

GALATIANS:

EXPLANATION OF DIFFICULT WORDS AND PHRASES — Keys to Understanding the Book of Galatians In a Pro-Torah Light

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the law (Torah):

The Torah of Elohim as contained in the first five books of Scripture (the Penteteuch [Greek] or Chumash [Hebrew]). Defined literally, *Torah* in Hebrew means *teachings, precepts, instructions [in righteousness]*. In the Jewish religion the term *Torah* can have both broader and narrower meanings than just the five books of Moses: (a) the entire Tenach (OT); (b) the Oral Law; (c) or strictly the legal code (non-narrative) parts of the first five books of Moses. The term *the law* is preceded by the definite article *the* in the following places in the book of Galatians: 3:10 (*the law* is found twice in this verse; the first time *the* is absent and the second time it is present); 12,13,19,21 (first usage in the verse contains *the*, second usage contains lacks *the*), 24; 4:21 (the first usage in this verse lacks *the* and the second usage contains *the*); 5:14; 6:2,13 (in all other places *the* is absent in the original Greek and should be crossed out in your Bibles).

law:

In most cases where the term *the law* is found in the English “New” Testaments the definite article *the* is not part of the original Greek (this can be verified by consulting a Greek interlinear), even though the English translators have not italicized it indicating it as a word which has been added by the translators to clarify the meaning of the text (as they have in the KJV and NASB Bibles). The term *law* by itself (without the definite article *the* preceding) refers simply to: (a) any legal code of do’s and don’ts without reference to faith, heart conviction or love; (b) legalism; (c) a perversion of the Torah into a system of do’s and don’ts to earn, merit or keep Elohim’s love and favor and thereby to receive salvation.

under [the] law:

(3:23; 4:4,5,21; 5:18; also Rom. 3:19; 6:14,15; 1 Cor. 9:20,21) *under [the] law* can alternatively be rendered *under subjection to legalism*, according to David Stern. Finally, let's look actually at the Greek word *under* as it is used in the phrase *under law*.

The Complete Jewish Bible (by David Stern) translates the phrase *under [the] law* as *under legalism* (See Stern's *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, p. 344 where he explains why). Stern explains here that the word *under* is the Greek word *upo* which means *controlled by* (as in *under the control of* or *in subjection to sin*, see Rom. 3:9). He reasons that if one is not *controlled by* or *in subjection to* law/legalism, then how is one *under, controlled by* or *in subjection to* grace? In the same sense that we have accepted Yeshua's yoke which is *easy and light to be under* (Mt. 11:28-30), this is in contrast to the yoke of legalism which is not easy and light to be under.

Stern contends that YHWH's people are living *en* (i.e. within the framework of Torah, but not to be *upo* (i.e., *in subjection to*) legalism. YHWH's people are in a faith/trust relationship with him and always have been under grace and “under” Torah (a gracious subjection), but never under legalism (a harsh subjection)

(*Jewish New Testament Commentary*, p. 374).

elements of the world:

(4:3) Refers to the elemental [demonic] demigod spirits that the dualistic hellenized heathens worshipped and who were supposed to live in the spheres above the earth and who controlled life on earth (See Stern's *JNT Commentary*, pp. 556-7).

weak and beggarly elements:

(4:9) Stern says that when Gentiles observe the Torah festivals of YHWH neither out of joy in sharing what YHWH has given to them nor out of spiritual identification with them, but out of fear induced by legalists who have convinced them that unless they do these things, YHWH will not accept them, then they are not obeying the Torah but subjugating themselves to legalism; and legalism is just another species of those *weak and miserable elemental [demonic] spirits* and no better than the idols they left behind (*JNTC*, p. 557).

under a schoolmaster:

Stern in his *Complete Jewish Bible* translates schoolmaster as *custodian*. He explains why in his *JNT Commentary* (p. 553). The word translated as *schoolmaster* in the *KJV* and other English Bibles is the Greek word *paidagogos* which literally means *boy-leader*. In ancient Greece a *paidagogos* was a slave who conducted a boy to and from school and was not actually the school teacher. You can verify this definition in *Webster's* dictionary. As languages evolve words change in meanings. Therefore, a secondary modern meaning of *pedagogue* is a *teacher* or *schoolmaster* and *pedagogy* is *the science of teaching*. Stern explains that the ancient Greek *paidagogos* had no teaching function and although the Torah had as one of its goals the leading of Jewish people to the Messiah, as Paul explicitly states at Romans 10:4, that is not the import of the present verse. The *paidagogos* actually would have been a harsh disciplinarian for the Jewish people, providing some protection but generally making the Jewish person aware of many transgressions so that Jews might turn from legalistic rule-following and be declared righteous legally on the basis of faith and being faithful to Yeshua, whose trusting faithfulness to God the Father purchased our salvation.

but:

(2:11) Should be *furthermore, moreover*, not *but*, as *in opposition to*.

the Jews' religion:

(1:13,14) Referring to non-Messianic Judaism, not to Messianic, Torah-keeping Jews.

Hagar Versus Sarah:

(4:22-31) Here we see a Jewish midrash which is an in-depth biblical lesson in story form. Often it involves interpreting the Tanach through allegorical and not literal interpretation. In this passage we see that Abraham tried to obtain YHWH's promises through works by working out YHWH's plans and purposes for his life through his own effort. As a result, he took matters into his own hands (works) and conceived Ishmael through Hagar instead of waiting in faith on YHWH to bring him a son through Sarah.

Conversely, Isaac represents obtaining YHWH's grace and favor (salvation) through faith and not works. Paul here draws a parallel between Hagar (who represents a works or legalistic approach to earning YHWH's favor) and the Torah-commandments given on Mt. Sinai. If one hopes to achieve YHWH's favor by the legalistic works of perfectly keeping all of the Torah-commandments then one is sure to fall short and miss the mark even as Abraham did in attempting to obtain a son of promise through Hagar.

This midrash underscores the fact that the Mosaic or Sinaitic Covenant was not a covenant of salvation. This was the purpose of the Abrahamic Covenant as Ariel Berkowitz so clearly points out in his book *Take Hold* (pp. 23-25). He says that the Abrahamic Covenant was a covenant strictly of grace which Abraham did not earn, merit or deserve, yet he received the promises and blessings of offspring, land and nations. Berkowitz goes on to write that if the Abrahamic Covenant was the covenant of promise then the

Mosaic Covenant was the covenant of dwelling in that promise. Participation in the covenant of Sinai did not secure the promises given as a grace gift by YHWH to Abraham and his descendants. Rather, the Torah-covenant was given to keep the people of Israel in YHWH's path of righteousness so that the promises YHWH made to Abraham and his descendants might come to fruition upon Israel. The Torah-covenant provided a means for Israel to fulfil it's YHWH-ordained destiny, and it provide d a legal standard so necessary to an orderly society (*ibid.*).

A QUICK OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF GALATIANS:

Here is a helpful study on the book of Galatians from Daniel Rendelman (which came to me via e-mail e-group transmission):

“Friends, this is not the message of the book of Galatians Study Bible, the central theme of this letter is ‘justification by grace through faith.’

“Rav Shaul uses Galatians chapters 1 and 2 to defend the good news. Chapters 3 and 4 are written to define the good news and in chapters 5 and 6 Shaul shows followers how to display the Gospel. Paul begins the letter detailing his own conversion through the power and message of the Moshiach (Hebrew for Messiah).

“Apparently, these false teachers brought a different message than Rav Shaul so he wanted to write and expose their impure motives (6:12 & 13). These false teachers espoused the doctrine that one must be circumcised and follow the Torah to be born again. But, Shaul told the Messianic Community ‘do not frustrate the grace of Elohim: for if righteousness comes by the law, then Messiah is dead in vain.’ The Law/Torah is not to be followed for salvation through performance. Follow the Torah for sanctification yes, but for salvation no.

“Though salvation is not earned by our earnest following of Yahweh's commandments the Torah is still to be obeyed. Yeshua said in Matthew 5:17 & 18 ‘Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no way pass from the law.’ Romans says the Torah is ‘holy, righteous, and good.’

“And Isaiah 40:8 says, ‘The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the Torah of our Elohim shall stand forever.’

“The Torah was given by Yahweh as a way of life. Even in Galatians we are called to follow it in this manner. Galatians 5:13 & 14, ‘For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love to serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.’ Here love is esteemed as the way to follow the Torah.

“Galatians 6:2 goes even farther to prove this point, ‘Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.’ By walking in love, through bearing the burdens of our neighbor we are walking out Torah. For it is in the Torah, in Leviticus 18:18, “thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” is first found.

“The freedom spoken of throughout the book of Galatians is in reference to the freedom mankind has been given to walk out the Torah without the bondage of man's traditions and the fear of evading ones eternity. ‘Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree,’ Galatians 3:13. This verse shows that Yeshua freed us from the curse quoted in Galatians 3:10, ‘For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.’ The curse that Yeshua took upon Himself enables believers to walk out the commands of the whole Bible without the fear of being cursed for not fulfilling the instructions completely. Through His life and sacrifice He did not bring the Torah to an end, rather He modeled how we as followers should live the Torah.

“In conclusion, the key to understanding the book of Galatians rests in the knowledge of the letter's purpose. The purpose of this epistle was to show that justification or right standing in Yahweh's eyes comes through faith and not through perverting the Torah into legalism. Galatians 3:11, ‘But no man is justified by the law in the sight of Yahweh, it is evident: for, the just shall live by faith.’”