Torah: What Is It?

BMC Teens Study Series

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Torah: What is it?

- The latest research shows that the Hebrew word ‘Torah’ likely comes from an Akkadian root which means “to stretch out the finger or hand to point out a route.” When associated with the LORD, then, it points out the way of the LORD!
- The word can also be translated ‘instruction’ or ‘directive’, among other possibilities.
- It’s a profoundly positive and foundational word, of which David said: “Oh how I love your Torah, all day long it is my meditation” (Psalm 119:97; Cf. 119:100; Cf. 19)
‘Torah’: Translated as ‘Law’

- How did the word ‘Torah’ ever get reduced to the word ‘Law’?
- Is all ‘Torah’ law?
- Is ‘law’ a positive concept?
- Is following the ‘law’ legalism?
- Only following the letter of the law apart from the spirit of the law or without empowerment could ever be referred to as legalism.
- In the context of the New Covenant (see Jer 31:31-34) is Torah or law done away with? See Matthew 5:17-18 and explain “not one jot or tittle shall pass away from the Torah”
- Absolutely not!!! It’s placed in the deepest inward part and written on the heart of God’s covenant people (Jer 31:33)
Torah as Foundation of Scripture

- Which 5 Books, in which order, comprise the Torah of Scripture?
- B’resheet “In the Beginning” (Genesis)
- Sh’mot “Names” (Exodus)
- Vayikra “And He called” (Leviticus)
- B’midbar “In the wilderness” (Numbers)
- D’varim “Words” (Deuteronomy)
- The Torah’s key summational statement: Deut 30
Laws: What? Why?

- What are laws?
- Why are they necessary?
- What are some examples of laws the police expect us to follow? Why?
- Are most laws ultimately in our best interest?
- What would likely happen if there were no laws?
- Discuss Matt 24:12; 1 John 3:4
God's Laws for Israel: The Heart

- The 10 Commandments
- Where are they found?
- What key context precedes them in Exodus 19?
  - Exo 19:4-5 (rescue; treasured possession)
  - Exo 19:6 (kingdom of priests; holy/unique nation)
  - The Sinai experience
- What are the 10 commandments?
- God’s Mitzvot for Life in the Covenant!
- Shemot (Exodus) 20:1-20 (read together); Cf. Deut 5, esp. 5:33.
The 10 Commandments
What are the purposes of the 10?

- To maintain awe of God (discuss ‘awe’)
- To give God top priority in life (discuss ‘idolatry’)
- To profoundly observe/experience Shabbat (to which ~ 1/3 of the Decalogue is devoted)
- To treat others with love and respect (how many of 10?)
- To enable Israel to be God’s treasured possession and kingship of priests & holy (unique) nation
- To covet the things of space, not time (See the next few slides paraphrased from Heschel’s *The Sabbath, 90-101*)
Heschel on Coveting Time

- Only the commandment on not coveting is repeated twice (see Exodus 20:17)
- Heschel thinks we must discover the relationship between the commandment not to covet/not to covet and the commandment to remember the Sabbath
- Hebrew observation: “Remember” = qal infinitive absolute: “observe as an ongoing covenontal priority” the Shabbat
- He goes so far as to say: What we are depends on what Shabbat is to us! (p. 89)
Heschel on Coveting Time

- Judaism tries to foster the vision of life as a pilgrimage to the seventh day; the longing for Shabbat all days of the week which is a form of longing for the eternal Shabbat all the days of our lives. It seeks to displace the coveting of things in space for coveting the things in time, teaching humanity to covet the seventh day all days of the week. God Himself coveted that day, He called it Hemdat Yamim, a day to be coveted (an Aramaic paraphrase of Genesis 2:2 “God completed on the 7th day” reads “God coveted the 7th day”). It is as if the command: Do not covet things of space, were correlated with the unspoken word: Do covet things of time.
Heschel on Coveting Time

- Everyone will admit that the Grand Canyon is more awe-inspiring than a trench. But how many of us have a similar sense of discretion for the value of time?
- Time has become a measuring device to us, rather than a realm in which we abide/live.
- A special consciousness is required to recognize the ultimate significance of time.
- ‘Temporary’ is the key attribute associated with the things of space. Time is beyond past, present, and future!
Heschel on Coveting Time

- Exodus 19:1 says “...on this day they came into the wilderness of Sinai.” This can only mean that the day of giving the Torah can never become past. Biblical remembrance requires that every day be as if the day Torah was given.
- Time is our greatest challenge. Time has independent ultimate significance; it is of more majesty and more provocative of awe than [the Grand Canyon] or even a sky studded with stars.
- Time is the presence of God in the world of space.
- To covet time is to covet God Himself!!!
The Testimony of a Gamer

Tuesday morning’s testimony of a transformed gamer who stated that he has entered the kingship of God for real, and how he uses his time is now under the control of the Ruach HaKodesh.