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The Torah Became our Guardian to Lead Us to Messiah

3: 19-25

The Torah became our guardian to lead us to Messiah DIG: In what sense was the Torah temporary? What was the Torah able to do for people? What was it unable to do? What can Messiah do for sinners that the Torah cannot do? How would trying to obey the Torah make a person more willing to receive Yeshua Messiah? How is trying to keep all 613 commandments of the Torah like being held under guard? How does Messiah change all that? What is a paidagogos, and how did Paul use it as an analogy to the Torah?

REFLECT: What does all this discussion of the Torah have to do with you? When are you most tempted to look to your own efforts to make yourself acceptable to God? Is the Torah still valid today? In what sense? What should be your attitude toward Torah? How has the Word of God kept you under protective custody until you could fully understand it? Who was the human mediator that introduced you to Messiah?

Paul compares the Torah and Jewish status to a paidagogos, a guardian entrusted with the care and supervision of a child.

An indignant Judaizer (**to see link click [Ag - Who Were the Judaizers?](#)**) was sure to respond with objections to **Paul's** insistence that **the Torah** would not give **the Ruach ha-Kodesh (3:1-5)**; could not bring **justification (3:6-9)**; could not alter the permanence of **faith (3:15-18)**; but does bring **a curse (3:10-12)**.⁹⁰ In light of **Paul's** convincing arguments up to this point, the obvious question would be **why then** were **the 613 commandments of the Torah added to the promise** (see **[Bl - The Promises were Spoken to Abraham and to his Seed](#)**)? If salvation has always been by **faith** and never by deeds, and if **the covenant of promise to Abraham** was fulfilled in **Yeshua Messiah**, what purpose did **the Torah** serve?

Paul's answer was direct and sobering: **It was added** to define and condemn **sin, because of transgressions** (Greek: *parabasis*, meaning *to choose to sin, to intentionally and willfully*

disobey) **until the Seed [Yeshua] would come - to whom the promise had been made (3:19a).** Unless people realized they were living in violation of **the 613 commandments of the Torah** and therefore under divine judgment, they saw no reason to be saved when **Yeshua would come.** Grace would be meaningless to a person who does not realize he or she was lost. Such a one would see no need of forgiveness by **God** if they do not know they had offended **Him** in the first place. Such a person would see no need to seek **God's** mercy if they were unaware that they were under **God's** wrath.⁹¹

First, the purpose of the 613 commandments of Moshe was not to save, but to make us aware of our sin as clearly as possible. Consequently, you don't have to wonder if you have sinned or not. Start reading the Torah and it won't take you very long to discover that you have already sinned.

The Law spiritually is like a mirror physically. When you look into a mirror you may see that your hair is messed up, or that your shirt is on backwards, or that you look fat. But looking into the mirror doesn't solve the problem, it only tells you that there is a problem. That's what the 613 commandments of Moses do. The Law doesn't fix the problem . . . the Law can't save us. The Law only points to a need for a savior.

Secondly, according to Romans 7, the purpose of Torah was to make us to sin more. Our sin nature must have a base of operation. Torah said, "You shall not," and our sin nature says, "Oh, yes I will."

Thirdly, Paul uses the word, "until." This shows that obedience to the 613 commandments was temporary. While the Abrahamic Covenant was eternal, obedience to the 613 commandments of Moshe was only temporary.

Fourthly, until "the Seed would come." Once Messiah had paid the price for disobeying the 613 commandments of Moses, the Dispensation of Torah ceased. It was temporary to begin with, but it ended with the Dispensation of Grace.

How was **the Torah** given? **It was handed-down through angels (Acts 7:53) by the hand of a human mediator, Moshe (3:19b).** An often heard **Jewish** objection to the B'rit Chadashah teaching that **Jews** don't need **Yeshua** because they don't need **a mediator** between themselves and **God**. This verse refutes the claim with its reminder that **Moshe** himself served as such a mediator - as, for that matter, did the priests and the prophets (**Hebrews 8:6, 10:19-21; First Timothy 2:5; Exodus 20:19; Deuteronomy 5:2 and 5).**

Therefore, the giving of **the Torah through angels** wasn't direct. It wasn't from **ADONAI** to **Isra'el**. It went from **God**, to **angels**, to **Moses**, to **Isra'el**. But if you go back to where **the Torah** was given in **Exodus** you don't find any mention of **angels**. It would appear that **YHVH** was speaking directly to **Moses**. **However, while much of Jewish tradition is unfounded, some aspects of Jewish tradition are true - like the giving of the Torah by the hands of angles.** But three times in the B'rit Chadashah we find **Torah** being given by **angels** (here; **Acts 7:53** and **Hebrews 2:2**). **But that truth was already contained in rabbinical writings before the B'rit Chadashah came into existence. There are many things of that nature that are true in Jewish tradition and confirmed in the writings of the B'rit Chadashah. This is just one example.**

Now, while **the Torah** came through several mediators, **God, angles, Moses** and **Isra'el**, the **Abrahamic** Covenant came through just one **mediator**. The means by which covenants were ratified in the ancient world was that you would kill animals and then cut them in half, putting the halves in two rows opposite of each other. The two parties making a covenant with each other would walk together between the halves of the animals. Then the covenant was binding for both parties. But something different happened with the signing of the **Abrahamic** Covenant in **Genesis 15**. The animals were killed, cut up and placed in the ancient tradition. But **Ha'Shem** and **Abraham** didn't walk through the pieces of the animals together because **God** put **Abraham** to sleep. **YHVH** alone walked through the pieces of the animals, pointing to the fact that the covenant was binding to **ADONAI** alone. Regardless of what **Abraham** would do, **the LORD** was going to keep **His** end of **the promise**. **Now an intermediary is not for one party alone - but God is one (3:20).**

Eventually, the Dispensation of **Torah** ended. **It** did not bring justification. If it were possible to be justified by **legalism**, then **Messiah** died for nothing. The very fact that it was impossible to perfectly obey **the 613 commandments of Moses** made **Christ's** death necessary. **The Torah** did not justify. That wasn't its purpose anyway (see **four purposes** above).⁹² **Then, Paul** asked rhetorically: **Are the 613 commandments of the Torah against the promises of God? Do they contradict each other? Do they say different things? Does legalism offer life through deeds, while the unconditional promises to Abraham offer life through faith? May it never be! For if a commandment had been given that could impart life, certainly righteousness would have been based on the 613 commandments of the Torah (3:21).**

But such a thing is unimaginable. **Instead, the Scripture had locked up** (Greek: *phroureo*, meaning *to keep under lock and key*) **the whole world under sin** (Greek: *upo nomon*, meaning *under something that is not the Torah but a perversion of it, specifically, a*

*perversion that tries to turn it into a set of rules that one can supposedly go through the motions, with neither faith nor love for either **God**, yet earn a right standing with **ADONAI**).* **The Torah** includes both **Jews** and **Gentiles** in its condemnation of **sin**, so that the **Abrahamic promise based on the faithfulness of Messiah Yeshua might be given only to those who continue to trust (3:22)**. Not until people smash themselves up against the demands of keeping **the 613 commandments** of **Moshe** perfectly do they recognize their helplessness, and sees their need for a **Savior**. Not until **the Torah** has arrested, imprisoned, and sentenced them to death will they be driven to despair in themselves and turn to **Yeshua**.⁹³

Fifthly, the Torah was to bring us to faith in Yeshua Messiah. Now before faith came, [the Jewish people] were being guarded (Greek: *phroureo*, meaning *to keep under lock and key*) **under Torah** because we are **sinners, bound together** and the Law doesn't have the power to set us free. That is why **the coming** salvation by **faith in Yeshua Messiah would be revealed** (see the commentary on **Hebrews Bp - The Dispensation of Grace**). Before the cross, **they** looked forward to **the Savior**, as we look back. **The Torah** was **their** jailer who held **them** in protective custody, in order that **they** should not escape the consciousness of **their sins** and **their** liability to punishment **(3:23)**.⁹⁴

In the ancient world a **paidagogos** was given authority over the son of **his** master to guard him from evil, both physical and moral. **The paidagogos** would actually have been a harsh disciplinarian, and the student was required to obey **him**. **He** was not a teacher, but was responsible to bring the student to the teacher. **He** had total authority over the son until the son reached adulthood, so **his** authority lasted only as long as the child was a minor. Once the child reached adulthood, **his** authority ceased to exist. It was a great day of deliverance when a boy finally gained freedom from his **paidagogos**. **Therefore, the Torah became our guardian** (Greek: *paidagogos*, literally *a child under development by strict instruction*) **to lead us to Messiah** (see the commentary on **Exodus Dh - Moses and the Torah**), **so that we might be made right based on trusting** in the substitutionary death and resurrection of **Yeshua Messiah (3:24)**.



Just as the pedagogue brought the student to the teacher, the Torah brought the Jewish people to the Messiah. And just as the pedagogue was not the teacher; neither is the Torah the means to earn salvation. But now this mature faith has come. When Paul said: we are no longer under a guardian (3:25), he did not mean that the Torah is done away with (see the commentary on Exodus [Du](#) - Do Not Think That I Have Come to Abolish the Torah or the Prophets). He meant that we should not look to the Torah or legal conversion to Judaism, as the Judaizers were saying (see [Ag](#) - Who Were the Judaizers?), as a means of earning salvation. Salvation is, and always was, through faith for both Jews and Gentiles.

The **Gentile** believers to whom **Paul** was writing had already been led to **the Teacher of Righteousness**. They were already **sons and daughters** through faith; they had already come to **the Teacher**. In previous generations, prior to the revelation of **Yeshua**, there were valid reasons for **Gentiles** to become **Jewish** and thus under **the Torah**. Doing so brought **them** and **their** children inside the circle of blessing, protected, and preserved by **the Torah** along with the rest of **the Jewish people** until the coming **Messiah** would be revealed. But now that **He** had been revealed, conversion under **the Torah** no longer served that purpose. **The Law** couldn't fix **their** problem. Only **the Messiah** could save **them** from **their sins**.⁹⁵

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, How Great **You** are! We love and praise **You** for giving us **Your Spirit** to live in us (**Romans 8:9**). We cannot conquer sin by ourselves. We need **Your Ruach**. The Torah is like a broom trying to sweep up a dried and hard stain on the floor of our heart, but you have the power to make pure and clean even a scarlet stain," **Come now, let us reason together," says ADONAI. "Though your sins be like scarlet, they will be as white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, they will become like wool (Isaiah 1:18)**. Water cleans so much better than a broom, which can only push the dirt aside. The water of **Your Spirit** has the power to completely clean and defeat the stain of*

*sin. **Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture says, "out of his innermost being will flow rivers of living water." Now He said this about the Ruach, whom those who trusted in Him were going to receive; (John 7:38-39a).***

*Thank **You** that **You** live in your children (**Romans 8:9**) and are always there with us to help us conquer any temptation. **No temptation has taken hold of you except what is common to mankind. But God is faithful - He will not allow you be tempted beyond what you can handle. But with the temptation, He will also provide a way of escape, so that you will be able to endure it (First Corinthians 10:13).***

*How great that **Your** gift of salvation is - not only right now with **You** living in us, guiding us and helping us to please **You** - but also for a wonderful eternal life with **You** forever in heaven! It is with deep joy that we love and serve **You**! In **Your** holy **Son's** name and power of resurrection. Amen*