

Discipleship:
An
Introduction to
Systematic Theology and
Apologetics

The Doctrines of Redemption: The Law

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The Law

- In the NT “The Law” is a simplistic translation of *Torah*.
- In its narrowest sense, Torah is the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, sometimes called the Pentateuch or the Five Books of Moses.
- In its broadest sense, Torah is the entire body of Jewish teachings.
- In Hebrew *Torah* is derived from a root word (*yārāh*) referring to shooting an arrow at a target or to point, or to teach, or to lay a foundation. It is more about hand leading than legalism. (“y” is a picture of a hand)
 - for all have sinned and fall short (**harmartanō in Greek**) of the glory of God (Romans 3:23) is also an illusion to archery in falling short of the target.

The Law

- **Torah might be better understood as the instruction of God revealed through Moses.**
- **Proverbs 29:18, Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law.**

The Law

- **The Oral Law is a legal commentary on the Torah, explaining how its commandments are to be carried out.**

Example 1: Remember the Sabbath day to make it holy" (Exodus 20:8).

- The written Torah has injunctions against lighting a fire, going away from one's dwelling, cutting down a tree, plowing and harvesting on the Sabbath.
- **Is that enough?** The Sabbath rituals that are most commonly associated with holiness - lighting of candles, reciting the *Kiddush**, and the weekly Torah portion, are found only in the Oral Law.

*"Blessed are you, O Lord our God, who has created the fruit of the vine. Blessed are you O Lord our God, who has sustained us and enabled us to reach this season."

The Law

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- Example 2: *The Shema*

"**Hear, O Israel**: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall **bind** them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as **frontlets** between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)

The Law

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- Example 2: *The Shema*
- **Bind what?** The Torah doesn't say. "And they shall be for frontlets between your eyes." **What are frontlets?** The Hebrew word for frontlets, *totafot* is used three times in the Torah — always in this context (Exodus 13:16; Deuteronomy 6:8 and 11:18)*
- Only in the Oral Law do we learn that what a Jewish male should bind upon his hand and between his eyes are *tefillin* (phylacteries).
- * **And it shall be to you as a sign on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the law of the LORD may be in your mouth.** (Exodus 13:9)

The Law

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- ***Tefillin*** are two small black cubic boxes with black straps attached to them; Jewish men are required to place one box on their head and tie the other one on their arm each weekday morning. ***Tefillin*** are biblical in origin, and are commanded within the context of several laws outlining a Jew's relationship to God.
You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. (Deuteronomy 6:5-8).
- Certain Jewish groups, including the Sadducees, understood the last verse to be figurative; namely one should always be preoccupied with words of Torah, as if they were in front of one's eyes. The Pharisees took the text literally; the words of the Torah are to be inscribed on a scroll and placed directly between one's eyes and on one's arm. ***Tefillin*** are wrapped around the arm seven times, and the straps on the head are adjusted so they fit snugly.

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- **The text that is inserted inside the two boxes of *Tefillin* is hand-written by a scribe, and consists of the four sets of biblical verses in which *Tefillin* are commanded** (Exodus 13:1-10, 11-16; Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 11:13-21). **Because each pair of *Tefillin* is hand-written and hand-crafted, it is relatively expensive, and a well-made pair costs several hundred dollars today.**
- ***Tefillin* is commonly translated as "phylacteries." It is virtually unheard of that a Jew who puts on *Tefillin* will call them "phylacteries."**
- **Putting on *Tefillin* is the first *mitzvah* assumed by a Jewish male upon his Bar Mitzvah. Usually, boys start wearing them one to two months before their thirteenth birthday, but do not recite a blessing. After his Bar Mitzvah a specific blessing, "Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to put on *Tefillin*, " is recited whenever they are worn.**
- ***Tefillin* are worn each weekday morning, but not on the Sabbath or on most Jewish holidays.**

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- Example 3:

An Oral Law was needed to mitigate certain categorical Torah laws that would have caused grave problems if carried out literally. The Written Law, for example, demands an "eye for an eye" (Exodus 21:24).

Did this imply that if one person accidentally blinded another, he should be blinded in return? That seems to be the Torah's wish. But the Oral Law explains that the verse must be understood as requiring monetary compensation: the *value* of an eye is what must be paid.

The Law

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- Following the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70, the oral law was compiled and written down in a document called the *Mishnah*.
- Over the next few centuries, additional commentaries elaborating on the Mishnah were written down in Jerusalem and Babylon. These additional commentaries are known as the *Gemara*.
- The *Gemara* and the *Mishnah* together are known as the *Talmud*. This was completed in the 5th century A.D.
- There are two Talmuds: the Jerusalem Talmud and the Babylonian Talmud. The Babylonian Talmud is more comprehensive and organized around 63 topics. It is the one most people mean if they just say "the Talmud" without specifying which one.

Christ Came to Fulfill the Law

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:17-20)

The Law

- **Covenant and Law are not the same. The promise of a covenant is realized by fulfilling the requirements (Law) of the Covenant.**

To give a human example, brothers: even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified. Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “And to offsprings,” referring to many, but referring to one, “And to your offspring,” who is Christ. This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise. (Galatians 3:15-18)

The Law

- **The Law tells us what to do but does not enable us to do it.**

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:8-10)

- **The Gospel enables us to do what the Law commands!**

Run John run the Law commands

But gives me neither feet nor hands.

Far better news the Gospel brings.

It bids me fly and gives me wings.

(John Bunyan)