



## Torah Lesson #1

# Why Torah?

**Note:** These lessons assume some knowledge of Scripture, a belief in the Creator and in the Messiah. It is not designed for the non-believer.

### What is Torah?

Firstly "Torah" is a Hebrew word which in English means 'instruction' or 'teaching.' It is derived from the root word "Yarah" which means 'to flow as water.' Torah has traditionally been translated as "law" in most cases, So wherever you read 'law' in versions such as the KJV or NIV it is most probably "Torah" in Hebrew.

The word Torah in application can be defined in two ways:

(1) Used in a **general sense** it means the first five books found in the Scriptures which were authored by Mosheh (Moses). They are:

Common Name	Hebrew Name*	Meaning of Hebrew Name*
Genesis	Bereshith	'Beginnings'
Exodus	Shemot	'Names'
Leviticus	Vayyiqra	'And called'
Numbers	Bemidbar	'In the wilderness'
Deuteronomy	Davarim	'Words'

*\*The Hebrew name is derived from the first word of the book.*

In this course we will use the Hebrew names, so learn them well.

(2) Used in a **specific sense** it means **the instruction from YHWH** contained within these books. This is the most common meaning of the word in its use throughout Scripture. In this sense it doesn't **only** include those elements we might obviously recognise as "law" - the Ten Commands for example - but any **statement** from YHWH which contains advice on how we should order our lives, or any **action** by YHWH which demonstrates how he wishes us to behave. For example the first such statement is:

*"Bear fruit and increase, and fill the earth and subdue it, and rule over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over all creatures moving on the earth" (Bereshith 1:28)*

This is Torah! It gives the very basic instruction as to what our purpose in life is -

1. To have children (requires marriage)
2. To explore and colonize the earth
3. To shape the earth to our will (subdue - this includes even simple things like pruning a tree or mowing the lawn! But doesn't include destroying it!)
4. To be responsible for all animals, birds and fish.

The scope of Torah goes even further, it includes those statements which apply not to us, but to the natural world around us. So when YHWH says *"Let light come to be" (Ber. 1:3)* it is Torah, a Torah by which light exists, just as we should exist (live) by those instructions intended for humans!

### **Why Should We Learn It?**

Principally because it is the indicator as to what is right and wrong. In Bereshith 2:16-17 we see specific Torah being given to Adam:

*"And YHWH Elohim commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat: for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."*

In chapter 3 of Bereshith (read) we see how Adam and Chavvah (Eve) disobeyed this instruction. As a result death entered the world. So we too can expect punishment if we fail to obey. But we also can expect blessing if we **do** obey!

Mosheh in committing the Torah to Israel said:

*I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that **I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse:** therefore choose life, that you may live, you and your seed; (Davarim 30:19)*

Yes, while the Torah contains a curse - for those who disobey - it also contains blessing for those who obey. This blessing is most specifically called **life** (*khayim* in Hebrew). This is the other Tree that was planted in Eden (Ber. 2:9). Life includes all the elements that are meant by the Hebrew word 'Shalom' - peace, health, happiness and prosperity - but excludes the experience of evil - pain, suffering, sickness, sorrow and death.

But to be obedient we first need to **know!** YHWH has said "My people perish for lack of knowledge" and this continues to be true. We must do as the Psalmist did:

*"Your word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against you." (Teh/Psa 119:11)*

"Word" is a synonym for "Torah." So we must study, learn and internalise Torah, else when we need to make choices we won't know what is right.

The Torah is also the revealed will of YHWH for our lives. Many people pray seeking to know YHWH's will in their life - their prayer was answered long ago, if they will only listen!

**KEY POINT: *Torah is instruction from our Creator.***

---

## Exercises

1. Read Bereshith chapters 1-3.
  2. Write a list of all instructions given to humans in these chapters - statements and actions by YHWH, directed towards Adam or Chavvah which would affect their lives (food, work, clothing, etc.). Give source verse and also briefly state how each one could effect what we do now.
-