

What Is the Torah?

Finding the Ancient Path • Study Guide

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kBR-QhAmLqk>

Quick Answer

Torah means “instruction” or “teaching.” In its basic biblical sense, it refers to the five books of Moses—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. This teaching presents Torah as the foundation of Scripture and as an expression of God's character, covenant, and instructions for His people.

Teaching Summary

This teaching answers the foundational question, “What is the Torah?” It explains Torah first as instruction or teaching and identifies it with the five books of Moses—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The teaching presents Torah not merely as a list of rules, but as an expression of God's character, values, covenant, and way of life. It then traces the role of Torah through the prophets, David, Paul, and Yeshua, arguing that Scripture repeatedly calls God's people back to His commandments rather than away from them. The teaching closes by distinguishing the written Torah from later rabbinic traditions and urging believers to hold to Scripture rather than traditions that add to or replace God's commands.

Learning Objectives

- Define Torah in the context used by the teaching.
- Identify the major themes of the five books of Moses.
- Trace the teaching's argument through the prophets, David, Paul, and Yeshua.
- Distinguish written Torah from later human traditions.
- Apply the teaching's call to return to Scripture and the ancient path.

Teaching Outline

1. Why Ask “What Is the Torah?”

The term Torah is increasingly heard, yet many believers are unsure what it means. The teaching begins by defining the term and establishing why the subject matters.

2. What Is the Torah?

Torah means instruction or teaching and, in its basic form, refers to the five books of Moses. The teaching distinguishes Torah from the entire Old Testament and emphasizes that God's instructions reveal His character and covenant values.

3. Themes of the Five Books

Genesis introduces creation and the patriarchs; Exodus centers on deliverance, covenant, and Sinai; Leviticus develops holiness, offerings, priesthood, feasts, and food instructions; Numbers includes community order and Israel's wilderness experience; Deuteronomy rehearses covenant, rebellion, blessings, curses, and renewed instruction.

4. The Prophets Call Israel Back

The prophets are presented as repeatedly calling Israel and Judah to repent from sin and return to God's commandments, His light, His ordinances, and His ways.

5. David and Paul Delight in Torah

Psalms 119 portrays David delighting in God's commandments. Romans 7 and Romans 3 are used to show Paul likewise delighting in and upholding God's law.

6. Yeshua and Matthew 5

Matthew 5:17-20 is central to the teaching's argument: Yeshua did not come to abolish the Law or Prophets. The teaching connects this with obedience, fulfillment, heaven and earth, and the warning against relaxing commandments.

7. Torah vs. Traditions of Men

Mark 7 is used to warn against elevating human traditions over God's commandments. The teaching distinguishes written Torah from the Talmud/oral law and applies the same warning to later Christian traditions.

Key Scriptures

- **Exodus 20:** The Ten Commandments and the covenant setting at Sinai.
- **Proverbs 6:23:** The commandment is a lamp and the Torah/law is light.
- **Psalms 119:10-11, 18, 34-35:** David seeks God wholeheartedly, treasures His word, and delights in His Torah.
- **Isaiah 2:5:** A call for the house of Jacob to walk in the light of YHWH.
- **Jeremiah 15:19:** A prophetic call to return and be restored.
- **Ezekiel 18:30:** Repent and turn from transgressions.
- **Hosea 14:1:** Israel is called to return to YHWH after stumbling in iniquity.
- **Malachi 3:7:** Return to YHWH after departing from His ordinances.
- **1 John 3:4:** Sin is identified with lawlessness.
- **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."

- **Matthew 5:17-20:** Yeshua says He did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets.
- **Psalms 148:5-6:** Creation is established by God's decree.
- **Mark 7:6-13:** Yeshua rebukes traditions that nullify the commandment and word of God.

Key Takeaways

- 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.
- 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.

Discussion & Study Questions

1. How does defining Torah as “instruction” or “teaching” change the way you think about it?
2. Why does the teaching describe Torah as an expression of God's character and values?
3. How do the prophets use the concepts of sin, repentance, and return in relation to Torah?
4. What do Psalm 119 and Romans 7 reveal about David's and Paul's attitudes toward God's law?
5. How does the teaching interpret Matthew 5:17-20?
6. What distinction does the teaching make between Torah and Talmud?
7. Where can religious tradition begin to replace or override the plain teaching of Scripture?
8. What would it look like practically to “walk in the ancient path” in your own study and obedience?

Personal Study

Read Genesis through Deuteronomy with one question in mind: What does each passage reveal about God's character, His covenant, His values, and the way He calls His people to live?

Closing Reflection

The teaching's central challenge is not simply to know what Torah is, but to test inherited traditions against Scripture and to seek the ancient path revealed in God's Word.