



The word *Scripture* is mentioned over 50 times in the New Testament. It refers to the **Tenakh** which had been the Bible of the Jewish people in Yeshua's day for over 200 years. Their Tenakh was (and is) composed of three portions – The **Torah** (first five books of Moses), the **Prophets**, and the **Writings**. (See Luke 24:44 as an example.)

The **Torah** is the same thing as the *Law, Teachings, Commandments, Precepts, Ordinances, and Testimonies* of the Lord. There are 613 laws. The Israelites had come out of 430 years of slavery with no reference point for living in love and freedom. So, they considered the Torah to be a treasured gift and guide from the Lord, an expression of His heart. Through it He taught them how to love themselves, others, and Him. Their obedience was a response of gratitude for His gracious deliverance, not an attempt to earn His favor.

The Torah was passed down by oral repetition for over 4,000 years. Its ancient language is difficult to understand. Throughout the centuries, it was reinterpreted to apply to new circumstances and situations.

In the first century AD in the time of Yeshua, there were many rabbis (teachers) who interpreted the Torah for the people, and these rabbis differed in their interpretations. The two main schools of interpretation at this time were The House of Hillel (more lenient and merciful) and the House of Shammai (stricter).

Rabbi Yeshua also interpreted the Torah to His disciples. We have been taught that He opposed the Law when, in fact, He came to interpret it perfectly. Indeed, He embodied the Torah; in His life He taught and walked out its true meaning. The Apostle and Disciple John wrote, "the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Yeshua the Messiah." (John 1:17) In other words, Yeshua came to fully and perfectly interpret and express God's heart of grace and truth... expressed in the Torah.

Let's look at the words of Yeshua in Matthew 5:17-19:

"Do not think I came to **abolish** the Torah or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to **fulfill**. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke will pass away from the Torah until all is accomplished. Whoever then **annuls** one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever **keeps and teaches** them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

The underlying Hebrew words for **abolish** and **fulfill** refer to the interpretation of the Torah (the Law):

- To **abolish** the Law is to **misinterpret** it and thereby **abolish** and **annul** its meaning with these results:
 - People are led astray,
 - God's character is not expressed,
 - God's will is not accomplished, and
 - His Name is not sanctified.
- To **fulfill** the Law is to **rightly interpret** it and thereby **preserve** and **keep** its meaning with these results:
 - People are led in the right path,
 - God's character is expressed,
 - God's will is accomplished, and
 - His Name is sanctified.

Yeshua **filled** the Torah **full** with its intended meaning. He did not abolish or replace it. He showed the eternal, continuing value of it as God's revelation of His heart.

Since the Torah did not initially reach its intended purpose because the Holy Spirit was required to interpret and fulfill it, Yeshua came. And then He sent the Holy Spirit to His disciples during their observance of Shavuot (Pentecost) as we read about in Acts 2. The prophets had foretold of the new heart that would be given to us! (See Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-26; Joel 2:28).

When we receive Yeshua (the Father's sacrifice for our sins), He imparts the Holy Spirit to us and gives us a new heart. The Law is now written on our hearts, and the Spirit fulfills the Law through us for such a time as this. (See Romans 8:1-4; 2 Corinthians 3:2-4)

And we sing with King David from Psalm 19:7-11:

The **Law** of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul;
The **testimony** of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.
The **precepts** of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart;
The **commands** of the LORD are pure, giving light to the eyes.
The **fear** of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;
The **judgments** of the LORD are true and altogether righteous.
They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much pure gold;
They are sweeter than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.
Moreover by them Your servant is warned;
In keeping them there is great reward.

As a fun exercise, we can read Psalm 119 and substitute the words "His instructions of love" for the words *Law, Teachings, Commandments, Precepts, Ordinances, Judgments, Statutes, His ways, and His word!*

In Psalm 119, the Psalmist walks in the Torah. He seeks, loves, observes, remembers, esteems, tastes, keeps diligently, give thanks for, learns from, rejoices in, meditates upon, delights in, clings to, trusts, hastens toward, waits in, longs for, and stands in... the Law – the expression of God's heart.

In Psalm 119, the Psalmist finds: light for his path, joy, discernment, revival, strength, hope, comfort, wisdom, insight, understanding, protection, sustenance, gold, truth, purity, eternity, security, treasure, wonder, counsel, reverence for the Lord, songs, compassion, and deliverance.

Father, help us to rightly interpret Your word by watching our Rabbi Yeshua, by studying and listening to His words by the Holy Spirit, and following the leading of the Spirit within us so that Your character of love will shine through us, and others are led to You, and Your will is accomplished, and Your Name is high and lifted up! Amen!