

פרשת
וישלח
Parashat Vayishlach

*Bereshit / Genesis 32:3-36:43, Hosea 11:7-12:12
Obadiah 1:1-21, John 1:19-2:12*

Foreign gods and Theological Beliefs

The concept of foreign gods runs deep within the Torah in relation to the Shema (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 6:4* שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ | אֶחָד: (יהוה); Here O Israel, the Lord God, He is One. In this week's reading the Lord God tells Jacob to pick up camp and move to Bethel, to live there and to make an altar and worship. *Bereshit / Genesis 35:1* Then God said to Jacob, 'Arise, go up to Bethel and live there, and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau.' 35:2 So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, 'Put away the foreign gods which are among you, and purify yourselves and change your garments; (NASB, וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל-יַעֲקֹב קוּם עֲלֵה בֵּית-אֵל וְשֹׁב-שָׁם וַעֲשֵׂה-שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ לְאֵל הַנִּרְאָה אֵלַי בְּבִרְחֹתִי מִפְּנֵי עֵשָׂו אֲחִי: ב וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶל-בֵּיתוֹ וְאֵל כָּל-אֲשֶׁר עִמּוֹ (הִסְרוּ אֶת-אֱלֹהֵי הַנֶּכֶר אֲשֶׁר בְּתִכְכֶם וְהִטְהַרוּ וְהִחְלִיפוּ שְׂמֹלֹתֵיכֶם: It is interesting how Jacob tells his household to remove all of the foreign gods from among them and to purify themselves based upon what the Lord God is calling them to do (to move to a place called the house of God). We read something similar to this in *Joshua 24:23* Now then," said Joshua, throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel."(NIV) The main

question is where did they get their idols? Remember how Rachel was an idolater by stealing her dad's household gods. (see *Bereshit / Genesis 31*) Did these foreign gods remain in Jacob's house until this time? Or did they acquire these foreign gods from the people of Shechem? The important point is that God is calling Jacob and his people to go and live at Bethel (the house of God) and doing so requires their forsaking their foreign gods. The commentary *Chizkuni on Bereshit / Genesis 35:2 Part 1* states, "הִסְרוּ אֶת-אֱלֹהֵי הַנִּכְרֹ, *“remove the alien deities!” This was required in order to avoid giving the impression that prayers or sacrifices were intended for them.*" This commentary speaks of removing an idol for the purpose of eliminating the impression that one prays to or offers sacrifices to this idol. Could this be an allusion to the idols that one sets up in his heart? This question arises from the idea of prayers and sacrifices are not necessarily given to the idol one sets up in his heart, as opposed to those made of wood and stone. (Note however the sacrifice of praise might be something that is given to an idol that is set up in one's heart.) The Jewish commentaries state that these foreign gods were acquired from the looting of the people of Shechem. (Or *HaChaim on Bereshit / Genesis 35:2 Part 1*)

Rashi breaks it down in the following way:

Rashi on Bereshit / Genesis 35:2 Part 1

הַנִּכְרֹ [PUT AWAY] THE STRANGE [GODS] —which you have in your possession from the spoil of Shechem.

Rashi on Bereshit / Genesis 35:2 Part 2

וּתְטַהְרוּ AND PURIFY YOURSELVES of idol-worship.

Rashi on Bereshit / Genesis 35:2 Part 3

וְהַחֲלִיפוּ שְׂמֵלוֹתֵיכֶם AND CHANGE YOUR GARMENTS —lest you have in your possession a vestment that has been employed in idolatrous worship (Genesis Rabbah 81:3).

There are three parts to what God is calling upon His people to do, (i) to remove the gods they have acquired, (ii) to purify themselves

of idol worship, and (iii) to change their garments as symbolic of that cleansing due to the idea our garments have been defiled as having touched the idolatrous worship and or being used in the idolatrous practice. Note how in the book of Revelation, righteous works is paralleled to the garments / cloths that we wear. This is a significant point Rashi is drawing out about the Lord God calling His people to do. They were not just to remove the foreign gods, but to also turn from that way of thinking, acting and behaving. This draws back in the idea of idolatrous worship in the sense of creating an idol in our hearts. The prophet Ezekiel speaks about this in *Ezekiel 14*.

Ezekiel 14:1-8

14:1 Then some elders of Israel came to me and sat down before me. 14:2 And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 14:3 'Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts and have put right before their faces the stumbling block of their iniquity. Should I be consulted by them at all? 14:4 'Therefore speak to them and tell them, 'Thus says the Lord God, 'Any man of the house of Israel who sets up his idols in his heart, puts right before his face the stumbling block of his iniquity, and then comes to the prophet, I the Lord will be brought to give him an answer in the matter in view of the multitude of his idols, 14:5 in order to lay hold of the hearts of the house of Israel who are estranged from Me through all their idols.' 14:6 'Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord God, 'Repent and turn away from your idols and turn your faces away from all your abominations. 14:7 'For anyone of the house of Israel or of the immigrants who stay in Israel who separates himself from Me, sets up his idols in his heart, puts right before his face the stumbling block of his iniquity, and then comes to the prophet to inquire of Me for himself, I the Lord will be brought to answer him in My own person. 14:8 'I will set My face against that man and make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from among My people. So you

will know that I am the Lord. (NASB)

Based upon what the Lord is saying to Ezekiel, the idol that one sets up in his heart is related to sin (iniquity). This is consistent with David's words in his psalm saying in *Tehillim / Psalms 66:18 If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear; (NASB, אָוֹן אֲמַם- יִשְׁמַע רַאֲיִתִּי בְּלִבִּי לֹא יִשְׁמַע* David says the Lord will not hear us due to sin and Ezekiel speaks of the Lord answering such a person only in the sense that is related to the multitude of their idols (sins) that have been set up in the heart. The concept here is *how can the Lord hear if we keep iniquity in our hearts?* "Is it possible to desire the Lord to secretly allow (*something considered immoral, illegal, wrong, or harmful*) to occur, rebellious sin, and accept us while wilfully cling to an evil way? The thing that hinders our prayers is iniquity that is harboured in our hearts. Can we listen to idols (evil spirits, or the Evil One) and expect the Lord God to listen to us in prayer? If a person refuses to listen (hear) God's commands, he will surely refuse to hear our prayers. *Can the Lord God accept our devotions while we delight in sin?*" All of these things are very important questions, and are directly related to what the Lord God is instructing Jacob before moving to Bethel.

Bereshit / Genesis 35:1-15

35:1 Then God said to Jacob, 'Arise, go up to Bethel and live there, and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau.'

35:2 So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, 'Put away the foreign gods which are among you, and purify yourselves and change your garments; 35:3 and let us arise and go up to Bethel, and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone.' 35:4 So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods which they had and the rings which were in their ears, and Jacob hid them under the oak which was near Shechem. 35:5 As they journeyed, there was a great terror upon the cities which were around them, and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob. 35:6 So Ja-

cob came to Luz (that is, Bethel), which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him. 35:7 He built an altar there, and called the place El-bethel, because there God had revealed Himself to him when he fled from his brother. 35:8 Now Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and she was buried below Bethel under the oak; it was named Allon-bacuth. 35:9 Then God appeared to Jacob again when he came from Paddan-aram, and He blessed him. 35:10 God said to him, 'Your name is Jacob; You shall no longer be called Jacob, But Israel shall be your name.' Thus He called him Israel. 35:11 God also said to him, 'I am God Almighty; Be fruitful and multiply; A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, And kings shall come forth from you. 35:12 'The land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give it to you, And I will give the land to your descendants after you.' 35:13 Then God went up from him in the place where He had spoken with him. 35:14 Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He had spoken with him, a pillar of stone, and he poured out a drink offering on it; he also poured oil on it. 35:15 So Jacob named the place where God had spoken with him, Bethel. (NASB)

א וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל-יַעֲקֹב קוּם עֲלֵה בֵּית-אֵל וְשֹׁב-שָׁם
וַעֲשֵׂה-שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ לְאֵל הַנִּרְאָה אֵלָיךָ בְּבָרְחָךְ מִפְּנֵי יַעֲשׂוּ
אֲחִיךָ: ב וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶל-בֵּיתוֹ וְאֵל כָּל-אֲשֶׁר עִמּוֹ הִסְרוּ
אֶת-אֱלֹהֵי הַנִּכְר אֲשֶׁר בְּתֹכְכֶם וְהִטְהַרוּ וְהִחְלִיפוּ שְׂמֹלֹתֵיכֶם:
ג וַנִּקְוֹמָה וַנַּעֲלֶה בֵּית-אֵל וְאֶעֱשֶׂה-שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ לְאֵל הָעֵנָה
אֲתִי בְיוֹם צָרְתִי וַיְהִי עִמָּדִי בַדְרֹךְ אֲשֶׁר הִלְכְתִּי: ד וַיִּתְּנוּ
אֶל-יַעֲקֹב אֶת כָּל-אֱלֹהֵי הַנִּכְר אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדָם וְאֶת-הַנְּזָמִים אֲשֶׁר
בְּאֲזִנֵיהֶם וַיִּטְמְנוּ אֹתָם יַעֲקֹב תַּחַת הָאֵלָה אֲשֶׁר עִם-שָׁכְם: ה
וַיִּסְעוּ וַיְהִי | תַּחַת אֱלֹהִים עַל-הָעָרִים אֲשֶׁר סְבִיבוֹתֵיהֶם וְלֹא
רָדְפוּ אַחֲרַי בְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב: ו וַיָּבֹא יַעֲקֹב לוּזָה אֲשֶׁר בְּאֶרֶץ
כְּנַעַן הוּא בֵּית-אֵל הוּא וְכָל-הָעָם אֲשֶׁר-עִמּוֹ: ז וַיְבֹן שָׁם

מִזְבַּח וַיִּקְרָא לְמָקוֹם אֵל בֵּית-אֵל כִּי שָׁם נִגְלוּ אֱלֹהֵי הָאֱלֹהִים
בְּבָרְחוֹ מִפְּנֵי אֲחִיו: ח וַתִּמַּת דְּבָרָה מִיַּנְקַת רַבָּקָה וַתִּקְבֹּר
מִתַּחַת לְבֵית-אֵל תַּחַת הָאֱלוֹן וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ אֱלוֹן בְּכוֹת: פ
ט וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶל-יַעֲקֹב עוֹד בָּבֹאוֹ מִפְּדֹן אָרֶם וַיְבָרֵךְ
אֹתוֹ: י וַיֹּאמֶר-לוֹ אֱלֹהִים שְׁמֹךָ יַעֲקֹב לֹא-יִקְרָא שְׁמֹךָ עוֹד
יַעֲקֹב כִּי אִם-יִשְׂרָאֵל יִהְיֶה שְׁמֹךָ וַיִּקְרָא אֶת-שְׁמוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל:
יא וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אֱלֹהִים אֲנִי אֵל שְׂדֵי פְרָה וּרְבֵה גוֹי וְקַהֲל גּוֹיִם
יִהְיֶה מִמֶּךָ וּמְלָכִים מִחֻלְצֶיךָ יֵצְאוּ: [ששי] יב וְאֶת-הָאָרֶץ
אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לְאַבְרָהָם וְלִיִּצְחָק לְךָ אֶתְנַנֶּה וְלִזְרַעְךָ אֶתְרִיב
אֶתְּךָ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ: יג וַיַּעַל מֵעֵלְיוֹ אֱלֹהִים בְּמָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר
אֹתוֹ: יד וַיַּצֵּב יַעֲקֹב מִצֹּבָה בְּמָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר אֹתוֹ מִצֹּבָת
אָבֹן וַיִּסֹּד עָלֶיהָ נֹסֶד וַיִּצַק עָלֶיהָ שָׁמֶן: טו וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב אֶת-
שֵׁם הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֹתוֹ שֵׁם אֱלֹהִים בֵּית-אֵל:

These things are all very important because it is related to the idols we set up in our hearts and listening or hearing the Lord, and obeying His word. Notice how this is connected back to the nature of reality as we had discussed earlier, how one relies upon one's presuppositions and how this effects ones beliefs and faith? A faulty presupposition have lead to centuries of controversial philosophical judgments and assumptions as it is related to biblical interpretation. We know historically, this has led to all sorts of doctrines that have lead many astray, especially in light of todays liberal theologies being taught in churches such as those who accept hyper-grace theology and those theologies that lead to the acceptance (approval) of LGBT lifestyles and practices. In this case, we can see how the underlying presupposition and philosophical assumptions are leading some people straight to hell because this way of thinking controls how Scripture interacts with life and interferes with the application of God's Word in life that is effectual for salvation. We need to be aware of this in order to understand what God wants from us as this is related to being faithful to the Living God in Heaven, and being faithful to His Word. While studying the Jewish commentaries, there is a very interesting concept that is drawn out related to *all translation is interpretation.* This is important because it is directly related to this concept of holding fast to

a presupposition and philosophical belief that goes into a translation rendering the translation nothing more than a commentary. Let's look at a few of these references from the Jewish literature.

Rashi on Leviticus 26:21 Part 1

This [interpretation] is close to its Targumic [translation] of Onkelos, [which is] an expression of hardness, “for they harden their hearts, refraining from approaching Me.” (Rashi Chumash, Metsudah Publications, 2009)

Rabbeinu Bahya, Bereshit 32:25 Part 1

[According to this interpretation, the correct translation of the words פכיים קטנים, would be “vessels that the little ones drink from,” rather than “small vessels.”] (Torah Commentary by Rabbi Bachya ben Asher, trans. Eliyahu Munk, 1998.)

Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer 3:4

were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world”; The translation in the Revised Version might be consulted, in order to see how the Midrashic point of view, based on a literal translation..., agrees with or differs from the ordinary interpretation.

(Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer, trans. and annotated by Gerald Friedlander, London, 1916)

Rashi on Numbers 11:8 Part 4

Onkelos’ translation, rendered “kneaded with oil,” leans toward Donash’s interpretation, since a loaf kneaded with oil contains the moisture of oil. (Rashi Chumash, Metsudah Publications, 2009)

Midrash Tanchuma Buber, Vaera 12:1

gt; This text is related : A FOOL VENTS HIS WHOLE SPIRIT; BUT A WISE PERSON STILLS HIM IN THE END. 73Such a translation is required by the midrashic

interpretation. (Midrash Tanhuma, S. Buber Recension; trans. by John T. Townsend, 1989.)

Shulchan Arukh, Choshen Mishpat 17:8

Caro, as it may be seen offers both the interpretation of Rashi and that of Maim. The translation ‘but he ... and he etc.’, follows the interpretation of M.E. , however, Perisha. (Code of Hebrew Law by Chaim N. Denburg, Montreal, 1955)

Midrash Tanchuma Buber, Vayera 43:1

Ergo : YOU HAVE GIVEN THOSE WHO FEAR YOU A TRIAL IN ORDER TO HAVE A MIRACLE OCCUR .152This translation better fits the interpretation here than a more traditional rendering. (Midrash Tanhuma, S. Buber Recension; trans. by John T. Townsend, 1989.)

Midrash Tanchuma Buber, V'Zot HaBerachah 4:2

This translation follows the interpretation of the midrash. AT YOUR FEET. (Midrash Tanhuma, S. Buber Recension; trans. by John T. Townsend, 1989.)

Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh De'ah 344:15

The translation follows here the interpretation of A.H. (Code of Hebrew Law by Chaim N. Denburg, Montreal, 1955)

The Third Beit HaMikdash 26:3

Our translation follows the interpretation of Rambam in the Introduction to his Commentary to the Mishnah. as stating that in the Second Beis HaMikdash: “There was a step there, a cubit high. (The Third Beis HaMikdash, trans. by Rabbi Eliyahu Touger, Moznaim Pub Corp. 2016)

Chizkuni, Exodus 14:20 Part 2

The Targum’s translation confirms this interpretation. (Chizkuni, translated and annotated by Eliyahu Munk)

While studying the Jewish commentaries, there is a very interesting concept that is drawn out related to the idea that *“all translation is interpretation.”* Some of the commentaries say *“this translation fits the interpretation here than more traditional rendering,”* or *“this translation follows the interpretation of the midrash,”* etc. This is an important observation because it is directly related to this concept of holding fast to a presupposition and philosophical belief (a particular interpretation) that goes into the translation causing the translation to become a commentary. What we find is there are many more references in the Jewish literature concerning the topic *“the translation follows the interpretation...”* The rabbis are not shy about explaining how a translation follows a particular interpretation of the Scripture. This is a very important observation because it is related to how we are to understand what is going on in the biblical text. (*Concerning what is actually being taught.*) The rabbinic commentaries point out how the translators have a certain interpretation or presupposition based upon the way in which they translate the text. We also find something very similar in our English bibles where the translators inject their presupposition and philosophical beliefs, their doctrines into the translation of the text. If we are not aware of the underlying presuppositions, it is possible to develop doctrines that run contrary to what God would have us know about His Word. In other words, without being aware of these things, it is entirely possible to obtain an understanding that is contrary to what was intended. One such example may be found in *Romans 10*.

Romans 10:2-11

10:2 For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. 10:3 For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. 10:4 For Christ is the end (τελος) of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. 10:5 For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness. 10:6 But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: ‘Do not say

*in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring Christ down), 10:7 or 'Who will descend into the abyss?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ' 10:8 But what does it say? 'The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart' that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, 10:9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; 10:10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. 10:11 For the Scripture says, 'Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed.' (NASB, 10:2 μαρτυρω γαρ αυτοις οτι ζηλον θεου εχουσιν αλλ ου κατ επιγνωσιν 10:3 αγνοουντες γαρ την του θεου δικαιοσυνην και την ιδιαν δικαιοσυνην ζητουντες στησαι τη δικαιοσυνη του θεου ουχ υπεταγησαν 10:4 **τελος** γαρ νομου χριστος εις δικαιοσυνην παντι τω πιστευοντι 10:5 μωσης γαρ γραφει την δικαιοσυνην την εκ του νομου οτι ο ποιησας αυτα ανθρωπος ζησεται εν αυτοις 10:6 η δε εκ πιστεως δικαιοσυνη ουτως λεγει μη ειπης εν τη καρδια σου τις αναβησεται εις τον ουρανον τουτ εστιν χριστον καταγαγειν 10:7 η τις καταβησεται εις την αβυσσον τουτ εστιν χριστον εκ νεκρων αναγαγειν 10:8 αλλα τι λεγει εγγυς σου το ρημα εστιν εν τω στοματι σου και εν τη καρδια σου τουτ εστιν το ρημα της πιστεως ο κηρυσσομεν 10:9 οτι εαν ομολογησης εν τω στοματι σου κυριον ιησουν και πιστευσης εν τη καρδια σου οτι ο θεος αυτον ηγειρεν εκ νεκρων σωθηση 10:10 καρδια γαρ πιστευεται εις δικαιοσυνην στοματι δε ομολογεται εις σωτηριαν 10:11 λεγει γαρ η γραφη πας ο πιστευων επ αυτω ου καταισχυνησεται)*

τέλος

Usage: (a) an end, (b) event or issue, (c) the principal end, aim, purpose

In our English translations, Paul says *“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness.”* τέλος γὰρ νόμου Χριστὸς εἰς δικαιοσύνην (telos gar nomou christos eis dikaiosunen). The word *“télos”* is a neuter noun and translates to mean *“the principle end, end-goal, aim, or purpose”* in the sense of *“reaching the end (aim).”* What Paul is trying to say is the Torah is the principle end, the aim, the end-goal that directs us to understand Yeshua the Messiah is our righteousness. The point is we are unable to reach the goal on our own (we fall short of God's Torah). We are expected to live both holy and righteous lives. For example, the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin validating (establishing) the requirements of the Law in our lives (*Romans 3:31*). We then seek the Lord by the power of His Holy Spirit to enable us to produce the fruits of righteousness and faith. This is what it means when James wrote of faith and works (see *James 2:24*). These things are connected to walking in the Spirit which means we do not sin. The definition of sin is to disobey God's commands. Essentially, the power of God's Holy Spirit in our lives is to live for the Lord God Almighty according to His Torah. This is how the Torah and the Gospel Message are connected.

We find something very similar in the classical interpretation from *John 14*.

John 14:1-31

14:1 ‘Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 14:2 ‘In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 14:3 ‘If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. 14:4 ‘And you know the way where I am going.’ 14:5 Thomas said to Him, ‘Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?’ 14:6 Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me. 14:7 ‘If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.’ 14:8 Philip said to Him, ‘Lord, show us

*the Father, and it is enough for us.’ 14:9 Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? **He who has seen Me has seen the Father;** how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? 14:10 **‘Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. 14:11 ‘Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves. 14:12 ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father. 14:13 ‘Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14:14 ‘If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it. 14:15 **‘If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. 14:16 ‘I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; 14:17 that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. 14:18 ‘I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 14:19 ‘After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also. 14:20 **‘In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. 14:21 ‘He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.’ 14:22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, ‘Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?’ 14:23 Jesus answered and said to him, **‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. 14:24 ‘He who does not love Me does not keep*********

My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me. 14:25 'These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. 14:26 'But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. 14:27 'Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful. 14:28 'You heard that I said to you, 'I go away, and I will come to you.' If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father; for the Father is greater than I. 14:29 'Now I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens, you may believe. 14:30 'I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me; 14:31 but so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me. Get up, let us go from here. (NASB)

Notice how Yeshua goes to great lengths to establish that He and the Father are one, and that He is doing everything the Father tells him to do. This is connected to *John 14:15* which states, *If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.*"The typical interpretation on this verse states that this is not the Torah, but those things Yeshua commanded while he was teaching his disciples with the idea that Yeshua gave different commands than what are found in the Torah. In this case, the translation does not follow the interpretation. Based upon the text, Yeshua's words are the Fathers words (*John 14:10-11*), His commands are the Fathers commands, the Torah. What we observe in the typical interpretation on *John 14:15* is that it is entirely possible to do a verse-by-verse study of the Scriptures and miss something very important. In all cases of biblical studies, we must take a step back and look at the greater context. If we do not do this, it is possible to miss what Yeshua is teaching us. What we see here in the book of John chapter 14, Yeshua goes to a great extent to explain that He is in the Father and the Father is in Him (*John 14:20*). Also that His words, and the works that He does are actually the Father speaking and working in Him.

(i.e. *John 8:28, I do nothing of my own initiative.*) Notice how Yeshua says he does everything the Father tells him to do. I don't think anyone contests the idea that this is the Torah in the sense that Yeshua is obeying God's Torah and is keeping His commandments. It is interesting however how Yeshua also at one point tells us to walk in his footsteps while Christianity interprets these Scriptures to say that Yeshua commanded something different than what our Father had given us in His Torah. Why do you think the church is so anti-Torah? (Study *1 Peter 2:21 He left you an example so that you could follow in his footsteps. 1 John 2:6 Whoever claims to abide in Him must walk as Jesus walked.*) In the introduction to this Torah series, we looked at the how and why looking at the history of the church.

What we find in this week's Torah portion is the call of God on His people to go to the house of God (Bethel). *Bereshit / Genesis 35:1 Then God said to Jacob, 'Arise, go up to Bethel and live there, and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau.'* *35:2 So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, 'Put away the foreign gods which are among you, and purify yourselves and change your garments;* (NASB, וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל-יַעֲקֹב קוּם עֲלֵה בֵּית-אֵל וְשֹׁב-נָשָׁם וַעֲשֵׂה-נָשָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ לְאֵל הַנְּרָאָה אֲלֵיךָ בְּבָרְחֶךָ מִפְּנֵי יֵשׁוּ אָחִיךָ: ב וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶל-בְּיָתוֹ וְאֶל כָּל-אֲשֶׁר עִמּוֹ (הִסְרוּ אֶת-אֱלֹהֵי הַנִּכְר אֲשֶׁר בְּתֻכְכֶם וְהִטְהַרוּ וְהִחְלִיפוּ שְׂמַלְתֵיכֶם: Jacob understands this command as including the need to remove the foreign gods, the idols we have set up, to reform our ways, and to walk in God's ways. This is coupled to the idea of arriving at Bethel and making an altar to God in the sense that we are to worship Him only in the manner in which He prescribed. These things are connected to the concept of *those things which we hold on to and refuse to let go; those things that hinder our serving the Lord.*" This process of forsaking foreign gods is considered an *involuntary abandonment* by their owners which disqualified them from further use as idols, (*Talmud Bavli Avodah Zarah 52*); Yaakov *Commanded* (his command is described as being *involuntary*) for his household in the Talmud) the members of his household to remove these former idols and to sanctify themselves in order for the people to be qualified to serve God. The verse teaches us that sin itself is called ritual impurity. We have a similar verse in *Ezekiel 20:7* where the prophet warns his compatriots וּבַגְּלוּלֵי מִצְרַיִם אֵל תִּטְמְאוּ *and do*

not defile yourselves by committing the kind of sins committed by the Egyptians.” On the other hand, anyone who abandons sin is described as ritually pure, as we know from *Vayikra / Leviticus 16:30* מכל הטאָה תטהרו, “*you will become cleansed (ritually pure) from all your sins against God.*” (*Rabbeinu Bahya on Bereshit / Genesis 35:2 Part 2*) In the mind of Yeshua, his disciples, and Paul, the Hebrew bible taught God's love for all people and provided a practical guide for daily life. In the translation of the Hebrew and Greek texts, philosophical and theological beliefs are injected by the translators that show an anti-Torah opinion. In light of Yeshua's esteem for Torah, *Matthew 5:17* is actually addressing the issue of properly comprehending the driving force behind the biblical text, which leads to right conduct before God and others. The Hebraic background, such as the approach we just took looking at the rabbis, clarifies the deeper meaning of the biblical text. Take for example, in the Rabbinic literature, the greek words from the gospel that are translated *Abolish* and *Fulfill* possess dynamic equivalents. The word abolish means *interpret incorrectly* and the word fulfill means to *interpret correctly.* The Greek word katalyo (καταλύω) means abolish, and its Hebrew equivalent is batel (בתל), which also means *cancel, abolish, destroy.* Often batel is used in contexts that deal with interpreting Scripture. A person cancels the Torah when it is misunderstood. This is what was happening in the story of Joseph and his people, they poorly understood thinking idolatry was OK and so he commanded them to put away their idols, to literally forsake them for they were going to the house of God to worship. The word fulfill refers to interpreting the Scriptures accurately. The Hebrew equivalent of the Greek word pleroo (πληροο) is kiyem (קיים). The root of kiyem means *to establish, or cause to stand* and has the sense of *upholding, observing, fulfilling, or to place on a firmer footing.* This word also is used in the rabbinic literature to refer to interpreting Scripture. The question is how can one obey the Lord according to His word if one does not comprehend what it requires? If one does not properly understand the role or place of the Torah in the Gospel Message, one may not obey the Lord's will and therefore will cancel the law. Hence, a person may abolish Torah by misconstruing the divine revelation. This is what appears to be happening in the doctrines and theologies of this present day. And historically we are able to observe, the theological polemics

The Torah and the Gospel Message Series

within Christianity during its struggle for self-definition causing the church to sever itself almost completely from Judaism. What we are learning however is the Torah and the Gospel Message go hand-in-hand with one another. It is by the power of God and His Spirit which dwells within that enables us to walk according to the Spirit and live our lives according to God's Torah! Remember, living the Torah of God is a by-product of having a relationship with our Father in heaven in Yeshua God's Messiah!