

Introduction

Part 2

Believing the Lie without Torah

The Truth is the most precious thing! In our world, everyone is searching for something. Human beings are driven by a quest for meaning, and they find meaning when they know the truth and live by it. This is one of the fundamental reasons why Yeshua said according to *John 8:32*, “*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*” When we begin the search for truth, we also have to consider the antithesis of truth, which is the lie. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians the following:

2 Thessalonians 2:9-13

The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the

Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. (ESV)

Here Paul speaks of the lawless one who comes by the activity of Satan in power, false signs, and wonders, for the purpose of deception. These people who practice these ways do so because they refuse to love the truth. The idea of truth and a lie is so powerful, for those who refuse the truth, God Himself sends a powerful delusion such that those who do not believe the truth will believe the lie and so be deceived and condemned. Paul concludes saying that we are sanctified by the Spirit of God and by our belief in the truth. What Paul is writing about here is very important since he is warning us of the evil one who wants to destroy our lives. The Torah describes these things in the sense of the mitzvah (command) against idolatry. Idols are simply a compilation of wood, metal, ceramics, or stone, they do not have any supernatural powers. The question that we should be asking is how could anyone fall for these things in the first place? How could such large numbers of the world's population and a good part of the Jewish nation (from time to time) take up idolatry, especially when it is forbidden in the Torah? This happened by reason of desensitization of these things through the intermingling with the world and forgetting the Word (command) of God. Basically the people left the study of Torah and by doing so they were drawn to the lie.

Today however, more people than ever believe the lie of the evil one. One of the reasons is due to popular television shows that are at work to deceive and destroy. For example, there are many children and adult television shows which depict the champion (heroine) calling upon spirits, casting spells, and performing magic to defeat demonic beings. There are television shows which promote the narratives of teenage witches using their "white magic" to defeat warlocks, demons, and evil spirits, vampires, and werewolves, etc. These popular television shows deal with the world of the occult. Studying the history of mankind, the occult has thrived from since the beginning. An example may be taken from the Ugaritic texts. The Ugaritic texts are a corpus of ancient cuneiform texts discovered since 1928 in Ugarit and Ras Ibn Hani in Syria, and written in Ugaritic, an oth-

erwise unknown Northwest Semitic language. Approximately 1,500 texts and fragments have been found to date. The texts were written in the 13th and 12th centuries BCE. This places the age of these texts to be between 3200-3300 years old. The most famous of the Ugaritic texts are the approximately fifty epic poems; the three major literary texts are the Baal Cycle, the Legend of Keret, and the Tale of Aqhat. The other texts include 150 tablets describing the Ugaritic occult and rituals, 100 letters of correspondence, a very small number of legal texts (Akkadian is considered to have been the contemporary language of law), and hundreds of administrative or economic texts. Note also the Exodus from Egypt and the giving of the Torah was at approximately 1400 BCE, placing the Egyptian occult older and/or within the same time line of these texts. We are also told according to the Torah about the life of Abraham, he left his land and practice of idolatry to follow the Lord God Almighty. (*Bereshit / Genesis 11-12*) The point is the occult goes back to the beginning (i.e. Nimrod the father of the occult in *Bereshit / Genesis 10*). These things describe how the evil one has from the beginning tried to deceive mankind away from the truth. Today, at an ever increasing rate, more and more television shows are being created in order to popularize the occult in an attempt to normalize the occult practice. This is a serious problem for us today! This was also a serious problem for ancient Israel as we read throughout the Tanach and the Apostolic Writings how the prophets of God confronted the occult again and again.

The word occult is derived from the latin word "*occultus*" meaning to cover up, hide, or those things which are hidden or secret. The definition of occult therefore is the practice of attaining supernatural knowledge or powers apart from the God of Israel. Those who practice the occult do so in order to influence the present, or to divine the future of their lives and the lives of others. The wide spread interest in the occult is due to several factors. One factor deals with the disillusionment with the Bible and organized religion. The second factor deals with a curiosity with the occult. Many people begin their adventure into the occult believing it is harmless. Ultimately, those who practice such are looking for power and control, over others, individuals or spirits, etc. The world of the occult brings with it a false message, and a dangerous one. The occult drives us away from

God's presence and brings one in contact with the demonic realm. We are told about the dangers of the occult, as we read Paul speaking about those who come in the activity of Satan. Yeshua said that the Devil is a liar and the father of lies (see *John 8:44*). When dealing with evil spirits (the demonic realm), evil spirits do not deal in truth. They come in the activity of Satan bringing with them the lie, deception, and death. Yeshua said they only seek to steal, kill, and destroy according to *John 10:10*. The Torah describes the practices of witchcraft in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 18* and categorizes this with sorcery, divination, and necromancy, and states that these practices are detestable in the eyes of the Lord. It was these practices that brought destruction to the people of the Land of Canaan. Because of these things, the Torah goes to great lengths to prevent the occult practice from influencing Israel.

Believing the lie is a very dangerous thing as Paul warns us, if we love the lie over the truth, God will send a delusion to keep us bound up in the lie. All of Scripture, including the Torah, teach us that we must be committed to turning from our sin and following after the Messiah with all of our heart. We must heed Paul's exhortation to put on the armor of God as he wrote in *Ephesians 6*. The reason being, "*Our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*" Paul explains to us there is a deeper underlying adversary that is at work attempting to destroy us. The demon realm is the source behind these television shows which popularize witchcraft and the occult. The reason the Torah is so important for our lives, and helps us to not believe the lie is because of the Torah imperative to turn to the Lord God of Israel, and gives us a warning to turn from the lie, and believe the truth of God!

When we pick up a Bible and begin reading, we are embarking on a journey for truth, to know the truth, and to live by that truth. It is unfortunate that due to the theologies and doctrines we have been taught, we may be inadvertently given a lie, and so it is possible to believe a lie to be the truth. We had talked about these things in the Torah Series "*The Torah and the Gospel Message.*" One of the questions I have asked in the past is whether we know the difference be-

tween teaching a theology as opposed to teaching what the Scriptures actually say? In the Torah and the Gospel Message series we had discussed how Pentacoſt (Chag Shavuot) Christianity teaches that the “Church” was created. When reading through the book of Acts, the Scriptures do not say any such thing. The Scriptures ſtate that on Pentacoſt, the diſciples received the Holy Spirit of God and were empowered by the Spirit of God to go out into the world, to be bold in Chriſt, and to have the power to overcome ſin in their lives. The text ſays nothing about the creation of the “Church.” The reaſon being, Jews who believed in Yeshua the Meſſiah believed, have faith, and truſt in the God of Iſrael. The Gentiles who turn from their idolatry and believe in Yeshua the Meſſiah are grafted in to Iſrael. The concept of the Church being a ſeparate entity, (note this is antithetical to being grafted in as Paul wrote in *Romans 11*) and ſeparate from Iſrael has led to many replacement theologies, and correſponding rapture doctrines, etc. Theſe things preſent a problem in relation to the idea of the truth or a lie!

An example I like to uſe pertaining to believing a lie is related to the idea that Paul’s name was changed when he got ſaved on the road to Damascus. When we think about name changes and the Scriptures, this is one of the moſt often thought of name changes that we go to when reading the Bible, that of Saul being changed to Paul. The name change is commonly linked to Saul’s revelation on the Damascus Road that Yeshua is Lord, and when Yeshua commissioned him to take the goſpel meſſage to the Gentiles. (*Acts 9:1-19*) The iſſue we find in the text is that we do not read that Saul had his name changed to Paul. In fact, Yeshua addreſſed him as Saul, and later when Ananias was told to find Saul to reſtore his ſight, Yeshua uſed the name Saul and not Paul. *Acts 9* in fact goes on to deſcribe how Saul grew in ſtrength and the underſtanding of Yeshua the Meſſiah. If Yeshua did not change Saul’s name to Paul, what was happening when following Saul’s conversion, we read the name Paul is being uſed inſtead? The answer is that Saul’s name was alſo Paul. The cuſtom of dual names was common in thoſe days for Jews who lived and were born in the diaspora. *Acts 13:9* actually provides us ſome context ſtating the following:

Acts 13:6-10

13:6 When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they found a magician, a Jewish false prophet whose name was Bar-Jesus, 13:7 who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence. This man summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. 13:8 But Elymas the magician (for so his name is translated) was opposing them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. 13:9 But Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze on him, 13:10 and said, "You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord? (NASB)

Note how Paul speaks to Elymas about perverting the gospel (i.e. attempting to turn one away from faith in Yeshua) and its connection to the devil, the enemy of righteousness. Here in *Acts 13:9* we read the description that "Saul was also known as Paul." This suggests that Saul had two names. It is interesting from this point on the name Paul is used. The reason being, Paul was a Jew born in the Roman city of Tarsus. When he went to the Gentiles, he used his Gentile name. When he went to the Jews, he used his Jewish name.

In many instances in Paul's letters we read how proud he was of his Jewish heritage as he wrote in *Philippians 3:5* which states, "Circumcised on the eighth day, of the race of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrew parentage, in observance of the law a Pharisee." Note in his zealotry for the Torah, he persecuted believers as a way to demonstrate his devotion to the God of Israel. Following the road to Damascus experience, he went to his Jewish brethren but they would not accept his testimony. After that time he was "The apostle to the Gentiles," (*Romans 11:13*) and used his Roman name as he traveled deeper into the Gentile world. Notice something, in addition to his using his Roman name, this began on Cyprus when the Roman proconsul on that island became a believer. (see *Acts 13:12*) This was a high ranking man who turned from his idola-

try coming to faith in Yeshua the Messiah. The proconsul's name was Sergius Paulus, and this has led some to believe that Paul took the name Paulus (Paul) as a reminder of this event. This however is simply a coincidence. The idea that Paul would use his Roman given name over his Hebrew name is not surprising as he proclaimed that he would be "*all things to all people*" saying that he would be "*a Jew to the Jews in order to win Jews, weak to the weak in order to win the weak,*" etc. (see *1 Corinthians 9:19-23*) This attitude allowed him to approach the Gentiles to whom he was sent, and to speak to them in their language (Greek), as we see in the NT it was specifically stated that he started speaking Hebrew according to *Acts 21:40* which states, "*The commander gave him permission, so Paul stood on the steps and motioned with his hand for the people to be silent. When they were quiet, Paul spoke to them in Hebrew.*" If Paul was always speaking in Hebrew, there would be no need to mention what language he was speaking in. This suggests that He routinely spoke in Greek, and only spoke in Hebrew when addressing a large Jewish crowd, as in this case in Jerusalem at the Temple. Note again this adds support for his using the Roman name as opposed to his Hebrew name. The meaning of the name Paul means "*little*" or "*small*" may have also been a way to show how he grew smaller while Christ grew greater in his life and faith. Note this is different from the name change of Simon Peter (See *Matthew 16:18-19*) in which Yeshua purposely changed his name. In the case of Saul however, there is no reference to his name being changed to Paul. I felt this illustrates for us the difference between teaching a truth verses a lie in the sense of confusing the differences between teaching a theology as opposed to teaching what the Scriptures actually state. Another important observation is on the importance of studying the Scriptures, as we see *Acts 13:9* provides us with information on what was going on. This illustrates how important it is when reading the Scriptures we need to pay careful attention to what is written and how it is written!

The point about the belief of the name change of Paul is not a salvational issue. The point is concerning reading the Scriptures and being able to take a few steps back in order to objectively analyze a doctrine or theology for what it is, whether it stands in contradiction to the Scriptures or not. The ability to do so is tightly coupled to the

idea of knowing our Bible. We must be reading the Word of God every day, going through the Scriptures, from cover to cover, each year. It is in this way that we will be kept from deception. Just as Paul wrote to the Thessalonians of the lawless one who comes by the activity of Satan in power, false signs, and wonders, for the purpose of deception. The Torah explicitly warns us of the lawless one, and is the reason why the study of the Bible is so important. If we do not study the Bible daily, we will not recognize those who come in the ways of evil (i.e. the occult). These people who practice these ways do so because they refuse to love the truth. We are to be lovers of the truth! Remember, believing the truth or believing a lie, for those who refuse the truth, God Himself sends a powerful delusion such that those who do not believe the truth will believe the lie and so be deceived and condemned. Because of our culture today, similar to what we see going on in ancient Israel, more people than ever believe the lie of the evil one and I believe this is because the majority of people today have not kept the Word of God close to the heart.