



What Is the Torah?

Torah as instruction, covenant, foundation, and the ancient path

Finding the Ancient Path

What does “Torah” mean?

FOUNDATIONAL DEFINITION

- Torah means “instruction” or “teaching.”
- In its basic biblical sense: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.
- Also called the five books of Moses or the Pentateuch.
- The teaching cautions against treating the entire Old Testament as though it were all “the law.”

More than rules and regulations

TORAH REVEALS GOD'S WAYS

- The teaching presents Torah as an expression of God's character and values.
- At Sinai, God's instructions are framed as covenant vows between God and Israel.
- Obedience is therefore relational and covenantal, not merely legal.
- Torah is described as foundational to understanding the rest of Scripture.

Themes across the five books

GENESIS → DEUTERONOMY

- Genesis — creation, Babel, patriarchs, Joseph, and the beginnings of Israel's story.
- Exodus — deliverance from Egypt, Moses, Passover, the sea, Sinai, and covenant.
- Leviticus — holiness, offerings, priesthood, feasts, food instructions, and God's set-apart ways.
- Numbers — community order, compassion, justice, wilderness life, and warfare.
- Deuteronomy — remembrance, rebellion, promised land, blessings and curses, and covenant renewal.

The prophets call God's people back

RETURN, REPENT, WALK

- The teaching connects sin with lawlessness and violation of God's instruction.
- Isaiah calls Jacob to walk in the light of YHWH.
- Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, and Malachi repeatedly call God's people to return and repent.
- The prophetic pattern is presented as a return to God's ways—the ancient path.

David and Paul delight in God's law

A HEART POSTURE

- Psalm 119 portrays David seeking God, treasuring His word, and delighting in His Torah.
- Romans 7:22: Paul says he delights in the law of God in his inner being.
- Romans 3:31: faith does not overthrow the law; Paul says, “we uphold the law.”
- The teaching asks whether believers today share that same posture toward God's instruction.

Yeshua: “I have not come to abolish”

MATTHEW 5:17-20

- Yeshua explicitly says He did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets.
- The teaching interprets “fulfill” as faithful obedience and completion of His mission, not abolition.
- He warns against relaxing even the least commandments and teaching others to do so.
- The teaching connects heaven and earth imagery with the continuing force of God's instruction.

Commandment or tradition?

MARK 7

- Yeshua rebukes religious leaders for elevating human tradition over God's commandment.
- The issue is not zeal for Torah, but replacing Scripture with added rules and traditions.
- The teaching applies this warning beyond first-century Judaism: churches can create non-scriptural traditions too.
- The test is Scripture itself—not inherited custom.

The Talmud is not the Torah

WRITTEN TORAH VS. ORAL TRADITION

- The teaching describes the Talmud/oral law as rabbinic commentary, legal interpretation, and later tradition.
- Some commentary may be useful, but it is not identical to the written Torah.
- Human interpretation must never be allowed to void or replace God's Word.
- Hold to the way and the ancient path rather than exchanging Scripture for tradition.

Key Scriptures

STUDY THESE PASSAGES

- Exodus 20
- Proverbs 6:23
- Psalm 119:10-11, 18, 34-35
- Isaiah 2:5
- Jeremiah 15:19
- Ezekiel 18:30
- Hosea 14:1
- Malachi 3:7

Key Scriptures — continued

STUDY THESE PASSAGES

- 1 John 3:4
- Romans 7:22
- Romans 3:31
- Matthew 5:17-20
- Psalm 148:5-6
- Mark 7:6-13

Key Takeaways

WHAT TO REMEMBER

- Torah means instruction or teaching, not merely “law” in a narrow legal sense.
- The Torah is the five books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.
- The teaching presents Torah as an expression of God's character, values, covenant, and way.
- Torah provides the foundational framework for understanding the rest of Scripture.
- The prophets repeatedly call Israel and Judah to return from sin and back to God's instructions.

Key Takeaways — continued

WHAT TO REMEMBER

- David delights in God's Torah, and Paul likewise says he delights in and upholds God's law.
- Matthew 5:17-20 is presented as a direct rejection of the idea that Yeshua abolished the Torah.
- Believers should distinguish Scripture itself from traditions or interpretations that add to or replace it.
- The Talmud is presented as later oral/rabbinic commentary and tradition, not the written Torah itself.
- The central invitation is to return to the ancient path: God's revealed instructions rather than human tradition.

Closing challenge

FINDING THE ANCIENT PATH

- Know what Torah actually is.
- Read it as God's instruction and revelation of His ways.
- Test religious traditions against Scripture.
- Follow the biblical pattern of repentance, return, and obedience.
- Let Scripture—not inherited assumptions—define the ancient path.