

followingmessiah.org

"Proclaiming the Kingdom from Genesis to Revelation to all Nations"

TORAH – What Does This Hebrew Word Mean?



The most misunderstood word in the Bible is the Hebrew word *TORAH*. I grew up in the church, and as far back as I remember, God's "Law" (Heb. *TORAH*) was presented as something negative, pejorative and as some form of "bondage" and "legalism." However, after doing years of research on the Bible, Jewish and early Christian history and writings, I've discovered that the common view of the *TORAH* ("Law") is based on many erroneous assumptions and interpretations.

WHAT IS “TORAH“?

The Hebrew word **TORAH** does **NOT** mean “Law” as it is usually translated in English translations of the Bible, but it actually means “Instruction, Teaching, Guidance or Directives.” Again, in none of its meanings does it have the meaning of “law.” But due to it being translated as “law,” which has very negative connotations in English, it has been wrongly perceived as “legalism.”

This word is used throughout most of the Old Testament to specifically refer to the revelation that God handed down to Moses beginning on Mt. Sinai. Moses completed the writing of the first five books of the Bible before the people entered into the Promised Land under Joshua.

THE SPECTRUM OF TORAH

The word “Torah” has a wide spectrum of meaning. It can refer to one verse, a selection of verses, a chapter, a selection of chapters, a book, the first five books, the whole Old Testament, the whole New Testament, or the whole Bible.

In Judaism, the word spectrum has an even wider spectrum of meaning. It also includes one or more of the Oral traditions, one or more tractates, or the whole Oral Law. The Oral Law came into existence between the Old and New Testaments.

IF THE HEBREW WORD TORAH DOES NOT MEAN “LAW,” THEN WHY IS IT TRANSLATED AS “LAW” IN OUR BIBLES?

The word **TORAH** is translated in our English Bibles as “Law,” because the word “Law” is not based on the Hebrew at all, but upon the Greek and Latin versions of the Bible. The Greek word that was used to translate **TORAH** is *nomos* (“law”), and the Latin word chosen to translate the Greek word *nomos* was *lex* (“the law”). A valid point brought out by the online article “The Written Law – Torah” on the Jewishvirtuallibrary.org website states:

The Septuagint [Greek translation of the Old Testament] rendered the Hebrew Torah by the Greek nomos (“law”), probably in the sense of a living network of traditions and customs of a people. The designation of the Torah by nomos, and by its Latin successor lex (whence, “the Law”), has historically given rise to the misunderstanding that Torah means legalism.

This original Greek translation of the **PENTATEUCH** or **TORAH** [called the Alexandrian Septuagint] was done by 70 Jewish Scholars in 282 B.C.E., or 282 years before the conception and birth of the Messiah Jesus (Heb. *Yeshua*). It was commissioned and paid for by Ptolemy

Soter, the head of the Ptolemaic Empire in Egypt, who had built the famed “Library of Alexandria, Egypt,” and it was his desire to fill His library with writings from around the world, including a Greek copy of Israel’s **TORAH**, since Koine Greek was the common language of Alexandria, and the rest of the Greek and later Roman empires.

Once the Greek translation of the **TORAH** (or **PENTATEUCH**) was completed, the rest of the translation of the Old Testament then followed. There’s substantial archaeological proof in discovered parchments and fragments to place the completion date of the Greek Alexandrian translation of the entire Old Testament at 246 B.C.E. It was, therefore, **NOT** done by Christians in the 2nd-4th centuries, C.E., as I’ve seen erroneously taught online by some.

WHY WAS THE GREEK WORD **NOMOS** CHOSEN TO TRANSLATE **TORAH**?

The reason the 70 Jewish scholars, in the 3rd century B.C.E., chose the Greek word *nomos* (“law”) to translate the Hebrew word **TORAH** (“Teaching/Instruction”) was not a mistake nor was it mistranslated, nor was it a conspiracy to hide the truth, as I’ve heard some try to argue, but it was done to **GUARD** and **PROTECT** the **TORAH** from misuse and abuse by a heretical sect.

During the time period between the Old Testament (Heb. *Tanakh*) and the New Testament (Heb. *B’rit Chadasha*), there was a religious heretical and eclectic movement known as **Gnosticism** (from Ancient Greek: γνωστικός *gnostikos*, “having knowledge”, from γνῶσις *gnōsis*, “knowledge”). According to the article “The Gnostic World View: A Brief Summary of Gnosticism,” **Gnosticism** taught that –

Humans are caught in a predicament consisting of physical existence combined with ignorance of their true origins, their essential nature and their ultimate destiny. (The Gnosis Archive, gnosis.org).

The source, according to *Gnostics*, of humanity’s ills and problems is not sin, but ignorance.

The solution for humanity comes when people, with the help of special teachers (known as “Messengers of the Light”), come to the intuitive knowledge (Gk. *gnosis*) that within each of us is “the True God” (which was not the God of the Bible, for He was seen by the *Gnostics* as a lower demiurge.) According to *Gnostics*,

Gnostics do not look to salvation from sin (original or other), but rather from the ignorance of which sin is a consequence. Ignorance — whereby is meant ignorance of spiritual realities — is dispelled only by Gnosis, and the decisive revelation of Gnosis is brought by the Messengers of Light, especially by Christ, the Logos of the True God. It is not by His suffering and death but by His life of teaching and His establishing of mysteries that Christ has performed His work of salvation. (“The Gnostic World View”}

This inner intuitive revelation results in “salvation.” *Gnostics* came to this conclusion by combining many different ideas from many different religions (i.e., “eclecticism”). The Jews did not want the **TORAH** (“God’s Teachings/Instructions”) to be used in any way by this heretical group, so instead of using the Greek word **DIDASKALIA** (“teaching”), which would

have been an accurate Greek equivalent to *TORAH*, but at the same time, it would've lended itself to Gnostic theology, so Jewish scholars chose instead the Greek word *NOMOS* ("law") since there were "laws" in the *TORAH*, although "law" was not its actual meaning.

Although the Jewish scholars of the 3rd century, B.C.E., tried to frustrate Gnostic use of the *TORAH*, the Gnostics of the 3rd century, C.E., combined their beliefs with Christian doctrine to formulate such writings as "The Gospel of Judas," "The Gospel of Mary Magdalene," and the "The Gospel of Thomas." These writings and other Gnostic writings were used as the basis for the novel and later film, *The DaVinci Code*. It is unfortunate that there were those who were fooled by this ancient heresy because of their unfamiliarity with the teachings of the New Testament.

Return to the Top

© 2022 FOLLOWINGMESSIAH.ORG

CREATE A FREE WEBSITE OR BLOG AT WORDPRESS.COM. DO NOT SELL MY PERSONAL INFORMATION