



# Torah Achat - One Law

A d'rashah for parshat Sh'lach L'cha  
B'midbar (Numbers) Chapter 15

By Rabbi Reuel Dillon

As it is in most faith based movements today, the Messianic community has a few ongoing controversies when it comes to theology. And, I believe that many of the imbalances, false doctrines, and controversies have ultimately been the result of one particular controversy, which has resulted in separation and alienation amongst God's people. The controversy in question is called "One Law" or "One Torah" doctrine. To some, the term "One Law" is representative of false doctrine. And, to some, it is a designation gladly held. It is considered to be heresy amongst mainline Christianity, and unless one officially converts to the sect of Judaism they reside in...the mainline Judaisms of our day also consider it to be unacceptable. Where in the scriptures does this doctrine come from?

Amongst other places (Sh'mot/Exodus 12:47-49, Vayikra/Leviticus 24:19-22), in our parashah we read about it in B'midbar (Numbers) 15:15-16. It says, "For this community there will be the same law for you as for the foreigner (ger) living (hagar – from "gur") with you; this is a permanent regulation through all your generations; the foreigner is to be treated the same way before HaShem as yourselves. The same Torah (Torah Achat) and standard of judgment will apply to both you and the foreigner living with you." This is the battleground for the controversy.

It is ironic that those who reject the term "One Law" or "One Torah", as this is exactly what this passage says in the Hebrew. It says "Torah Achat", which literally means "One Law" or "One Torah". So, to me it is strange to use a thoroughly Biblical phrase to describe something that one thinks is wrong or to call into question a theology that literally comes from the Torah, from the Word of God. It amazes me that someone who is called a believer in Messiah can call that which is good, the word of God, to be evil, or bad. To call light; darkness, and darkness; light. But, Yesha'yahu (Isaiah) 5:20 says, "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who change darkness into light and light into darkness, who change bitter into sweet and sweet into bitter!"

Some who are not proponents of the "One Torah" position will point out that the passage in our parashah only is relevant to laws dealing with offerings and sacrifices, but otherwise the rest of the Torah that applies to a Jewish person doesn't apply to someone from the Nations (Goyim). Although, by claiming this it behooves one to take a closer look, and instead of limiting the scope of the Torah to someone born from the Nations outside of Yisra'el...it actually proves to support the instruction that the same Torah, that applies to an Yisraelite, a Jewish person, actually applies to someone from the Nations who has made the decision to sojourn amongst Yisra'el in its entirety.

Of The Torah, God's instruction for His people, it is said that there are three categories; "torot", "chukkot" and "mishpatim". These three categories make up the entirety of what we understand as Adonai's Torah. It is in our parashah that all three categories are actually mentioned when speaking of "torah achat". Our passage in B'midbar (Numbers) 15:15-16 says the following when it comes to those of the Nations who sojourn with Yisra'el. It says, "chukkah achat", "torah achat", and "mishpat echad", which is translated as "one statute", "one torah", and "one judgment" (collectively called "mitzvot" [commands]) for the sojourner who sojourns with the people of Yisra'el.

Therefore, far from limiting the Torah to someone from the Nations who sojourns with Yisra'el, it fully expands their observance of the Torah amongst the people of Yisra'el. And, although the context of this passage is initially connected to that of offerings that one would bring to Adonai, this also strengthens the sense of the "One Torah" doctrine. For the context is how someone would come before Adonai worship Him. On this point the Torah is clear...It doesn't matter if you are Jewish or are one who was born as a Gentile...there is only one way to worship Adonai. And, it is in accordance with His Torah. This is a clarifying and powerful teaching. Selah.

Furthermore, as we consider the fuller context, as we continue to read after our initial passage, the Torah goes onto to address the general idea of what the Torah defines as "sin", and it once again connects this to the sojourner, which is in relation to the immediate context of what was previously stated as "Torah achat", for both the native born Yisraelite, and the sojourner living among them. B'midbar (Numbers) 15:22-26 says, "If by mistake you fail to observe all these mitzvot that HaShem has spoken to Moshe, yes, everything that HaShem has ordered you to do through Moshe, from the day Hashem gave the order and onward through all your generations, then, if it was done by mistake by the community and was not known to them, the whole community is to offer one young bull for a burnt offering as a fragrant aroma to HaShem, with its grain and drink offerings, in keeping with the rule, and one male goat as a sin offering. The cohen is to make atonement for the whole community of the people of Yisra'el; and they will be forgiven; because it was a mistake; and they have brought their offering, an offering made by fire, to HaShem, and their sin offering before HaShem for their mistake. The whole community of the people of Yisra'el will be forgiven, likewise the foreigner staying with them; because for all the people it was a mistake".'

There are a few notable aspects of this passage that are worthy to meditate on. First, according to the Torah, these "foreigners" who have endeavored to live among Yisra'el's people are considered to be part of the "community" or "congregation" of Yisra'el. They are not considered some separate "church" of Gentiles within a different sphere of their own. As both of the passages we have been meditating on state, the foreigner living among them was to fully enter into the sphere of Yisra'el. Through the God of Yisra'el, and through His Torah, they become part of the community of Yisra'el. It wasn't dependent on the will of some man, or men, within Yisra'el...it was dependent on Adonai and His Torah. It was the Torah that brought, and will bring, unity between Jew and Gentile.

This is exactly that R' Sha'ul (Paul) taught in Ephesians 2:11-14 & vs.19. It says, "For we are of God's making, created in union with the Messiah Yeshua for a life of good actions already

prepared by God for us to do. Therefore, remember your former state: you Gentiles by birth - called the Uncircumcised by those who, merely because of an operation on their flesh, are called the Circumcised - at that time had no Messiah. You were estranged from the national life of Yisra'el. You were foreigners to the covenants embodying God's promise. You were in this world without hope and without God. But now, you who were once far off have been brought near through the shedding of the Messiah's blood. For he himself is our shalom - he has made us both one and has broken down the m'chitzah (dividing barrier) which divided us". And, in verse 19 he goes on to say, "So then, you are no longer foreigners and strangers. On the contrary, you are fellow-citizens with God's people and members of God's family".

The passage in Ephesians speaks of these foreigners as "goyim" (gentiles) in the past tense, specifically within the context that they are now understood to be "fellow-citizens" amongst Yisra'el. Furthermore, the passage begins by speaking of "good actions already prepared by God for us to do", which can only be the Torah of Adonai. On this note, it says that they are no longer strangers to the covenants, spoken of in the Torah. So, Ephesians chp.2 and B'midbar (Numbers) chp.15 are parallel passages. Earlier I stated that it is through the Torah that Adonai brings unity between the native born Yisra'elite, the Jewish person, and those who were Gentiles. This is what our parashah teaches us, and it is confirmed in the Ketuvei Sh'lichim (Apostolic Writings). While this is the literal understanding in both of our passages, the spiritual truth behind all of this is that Yeshua The Messiah is The Torah. He is the living Torah made flesh, as spoken of in Yochanan (John) 1:14. Therefore, Yeshua is the one who brings unity between Jew and Gentile.

It is only when the ordinances of mankind get in the way of this is a middle wall of partition erected between Jew and Gentile. This is what is spoken of in verses 14-18. A literal version states, "For He is our peace, He making us both one, and breaking down the middle wall of partition, in His flesh causing to cease the enmity, the law of the commandments in decrees, that He might in Himself create the two into one new man, making peace, and might reconcile both in one body to God through the cross, slaying the enmity in Himself. And coming, He proclaimed "peace to you, the ones afar off, and to the ones near." For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father".

The context of "the law of the commandments in decrees" is characterized by a "middle wall of partition". It has been said that this is representative of the wall that separated Jew and those from the Nations in the Beit HaMikdash (Holy Temple), for it was wall created by the authoritative tradition of men, or "ordinances" (from the Greek word "dogma"), and not the Torah of Adonai. A perfect example of this found amongst the K'tuvei Sh'lichim (Apostolic Writings). In Ma'asim (Acts) 10:28 where we read about Kefa's (Peter's) encounter with Cornelius, an encounter that normally would be unlawful...not according to the ordinances of Adonai, but according to the ordinance of men. The same ordinance represented by the middle wall of partition.

A literal version of Ma'asim (Acts) 10:25-28 states, "And as Kefa (Peter) was coming in, meeting him, Cornelius fell at his feet and worshiped. But Peter lifted him up, saying, Stand up! I myself am also a man. And talking with him, he went in and found many having come together. And he said to them, You know how unlawful it is for a man, a Jew, to unite with or to come near to one of another race. Yet God showed to me not to call a man common

or unclean". Adonai had revealed to Kefa the same thing that the Torah had already instructed, that he was not to consider someone from the Nations as being common or unclean. He was to consider someone from the nations who served the God of Yisra'el in righteousness, which is in accordance with the Torah, as one of his own. For in just a few more verses in Ma'asim (Acts) 10:34-35 we read, "Then Kefa addressed them: "I now understand that God does not play favorites, but that whoever fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him, no matter what people he belongs to".

It is the Torah of Adonai, and it is Yeshua The Messiah that brings this unity. The phrase "Torah achat" in our parashah uses the Hebrew word for "one"; "achat", which is the feminine version of "echad". The Hebrew word "echad" or "achat", can mean one, but it also can refer to a compound unity, such as multiple fibers which creates a rope. We see the compound unity of Adonai, being composed of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in such terms, as being "echad". Therefore, it not only can be translated as "one Torah", but it can also be translated as "Torah oneness" or "Torah unity". That is what the Jew and someone from the nations has through Yeshua The Messiah.

In Yochanan (John) 10:16 rabbenu Yeshua said, "Also I have other sheep which are not from this pen; I need to bring them, and they will hear my voice; and there will be one flock, one shepherd". Again, this is what the Torah of Unity accomplishes, this is what Yeshua accomplishes..."one flock". Therefore, based on our parashah, the words of the Emissary Sha'ul (Paul), and the words of The Messiah Yeshua..."one Torah" theology might as well be thought of as "one flock" theology. And, that one flock can only have unity if they are living according to the same Torah. It is only the "dogma" and ordinances of mankind that can get in the middle of that unity, and act as a middle wall of partition. But, in Yeshua The Messiah, the one who provides and enforces Torah unity...that wall comes crashing down. HalleluYah!

In Yochanan (John) 17:11 Yeshua speaks of the oneness or the unity that he has with the Father and how we are to have that oneness and unity with each other, both Jew, and the one from the Nations. He says, "Now I am no longer in the world. They are in the world, but I am coming to you. Holy Father, guard them by the power of your name, which you have given to me, so that they may be one, just as we are". And, how is this oneness characterized? A few verses later in verse 17 Yeshua says, "Set them apart for holiness by means of the truth -- your word is truth". According to the scriptures holiness and truth are defined by the Torah. Romans 7:12 says, "So the Torah is holy; that is, the commandment is holy, just and good". And, in T'hilim (Psalms) 119:142 we read, "Your righteousness is eternal righteousness, and your Torah is truth". Thus, when Yeshua says "your word is truth"...he is likely quoting this passage, and is definitely referring to the Torah. It is how Yeshua, and the God of Yisra'el set-apart and make one the entire community of Yisra'el, which as we read in parshat Sh'lach L'cha...includes the sojourner who chooses to take hold of the God of Yisra'el and lives among His chosen people.

And, as we go onto read in our parashah, B'midbar (Numbers) 15:27-29 speaks of sin in general, which is defined in Yochanan Alef (1John) 3:4 as "transgression of the Torah". How does the Torah present this matter when it comes to the foreigner? It says, "If an individual sins by mistake, he is to offer a female goat in its first year as a sin offering. The cohen will make atonement before HaShem for the person who makes a mistake by sinning

inadvertently; he will make atonement for him, and he will be forgiven - no matter whether he is a citizen of Yisra'el or a foreigner living with them. You are to have one law (Torah achat) for whoever it is that does something wrong by mistake". So, our parashah once again uses the Hebrew phrase "Torah achat" to describe the foreigner's relationship to the Torah when it comes to sin in general, and how one is to live a holy life. This aspect is really essential to the B'sorot Tovot (Good News), because it deals with the important aspect of turning from our sins in relation to receiving the Good News of Yeshua. Also, Yermiyahu (Jeremiah) chp. 31 and Yechezk'el (Ezekiel) chp. 36 makes it a center piece of the Brit Chadashah (New Covenant).

Regardless of any misunderstandings we may or may not have about all of this...these are timeless truths that have remained true "l'dor vador", from generation to generation, until this very day. For, in B'midbar (Numbers) 15:15, our parashah says, "For this community there will be the same law for you as for the foreigner living with you; this is a permanent regulation (chukat olam) through all your generations; the foreigner is to be treated the same way before HaShem as yourselves". In Hebrew "chukat olam" can be translated as a "permanent regulation", or a "never ending statute". This means, according to the Word of God, that to our very generation this statute has never ended.

Only when both Jew and Gentile have accepted the Torah will we have unity, thus ending the fighting and the controversy. Yesha'yahu HaNavi (The Prophet) also bears witness to this truth. We see this to be the case amongst Yisra'el and the nations, as seen in Yesha'yahu (Isaiah) 2:3-4. It says, "Many peoples will go and say, "Come, let's go up to the mountain of HaShem, to the house of the God of Ya'akov! He will teach us about his ways, and we will walk in his paths." For out of Tziyon will go forth Torah, the word of HaShem from Yerushalayim. He will judge between the nations and arbitrate for many peoples. Then they will hammer their swords into plow-blades and their spears into pruning-knives; nations will not raise swords at each other, and they will no longer learn war".

As we see in this passage it says that many peoples will go up to the mountain of HaShem and learn of his ways, which is immediately described as his "Torah", being identified as the "word" we were reading about earlier. What is the result of teaching the Torah to the nations?...None other than world unity and shalom, for immediately after speaking of teaching the nations the Torah...it says, "then they will hammer their swords into plow-blades and their spears into pruning-knives; nations will not raise swords at each other, and they will no longer learn war".

So, we can see that teaching the Torah to the Nations is not only Adonai's expressed desire, it is not only what will happen in the future, but also when it does happen...the result is shalom and unity between peoples. It is the solution to world peace. This is why Yeshua brings us all through the Brit Chadashah (New Covenant), by giving us the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit) to change our nature and empower us all to live a life of Torah, as seen in Yechezk'el (Ezekiel) 36:26-27 and Romans 3:31, and Romans chp. 8.

Likewise, only when both Jew and Gentile have truly come together to accept Yeshua as their Lord will we have unity and peace, for he is the living Torah. He is the Word of God made flesh, and he is the Truth. All of this is an essential aspect of preaching the B'sorot Tovot (Good News). For as we read, one of the purposes of Yeshua's sacrifice was to bring

unity between us all, making us one, bringing us all into one flock, thus bringing shalom, to the glory of The Father. He does this through empowering the Torah in his people through the Ruach (Spirit). Amein. With that being said, may we all be about the Torah of Unity, about "Torah achat", about being a "One Torah" community. And, may we not allow any man made dogma, or other such walls, get in the way of any of this. For it is God's sovereign will. Therefore, if someone has a problem with any of this, their controversy is with God...not us. And, in that heated discussion...you know who will have the final say.

To conclude, there is so much more to say on this subject that cannot be taught in just one lesson. To read more on this subject, amongst many other teachings, you may download the teaching: "Covenant Responsibilities - Whose Are They?" ([www.synagoguechm.com/drashot/reeh\\_covenantresponsibilities.pdf](http://www.synagoguechm.com/drashot/reeh_covenantresponsibilities.pdf)).

Also, one can read more about how essential the concept of "Torah achat" is to the integrity of the Message of the Good News by reading the teaching, "The Point Of The New Covenant" ([www.synagoguechm.com/drash/shavuot\\_thepointofthenewcovenant.pdf](http://www.synagoguechm.com/drash/shavuot_thepointofthenewcovenant.pdf)).

And, you also may read about some of the other theological controversies which I believe find their origins in the lack of observance of the principle of "Torah achat" amongst the Messianic community in the teaching called, "What About The Ephraimites" ([www.synagoguechm.com/drash/vayechi\\_whatabouttheephraimites.pdf](http://www.synagoguechm.com/drash/vayechi_whatabouttheephraimites.pdf)).

Shabbat shalom!

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