and unclean animals even before the flood. (Genesis 8:15-9:13)

108-Laws of clean and unclean foods teach us about the difference between the permissible and forbidden, light and dark, right and wrong.

-A well-cooked pork chop is certainly delicious and desirable, but that doesn't make it permissible. So too sexual temptations, avarice, and a host of other desirables the flash before our mortal inclinations.

-If we should be careful to avoid eating something that might be deemed levitically unclean, how much more so should we be careful to avoid looking at something spiritually unclean or listening to something unwholesome?

F. God's Biblical Rhythm

109-The Christian life is much more than simply changing our behavior. It's about being a new person on the inside.

-Throughout the day, week, month and year, the Lord offers a regular rhythm of godliness. The Torah mode of life provides daily prayers and constant reminders.

111-Many Gentile believers in Yeshua were left trying to interpret the Bible with only a superficial knowledge of the original matrix from which it had come.

-Our early Christian faith took its traditional shape by defining itself in antithesis to Judaism. Therefore, believers begin to consider it praiseworthy and meritorious to violate any laws that seemed conspicuously Jewish. Within a few centuries, they began to consider it a service to God to persecute and even torture and kill the Jewish people.

Chapter 11: The Jots & Tittles of Torah

114-By writing a copy of the Torah for himself, the king is reminded that he is not above God's law. (Deuteronomy 17:18)

115-In replacing that letter, Solomon's changed the whole meaning of the sentence. Now it says, "I will multiply for himself wives and his heart will not turn away." By changing that single letter (yod), Solomon's change the meaning. It is a small and subtle change. But now the verse is no longer an

- imperative forbidding a king to multiply wives. Instead, it is become a statement that his multiplication of wives will not have the effect of leading his heart astray.
- The above scene is more or less described for us in an ancient collection of Jewish teachings called the *Midrash Rabbah*.
 - 116- Solomon was able to ignore the command not to multiply wives. In his mind, because he understood the principle of law, he did not need to obey the literal meaning.
 - 118- In his wisdom, Solomon outsmarted himself. He assumed that because of his rational apprehension of Torah, he was above the rule of law.
 - 119-The reasoning might go like this: “I understand the meaning of the Sabbath. It teaches us about the Sabbath rest in Messiah. Therefore I am free from keeping the Sabbath. I may celebrate the Sabbath if I want to, but I don’t need to, because I understand that the Torah’s purpose is to teach me about the Sabbath rest in Messiah.”
 - In the end, Solomon’s great wisdom turned out to be madness of folly because he thought he was wiser than the Torah.

Chapter 12: The Difficult Laws of Torah

A. Email to Dr. Laura (God’s Ways Backward & Obsolete?)

- 123-Are you suggesting we go back to making animal sacrifices? What about the laws of clean and unclean, and stoning adulterers and Sabbath-breakers? Surely you aren’t suggesting that, as a part of this restoration, believers should return to these antiquated harsh and ritualistic laws are you?
- 124-The issue that sank Dr. Laura’s ship was her refusal to accept homosexuality as a normal and healthy lifestyle. Standing on the basis of Torah, Dr. Laura declared homosexual behavior to be abnormal.
- 126-In what is certainly his strongest argument, the author of the email to Dr. Laura, compares eating shellfish to homosexuality. Both are described by Torah as abominable to God. The Hebrew word used in both instances is *to’evah*. It is a word to describe an object that elicits a reaction of disgust and distaste.
- The book of Deuteronomy tells us that God is disgusted by idolatry, child sacrifice, divination, sorcery, witchcraft, spellcasting, channeling spirits and consulting the dead. In addition, the Torah says that God is disgusted by the employment of prostitution in worship, gender cross-dressing, remarriage to a previous spouse who has remarried and inaccurate weights and measures used to defraud. In other words, God is disgusted by sin. Whether those particular sins disgust Him more than others is not certain.

B. Moral, Civil, and Ceremonial Distinctions?

- 127-Typically the reconciliation is accomplished by dividing the Torah into three domains of legislation. The Torah seems to contain laws pertaining to morality, laws pertaining to civil government and laws pertaining to ceremony.
- We have been able to proceed by saying that the Gospels made the ceremonial laws and civil laws obsolete. Only the moral code remains valid to the new dispensation of Grace.
- The threefold explanation is, however, flawed at its core and does not withstand modern scrutiny. There are not three Torahs.
- The distinction between moral, civil and ceremonial laws is artificial and arbitrary. It is a contrivance created for the convenience of popular theology.
- 128-Following this line of reasoning, nothing can be said to be absolutely wrong or right. Rather, everything is subject to possible reinterpretation and dismissal as part of the obsolete body of ceremonial legislation.
- By dividing the word of God into arbitrary categories, some of which we’ve declared no longer valid, we have dug our own theological grave and handed the shovel to the opponents of the gospel.
- Commandments within torah that do not support our ethical and religious contrivances, however, are disregarded as obsolete.
- 129-If the Torah foundation is malleable, so are the arguments based upon it. If, however, we maintain the Torah is unchanging and immutable, as our Master did we find ourselves on firmer ground.

C. Answering the Email

1. Animal Sacrifices in Our Backyard?

- In the absence of an existing temple, the right to sacrifice cannot be practiced.

-The email author's transference of those laws from their temple context to the suburban American backyard raises some humorous possibilities, but it isn't a relevant argument.

2. *Purity Laws in Affect?*

-Like the laws of sacrifice, the purity laws have a relevant context only when there is a functional temple.

The purity laws of clean and unclean are designed to protect the sanctity of the temple precinct and priesthood. In the absence of the temple, the purity laws are only vestiges of a different world.

130-Women in menstruation are only one source of ritual impurity. He selects that particular one because it will incite the strongest reaction.

3. *Priesthood Qualifications*

-The eyesight law only relates to the priesthood of Israel, and it is a reference to blindness, not astigmatism.

It is part of the list of prohibitions that forbid a maimed or disabled priest from facilitating the sacrificial service of the temple.

-Like the sacrifices themselves, the priests handling them needed to be without defect. A priest with a disqualifying defect was still fully employed within the priesthood and had the rights to all venues of the priesthood except the sacred service of the altar.

-He would be forbidden to approach the altar unless he is a direct and certifiable descendent of Aaron.

4. *Women & Slaves*

131-The Torah seeks to protect a woman who might be caught in that barbarous system of economics by ensuring her right of redemption and forbidding her resale to another. Thus she cannot be used as a sexual slave, passed from owner to owner. She must be treated with dignity and accorded her rights.

-The Torah law he criticizes is actually meant to defend the cause of the slave and the rights of women.

-The same passage does, however, allow for the purchase of heathens as lifelong slaves. Of course, slavery is illegal in Canada, United States and Mexico, so even if he were to find some heathens for sale in either Canada or Mexico, he would have other legal issues to deal with.

5. *Sabbath-breaking*

-The death penalty assigned to Sabbath breakers and other grievous sins of Torah was not a vigilante style execution as our anonymous author imagines. Those sentences were determined through a court of law employing the adversarial system of justice. If such a court (namely, the Sanhedrin) existed today and had civil jurisdiction in Israel or in the United States, and if the accused Sabbath breaker was not a Gentile, but was demonstrably obligated by Torah to keep the Sabbath, then he would be well advised to get a good lawyer. The anonymous author of our email could stand as a witness for the prosecution the trial, but a guilty verdict would not be achievable without an additional witness. Also, intention to belligerently break the Sabbath would have to be proven. If all of those criteria were met, then an execution under the auspices of the court would commence.

132-The Sabbath is the most often-repeated positive commandment in the Scripture. It may not seem like a big deal to us, but apparently it is to God.

6. *Dietary Abominations*

-We must either acquiesce to the notion that parts of the Torah have been abolished or that we have been wrong about shellfish and the rest of the biblical dietary laws.

-Certainly we could point to several New Testament passages that Christianity has traditionally interpreted as abrogations of the dietary laws, but that would only prove his point about the eternal, unchanging quality of God's Word. If what was called an abomination in one case is now called breakfast, why shouldn't an abomination in another case now be called healthy human sexuality?

D. Regarding All of God's Ways

-The Torah contains a plethora of laws that are foreign to us.

133-It is important that we do not make arbitrary distinctions, slicing and dicing God's Word in order to make it fit our world view.

-When we encounter difficult laws in the Torah, rather than toss them out, we should take the time to study them. That might require some homework on our part. There is only one Torah and every commandment of Torah is a matter of morality, but not every commandment applies in every circumstance or is incumbent upon every individual...When studying the Torah, it is crucial to examine the context and application of the commandments.

-Oftentimes the rabbis see far deeper into the text than our cursory readings allow. They bring a wealth of oral tradition and family history to help clarify difficult passages.

Chapter 13: The Oral Torah

A. Definitions

135-In addition to the written Torah, Judaism teaches the authority of an oral Torah. Thus traditional Judaism has two Torahs: the written Torah and the oral Torah.

-The oral Torah is a collection of laws, explanations and legal minutia. Allegedly, the Jewish people orally passed these laws on from the days of Moses until the second century CE when they were finally committed to writing. The written code of this vast body of traditional law is called the *Mishnah*.

-The laws contained within the oral Torah are, for the most part, explanations of and expansions on the written Torah's laws. The need for such explanations and expansions is self-evident. The written Torah contains numerous commandments require more information if they are to be observed.

136-The oral Torah endeavored to preserve those original traditions and pass them on along with the written Torah.

-Traditional Judaism, therefore, believes that the oral Torah carries the same authoritative weight that the written Torah carries.

B. Origins

1. *Mishnah*

-In the early second century, the famous Rabbi Meir began the dizzying task of committing the gigantic body of oral tradition to writing. His work was continued by a wealthy and prominent relative of Yeshua named Rabbi Judah the prince. Judah completed what Meir had begun. The finished work was a momentous, skeleton-like, written version of laborious legal material called the Mishnah... He completed the work around 200 CE, and it immediately became the textbook of Torah study for world Jewry.

2. *Gemara*

137-In the process, old parables, amusing anecdotes, pieces of antiquated laws, rabbinic proverbs, customs, folklore and superstition were discussed and eventually written down as commentary on the Mishnah. The commentary on the mishnah called Gemara, which means "completion" because it adds the oral traditions and proof texts and arguments that the mishnah left out. In that sense, it completes the mishnah.

-Two prominent schools of sages, one in Israel and one in Babylon, independently produced written gemara on the mishnah.

C. Justification

138-Deuteronomy 17:8-13 grants that judges and teachers of Israel the authority to make legal rulings and instructional interpretations based upon the laws of the written Torah. These rulings are also considered oral Torah. Each generation has added to this ever-growing body of legislation.

-It is far beyond the realm of credibility to suggest that the body of the oral Torah's legislation is all derived directly from Moses. It is not self-evident that all or even most rabbinic tradition contained within the oral Torah is derived from Moses and therefore carries the weight of Scripture. On the contrary, the majority of the teachings of the oral Torah are inferences and extrapolations created by the sages in their attempts to clarify and explain Torah.

1. *Ignore if Contradicting the Written Word*

139-When the tradition contradicted the written commandments of God, the Master regarded that tradition as void.

2. *Potentially Beneficial*

141-Before we completely throw out the oral Torah and all its 'traditions of men,' we need to point out Yeshua retained the majority of such traditions. He lived in the Jewish world. He engaged in practices derived from both the written Torah and the oral Torah. He did this deliberately and with intention.

142-Only in the oral Torah do we find the tradition of serving cups of wine as one of the elements of the Passover seder meal.

-The oral Torah is a valuable piece of the Torah heritage and should not be dismissed simply on the basis that it is largely traditional. However Yeshua clearly did not regard the oral Torah as an authority on par with the written word of God. Neither should we.

143-That's how he characterized the stringencies of the emerging oral Torah: binding and tying heavy burdens. The cumulative result of centuries of tradition, law after law and additional derived stringencies, was a heavy yoke that made practical observance of the Torah a virtual impossibility.

D. Yeshua's Yoke

-Yeshua offers a simpler and clearer approach to Torah. His yoke is easy. His burden is light.

144-The apostolic structures gives us two primary tools for determining the value and legitimacy of any given tradition.

1. *Don't break the Commandments of God.* If a certain tradition or stringency contradicts scripture, we must discard it.

145-2. *Don't go beyond what is written.* If one cannot find a biblical basis for a particular tradition, it is irrelevant to the legitimate application of a biblical life.

-The tradition of lighting Sabbath candles before dark on Friday night does not contradict the word of God. Neither does it go beyond what is written, because it is part of honoring the Sabbath, sanctifying the Sabbath and keeping the Sabbath holy.

-When we turn to Jewish tradition, we should remember that it is not Torah, on the same level as the word of God, and is subject to the above two-fold criteria.

3. *He is the Goal*

146-As we approach Torah and Jewish tradition, we must remember that the goal of Torah is the Messiah, not Jewish expression. As long as we keep our eyes firmly upon the living Torah, we will be able to find an appropriate balance of the written Torah and the oral tradition. We need look no further than Yeshua.

Chapter 14: Paul and Torah

A. Lancaster's Controversy

147-I explained my position on the matter. I explained that in the Bible, Yeshua and His followers were all Torah observant. They kept the Sabbath. They kept the festivals. They kept the dietary laws. As an aspiring disciple of Yeshua, I felt that it made sense to do the same.

-[The dean stated to me in reply]: "that is because they did not understand what Jesus was trying to do.

That's why the Holy Spirit raised up Paul to take the Christian faith out from under the law. The Jewish Christians in Jerusalem misunderstood. They missed the movement of the Spirit."

148-It is a staggering proposition, and one that I cannot seriously entertain.

B. Paul's Torah Observance

-Contrary to popular Christian legend, Yeshua did not change his name from Saul to Paul. Instead, it was common among Diaspora Jews to have a Hebrew name and a Greek name. The same custom is common even today among Jewish people.

-Paul never abandoned the Torah. He was a Torah observant Jew until the day he died. His enemies claimed otherwise.

149-*Then they said to Paul: "You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law. 21They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs. 22What shall we do? They will certainly hear that you have come Acts 21:20-22*

C. Allegations Against Paul

-According to James the elders, three specific allegations have been raised against Paul.

1. He was teaching Jews to turn away from Torah.

2. He was teaching Jews not to circumcise their children.

3. He was teaching Jews not to live according to the customs.

-It is ironic that most Christian theologians have accepted these false allegations as gospel truth.

-His opponents and adversaries were misconstruing his inclusion of and leniency toward the new Gentile believers as an anti-Torah posture.

D. Paul's Defense

-Had Paul been anything other than the Torah observant Jew, he should have seized the moment to correct the Jerusalem elders. He did not. Instead, he consented to their plan to demonstrate to all of Jerusalem he was, indeed, torah observant.

150-Throughout the book of Acts, Paul continues to plead his case, protesting his innocence and insisting that he and others remain faithful to Torah.

-Paul went on to tell them, "Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees" (Acts 23:6). Notice the present tense. He did not say, "I was a Pharisee." He said, "I am a Pharisee."

151-For us to suppose that Paul was anything less than scrupulously torah observant is to deny the testimony of James, the testimony of the Jerusalem elders, the testimony of Luke and the testimony of Paul himself.

E. Context is King

152-Why is it common then that so many Pauline passages seem to disparage the Torah and even encourage us not to keep the Torah? The problem is one of context.

153- Paul's letters must be understood in this larger Torah context.

1. Circumcision

-From Paul's vantage, for a Gentile believer to become circumcised under the auspices of a "conversion" to Judaism was redundant. It was an affront to Messiah because it implied that faith in him was not adequate to secure a position in the covenant with Israel. It was a denial of the gospel.

-In the case of Gentiles with Jewish heritage, however, Paul did not hesitate to circumcise. In fact he personally oversaw Timothy's circumcision. Gentiles like Titus and the Galatians, he encouraged to remain uncircumcised so long as circumcision was not understood as a ticket into the kingdom.

2. Obeying Yeshua's Commandments

156-In the great commission, Gentile disciples are directed to obey everything Yeshua commanded the twelve.

157-In order to read Paul in context, we must remember that Paul was a torah-observing Jew throughout his life. He was writing to believers who are already congregating in the synagogue and participating in the Torah life.

-If it was easy to misunderstand Paul in Peter's day, how much more so in our own day? (2 Peter 3:16)

Chapter 15: ResTorahation

A. Yeshua: a False Prophet?

159-I believe that without the restoration of Torah, we risk discrediting Messiah.

160-The traditional understanding and presentation of the Christian Jesus is that He was a prophet (and more), attested by signs and wonders, but that he also canceled the Torah. Such a person fits Deuteronomy 13's description of a false prophet perfectly.

161-In our presentation of the Gospel to the Jewish people, we have consistently invited them to throw off the Torah and follow the Messiah. According to the Bible's own criteria, we thereby disqualify him as prophet and Messiah.

B. The Consistency of God's Word

-If the word of God is true, it must be consistent.

162-If turning away from the Torah inflicted the world, then returning to Torah is the balm.

163-I believe that God is doing an old thing. God, who never changes, is pouring out the same message he has always delivered through his holy prophets; "return to my Torah. Obey my Commandments."

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