THE WORDS OF TORAH:

FOUNDATIONAL, RELEVANT AND LIFE-CHANGING

Scott Kokoska, January 2016

DEUTERONOMY 32:*46-47*A

…HE (MOSES) SAID TO THEM,
"TAKE TO HEART ALL THE WORDS BY WHICH I AM WARNING YOU TODAY,
THAT YOU MAY COMMAND THEM TO YOUR CHILDREN,
THAT THEY MAY BE CAREFUL TO DO ALL THE WORDS OF THIS LAW.
FOR IT IS NO EMPTY WORD FOR YOU, BUT YOUR VERY LIFE,…"

The Scriptures are the Words of God,[1] living and active, sharper than a two edged sword.[2] His Word is like fire, like a hammer that shatters rock.[3] We humbly seek to engage and wrestle with these Scriptures. We desire to learn, apply, and obey the Scriptures in their entirety, Genesis through Revelation. This has been a journey for us, a journey we are still walking, as the rock of our hearts is hammered away to see his Word unified and cohesive.

Torah (The Law: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) is the foundation. The very first Psalm declares that the blessed man is one who delights in Torah of YHWH and meditates on Torah day and night.[4] It is the beginning, the starting point from which all our understanding grows. Torah reveals to us the One True God, righteous and just, his created mankind that fell out of fellowship due to sin, and the relationship between the two that continues into eternity. Because of the beautiful plan that God wove into life from the beginning, a plan to redeem creation and draw it close to himself once again, Torah reveals the Messiah. Such incredible mysteries and complex truths are wrapped up in words that are often thought of as obsolete.

Psalm 119:129-130
"Your testimonies are wonderful; therefore my soul keeps them.
The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple."

[1] 2 Tim 3:16
[2] Hebrews 4:12
[3] Jeremiah 23:28
[4] Psalm 1:1-2

Torah teaches us who God is, how God defined Himself through his relationships with mankind as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who created the world from nothing by his word and mankind from dust and breath.[5] Through Torah we learn that YHWH is One,[6] that YHWH is Holy,[7] that YHWH is slow to anger, full of unfailing steadfast love,[8] is jealous for our love and will not allow us to be satisfied with the love of another.[9] Through Torah, God provides some insight into what pleases Him,[10] and also what is detestable and abhorrent to Him.[11]

Torah teaches us our identity as mankind, our purpose in life, our depravity, and our need for Messiah. Torah defines the fundamental concepts of sin, the penalty for sin, holiness, and righteousness.[12] We see throughout the Biblical narrative that following Torah (righteousness) brought blessings, ignoring Torah (lawlessness) brought curses.[13] God, through His grace, provided means for atonement for sin through blood sacrifices, though not complete and thus the need for a true Messiah.[14] God sent prophets to restore Torah living (righteousness) to His people.[15] The righteous kings clung to Torah.[16] People of true faith in the Scriptures feared YHWH and walked with him in obedience.

> Ezra 7:10
> *For Ezra had set his heart to study the Torah of the YHWH,*
> *and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.*

Torah describes how mankind is to interact with God, how to present themselves in his presence, both children of Abraham as well as the sojourners.[17] God describes acceptable worship of himself.[18] Through Torah, God explains in detail the appointed times[19] and Sabbaths that are to be kept by the people of God and sojourners among them.[20]

Torah is about Messiah. The words of Torah overflow with the foreshadowing of the Messiah and promises of a Redeemer.[21] From men, like Adam, Noah, Joseph and Moses, to the illustrations like the festivals and the Temple sacrificial system, Torah points us to the Messiah. The very fabric of Biblical

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[5] Genesis 2:7
[6] Deuteronomy 6:4
[7] Exodus 3:5, Leviticus 11:4
[8] Exodus 34:6-8
[9] Exodus 20:5, Exodus 34:14
[10] Isaiah 56:3-5 (note: footnotes not intended to be exhaustive)
[11] Leviticus 11:41-45, Deuteronomy 14:3→Isaiah 66:17, Deuteronomy 18:9-14→ 1 Samuel 15:22-23, Micah 5:12-15 & Revelation 9:21, Revelation 22:15
[12] Nehemiah 9, Romans 3:20, Romans 7:7-12
[13] Genesis 3:17, Deuteronomy 11:26-28, Joshua 8:34, Isaiah 24:6, Galatians 3:10
[14] Hebrews 13:11-12
[15] Hosea 4:6,
[16] 2 Chronicles 31:20-21, 2 Chronicles 34:19-33, 2 Kings 23:21-25
[17] Exodus 12:49, Leviticus 16:29, Leviticus 17;8, Leviticus 17:10, Leviticus 24:22
[18] Deuteronomy 12, Deuteronomy 16:21-17:8
[19] Moed, often translated as "seasons" one of the primary functions of our sun and moon, Genesis 1:14, Psalm 104:19
[20] Leviticus 23, Numbers 9, Numbers 9:14
[21] Genesis 2:9-14, Exodus 12:21-24

culture, as outlined in Torah, weaves the Messiah into the cycle of life. Through the Temple system and the appointed times, Yeshua, the Messiah, is displayed.[22]

> John 1:45
> *Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Torah and also the Prophets wrote, Yeshua of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."*

Not only is Torah foundational for understanding and interpreting the rest of Scripture, the lives and ministry of Yeshua and his apostles were built on Torah. Yeshua, the Messiah, is actually the Word of God, not only Torah and the Prophets, but the entirety of the Word of God, God's communication. The Word was with God in the beginning and is God.[23] The Word became flesh to live a sinless, perfect Torah-following, life in order that His blood sacrifice, as the spotless Lamb, would be acceptable and pleasing to God as the complete atonement for our sin.[24] Yeshua, the Messiah, the Living Word, quoted Torah as essential for life.[25] Messiah stated that Torah has not been cancelled, and will remain as long as Heaven and Earth remain.[26] Yeshua spent much of his ministry interpreting Torah in a perfected way. He taught that Torah obedience goes deeper than just the letter of the law and obedience to it must originate from the heart.[27] Torah is applicable to all of humanity that desire to follow YHWH, to the Jews, Gentiles, foreigners, and sojourners.[28]

> Matthew 5:17-20
> *Do not think that I have come to abolish Torah or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from Torah until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.*

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[22] 1 Corinthians 5:7
[23] John 1:1-5
[24] 1 Peter 1:19, Luke 22:7, John 1:19, 1 Corinthians 5:7, 2 Corinthians 5:21
[25] "'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" – Matthew 4:4 quoting Deuteronomy 8:3
[26] Matthew 5:17-20
[27] Matthew 5:21-48, Matthew 15:2-9, Matthew 19:8-9
[28] Romans 11:17, Isaiah 56:6,

The apostles of Yeshua quoted Torah,[29] stating that all Scripture, including Torah, are breathed by God.[30] In every way they upheld the teachings of Torah.[31] Paul defends Torah, saying that it is holy, righteous and good, and that it in no way contradicts the promise. [32] The apostles and Messiah-following communities upheld Sabbath, even after the death and resurrection of the Messiah. They continued in the cycle of meeting corporately with God at the appointed times. [33] When the early believers were accused of defacing Torah, teaching others to disregard Torah, they responded that this was not the case. In fact, since the time of Abraham God's people have ignored Torah, resisted the Spirit and persecuted the prophets sent to bring them back to the truth. [34] Torah was never disregarded by the apostles, but held as the utmost authority, under leading of the Spirit, for bringing people of God back from lawlessness.

> Act 7:51-53
> *You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it.*

Therefore, it is evident that Torah lays the groundwork for our understanding the rest of Scriptures, and additionally, the Messiah, himself, and his apostles faithfully taught and lived out Torah. In light of this we need evaluate, or most likely reevaluate, the implications of all of Scripture for our redemption and for our new life in the Messiah.

In the Scriptures, God calls us to repentance, to turn from our sin and cling to God so that we might live.[35] We are justified by faith in Jesus, the Messiah, not by works of Torah.[36] This is a gift of grace from God and is not something we can earn. There are very strong warnings against trying to earn salvation according to the flesh,[37] or "relying on works of the Torah" for justification.[38] The promises of God for faith in Messiah do not contradict Torah that taught us, as a guardian, about sin.[39] We are released from the curse of the law of sin and death[40] through the blood of the Messiah. Sin no longer rules over us,[41] so that we can be slaves of righteousness and joint heirs in his kingdom.[42] God, in his

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[29] 1 Corinthians 9:8, 10:1-10,
[30] 1 Timothy 3:16
[31] Romans 3:31
[32] Romans 7:12, Galatians 3:21
[33] Acts 13:27, Acts 13:44, Acts 16:13, Acts 20:6, Hebrews 4:9, 1 Corinthians 5:8
[34] Act 7
[35] Matthew 3:2, Matthew 4:17, Matthew 12:41, Matthew 26:28, Luke 5:32, Luke 13:5,
[36] Romans 3:28, 5, Galatians 2:16
[37] "Accepting circumcision", relying on being under the law for justification. See footnote 31.
[38] Galatians 3:10, 5:1-6, Romans 9:32
[39] Galatians 3:21
[40] Romans 7:6, 8:2
[41] Romans 6:14
[42] Romans 6:18, Romans 8:17, Ephesians 3:6

grace, renews our mind as we sacrifice ourselves to Him, so we can be transformed by the Spirit and discern his will for our lives.[43] There is no condemnation for those who walk with Yeshua,[44] because He has fulfilled the righteous requirement of Torah for us.[45] Now, we can confidently enter the presence with God by the blood of Yeshua.[46]

Repentance and faith is demonstrated to be genuine by obedience, not pursuing lawlessness, through good works,[47] bearing good fruit.[48] Faith also requires forgiveness.[49] Faith does not overthrow Torah, but rather upholds it.[50] Genuine faith requires walking the path of righteousness (not lawlessness)[51] in obedience[52] and not making a practice of sin (lawlessness).[53]

> 1 John 3:10
> *By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.*

Loving God with all our heart, mind and strength, and loving our neighbor as ourselves is the fulfillment of Torah.[54] Every command and the essence of the entire Torah demonstrate either a committed love for YHWH or a sacrificial love for mankind. We strive to love one another with a pure heart, encourage one another, and carry one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of the Messiah.[55] Love does not replace Torah, and love will never contradict Torah.[56]

The Spirit of the Living God, the long-awaited promise, was sent to us to enable us to love,[57] and as counselor to bring us into all truth. This is not a concept developed after the death and resurrection of the Messiah. This has been the heart of Torah from the start. It was the promise for which the people had been longing. So when the apostles declare to God's people that the Spirit has come they immediately and completely understand this to be the fulfillment of the covenant promise.[58] The result, the fruit, of following the flesh is in violation of Torah.[59] However, following the Spirit of the Living God

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[43] Romans 12:1-2
[44] Romans 8:1
[45] Romans 8:4
[46] Hebrews 10:19
[47] James 2:14-26
[48] Matthew 3:8-10, Matthew 7:15-20, Matthew 12:33, Matthew 13:23, Matthew 21:43
[49] Luke 17:14, Matthew 6:15, Matthew 18:35
[50] "Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law." Romans 3:31
[51] 1 John 3:10
[52] Hebrews 11:4-31
[53] 1 John 3:4-10
[54] Matthew 22: 34-40, Romans 13:8-10
[55] Galatians 6:2
[56] One cannot love one's neighbor while violating Torah (e.g. murdering one's neighbor).
[57] Romans 5:5
[58] Hebrews 10:16, Zechariah 7:9-12, Jeremiah 31:33
[59] Galatians 5:19-21 are all violations of Torah
"For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God." Romans 8:7-8

will keep us from following the flesh, and will bear fruit that is in keeping with Torah.[60] As promised, the Spirit will write God's Torah on our hearts,[61] transforming hearts of stone into hearts of flesh, to enable us to follow Torah naturally and with great joy.[62]

> Hebrews 10:16
> *This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,*

At the end of times God will return to separate the sheep from the goats,[63] and call his bride dressed in a white robe of righteous works.[64] A parable of ten virgins illustrates that even among those who are anxiously awaiting the return of the Messiah, not all will be invited to the wedding feast. The ones who have prepared the "extra oil", used to sanctify and remember the Sabbath, were the ones truly ready when the Messiah came.[65] Revelation gives a call to action for the perseverance of the ones devoted to God, to follow the commandments of God and hold to their testimony of Yeshua.[66]

In summary, every word breathed from the mouth of YHWH, Scripture in its entirety, is valuable, relevant and in no way obsolete or abolished. Torah is the foundation for the rest of Scripture, revealing God, man and how we are to interact. It is for the covenant people and all who join themselves, in faith, through the redeeming work of the Messiah. Yeshua and the apostles taught and lived all aspects of Torah. These truths have deep implications on how all of Scripture should be interpreted, and ultimately the manner in which we are called to live out our faith in the One True God.

> ZECHARIAH 7:9-12
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> THUS SAYS YHWH *OF HOSTS, "RENDER TRUE JUDGMENTS, SHOW KINDNESS AND MERCY TO ONE ANOTHER, DO NOT OPPRESS THE WIDOW, THE FATHERLESS, THE SOJOURNER, OR THE POOR, AND LET NONE OF YOU DEVISE EVIL AGAINST ANOTHER IN YOUR HEART." BUT THEY REFUSED TO PAY ATTENTION AND TURNED A STUBBORN SHOULDER AND STOPPED THEIR EARS THAT THEY MIGHT NOT HEAR. THEY MADE THEIR HEARTS DIAMOND-HARD LEST THEY SHOULD HEAR THE TORAH AND THE WORDS THAT* YHWH *OF HOSTS HAD SENT BY HIS SPIRIT THROUGH THE FORMER PROPHETS.*

[60] Galatians 5:22-23, Romans 8: 9-14
[61] Jeremiah 31:33
[62] See also Romans 2:14 who by nature did what the law requires since it was written on their hearts.
[63] Matthew 25:31-46
[64] Revelation 19:7-8
[65] Matthew 25:1-13
[66] "Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus." Revelation 12:17
"Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus." Revelation 14:12