

ONE TORAH FOR ALL

Zerubbabel ben Emunah

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Understanding Torah Society part 18

Torah: Who is it for? How Many Standards?

Shemot (Exodus) 12:49

“One Torah shall be to him that is home-born, and unto the stranger that sojourns among you.”

There is one Torah. However, within that one Torah is many aspects. Certain parts of the Torah apply to particular individuals, while other portions apply to other various groups or individuals. Some commandments are to be obeyed by some people, and other commandments of that same Torah are to be obeyed by other people. Furthermore, not everyone is held to the same standard of measure. As we examine this from the Torah, hopefully, it will become clear there is a parallel between Israel and the human body, just as Shaul suggests in 1st Corinthians. In part, this entails understanding that each part of the body functions in a different manner in order for the body to be in harmony with itself and to function properly. The ear hears; the eye sees; the mouth speaks; and so forth. Likewise, in order for Israel to function properly, each one of its respective parts must do its own task, rather than attempting to do the task of a part of the body which it is not. Hence, upon close examination of the Torah Moshe, one finds various standards within Torah for different parts of Israel. Perhaps this is why the Torah itself refers to “Torahs” in the plural at least five times in the Torah Moshe.

Shemot (Exodus) 18:20

“And you shall teach them the statutes and the Torahs, and shall show them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do.”

We shall examine seven sub-groups within Israel who each have a different standard to live by as commanded by YHWH. There could be more, but these seven will suffice to illustrate this important truth concerning Torah society. The sub-groups and the order in which we shall examine them are as follows: 1) men and women, 2) those over 20 years of age, 3) gerim, 4) goyim, 5) Nazirites, 6) Levites, and 7) priests.

As we study and dissect the following passages of Scripture, one must always remember to put it all back together in the end. This is true of any study of this nature. It is only a part of the whole. As the opening passage points out, there is one Torah. All who would be a part of Israel must submit to the Voice of YHWH as recorded in Scripture. It is His Voice we are to obey.

Vayyiqra (Leviticus) 12:2

“Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, ‘If a woman conceives seed, and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days; as in the days of the impurity of her sickness shall she be unclean.’”

Not surprisingly, men do not give birth to children. Vayyiqra chapter 12 consists of commandments for a woman who gives birth and what she is to do after giving birth. Whether a woman gives birth to a boy or a girl dictates her actions according to these commandments. These commandments do not directly apply to a man. These commandments are for the woman. However, it should be pointed out, that in giving birth, both a female and a male are involved. It is a given that these two people are married to each other. Therefore, since they have become “one flesh,”¹ it can easily be argued that, through the man’s wife, a man keeps these commandments as well, even though the commandments are directed towards the woman. There is one Torah.

Vayyiqra (Leviticus) 15:32-33

32 “This is the Torah of him that has an issue and of him whose seed of copulation goes from him, so that he is unclean thereby;

33 and of her that is menstruating with her impurity, and of him that has an issue, of the man, and of the woman, and of him that lies with her that is unclean.”

Depending upon whether the person is male or female, and what the type of uncleanness, determines how that uncleanness is to be cleansed. Different commandments apply for the male and female. Vayyiqra chapter fifteen deals with specifics of how a man is to become clean as well as how a woman is to become clean. Each gender has its own set of commandments to keep and obey. There are two aspects of Torah—two standards, one standard which applies to men, and one standard which applies to women, yet both are to live in obedience to YHWH through their respective standards. There is one Torah.

B’midbar (Numbers) 27:8

“And you shall speak unto the children of Israel, saying, ‘If a man dies, and has no son, then you shall cause his inheritance to pass unto his daughter.’”

Generally speaking, the inheritance of land stewardship is passed from the father to the son. If a man has daughters, the daughters receive no inheritance from their father. The exception to this is if the father has no sons. Then, and only then, does the inheritance pass to the daughters. Even in this there is a condition, which if not met, voids the possibility of the daughters inheriting from their father.

¹ Idiomatic language for a man and a woman to have a child together, his flesh (seed) has joined with her flesh (egg) to become a new and separate flesh—a child. Thus, the two become “one flesh.”

It is not difficult to see in Torah that men and women are held to different standards. A man does not live by the commandments which apply to a woman, nor does a woman live by the commandments which apply to a man. We must point out that there are many commandments which are non-gender specific, which apply neither to male nor female exclusively, but rather, apply to both genders equally. There is one Torah.

Not only are certain aspects of Torah gender specific, but there are commandments which are age specific, as well. Please consider the following passage, which is not only age specific, but gender specific, also.

Vayyiqra (Leviticus) 27:3-4

3 “And your estimated value shall be of the male from twenty years old even unto sixty years old, even your estimated value shall be fifty shekels of silver, after the shekel of the sanctuary.

4 And if it be a female, then your estimated value shall be thirty shekels.”

Each age group has a different estimated value, and each gender within each age group has its own valuation. We are particularly interested in the twenty year old and older age group at present, because this male age group makes up the men of war within Israel.

Shemot (Exodus) 30:11-14

11 And YHWH spoke unto Moshe, saying,

12 “When you take the sum of the children of Israel, according to those that are numbered of them, then they shall give every man a ransom for his soul unto YHWH, when you number them; that there be no plague among them, when you number them.

13 This they shall give, every one that passes over unto them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary (the shekel is twenty gerahs), half a shekel for an offering to YHWH.

14 Every one that passes over unto them that are numbered, from twenty years old and upward, shall give the offering of YHWH.”

According to this commandment, the males twenty years old and up are to be counted in the census. Each one of these men who is counted must pay a redemption fee of a half-shekel. This applies to all males twenty years old and up, but it does not apply to those who are less than twenty years of age, nor does it apply to women, regardless of their age.

B'midbar (Numbers) 1:45

So all they that were numbered of the children of Israel by their fathers' houses, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war in Israel.

This verse concludes a similar passage in which each and every tribe had the number of its men of war, twenty years old and up, counted and recorded. Those who were not yet twenty were not counted, nor were the women counted. Not everyone within Israel lives by the same standard of measure. There is one Torah.

In the opening passage of this study, we quoted Shemot 12:49, in which it uses the term “stranger among you.” “Stranger” comes from the Hebrew word גֵר – ger, which comes from the root word גָּרַר – gur, which means “to live fearfully.” We see this with Cornelius in the book of Acts, a man who lived fearfully.

Vayyiqra (Leviticus) 19:34

“The stranger that sojourns with you shall be unto you as the home-born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt: I am YHWH your Elohim.”

The group known as גֵרִים – gerim, are to be treated by those same commandments as if they were born into Israel, that is, just as if they are a native-born. There are many passages throughout the Torah which specify how the ger is to be treated in the same manner as the native-born. The following passage is one such passage.

Vayyiqra (Leviticus) 17:8

“And you shall say unto them, ‘Whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among them, that offers a burnt-offering or sacrifice,’”

The incorporation of a ger (pronounced - *gair*) into the life of Israel is to be so complete that the ger is to offer sacrifices in the same manner as the native-born.

However, in the treatment of the ger, there is one exception in Torah, that is, one difference in the commandments which they are to obey. Please consider the following passage.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 14:21

“You shall not eat of anything that dies of itself; you may give it unto the sojourner that is within your gates, that he may eat it; or you may sell it unto a foreigner; for you are a holy people unto YHWH your Elohim. You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk.”

It seems apparent from this passage, that while all the commandments which would apply to a native-born apply also to a גֵר – ger, this one does not. However, it may be this one commandment is a test upon the גֵר – ger to see if he is yet ready and willing to take upon himself the full yoke of Torah. Just because one may give it to the גֵר – ger, does not mean the גֵר – ger must take it, or even eat that which has died of itself, which YHWH commands not to be eaten. There is one Torah.

Vayyiqra (Leviticus) 20:23

“And you shall not walk in the customs of the nation, which I cast out before you; for they did all these things, and therefore I abhorred them.”

The גֵר – ger is a person who has come out of the nations and has attached himself to Israel. A גוי – goy (the plural being גוֹיִם – goyim, which means “nations,” while the singular גוי – goy

means a “person of the nations”), commonly called a “gentile,” may live among Israel, but has not attached himself to Israel. The Torah does not apply to the גוים – goyim. It applies to Israel and to those who come in and attach themselves to her. YHWH gave the Torah to Israel through the prophet Moshe. YHWH did not give the Torah to the nations. Therefore, generally speaking, the Torah Moshe does not apply to the גוים – goyim, even though there are portions within Torah which teach Israel how to treat the גוים – goyim.

For example, when YHWH commands Israel not to have certain sexual relations with close familial relationships, this commandment does not apply to those outside of Israel. That is, it is not against Torah for a goy to do such a thing. This is true of all such commandments given to Israel. There is one Torah.

B'midbar (Numbers) 6:2

“Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, ‘When either man or woman shall make a special vow, the vow of a Nazirite, to separate himself unto YHWH,’”

One group which is completely voluntary is the Nazirite. A Nazirite can be either male or female. This chapter in the book of B'midbar gives the specifics on how a Nazirite is to conduct himself while under this special vow. The vow can be as long as a person chooses, either a short amount of time or lifelong. Shimshon (Samson) was to be a Nazirite from birth for his entire life. In this case, YHWH placed this vow upon him in his mother's womb; it was not voluntary. He is not really a good example of a Nazirite because of his many failings. However, he is a pretty good example of what not to do in this regard. This is most likely why it was recorded for our instruction; see 1st Corinthians 10:6.

There is one Torah.

B'midbar (Numbers) 8:14-15

14 “Thus you shall separate the Levites from among the children of Israel; and the Levites shall be mine.

15 And after that shall the Levites go in to do the service of the tent of meeting; and you shall cleanse them, and offer them for a wave-offering.”

We will not spend too much time here on the Levites or the kohenim (priests) since we presented a study on the Levites and the kohenim just two parts before this present one. We mention them here to point out that the Levites as a tribe have a different standard of measure given directly from YHWH by which they live. YHWH has charged them with keeping the tent of meeting and all that entails. Please note what the writer to the Hebrew followers of Mashiach wrote.

Ivrim (Hebrews) 7:13

For He of whom these things are said belongs to another tribe, from which no man has given attendance at the altar.

The other tribes of Israel are not commanded to attend to the services of the tent of meeting in the way YHWH commanded the tribe of Levi. There is one Torah.

Vayyiqra (Leviticus) 1:5

“And he shall kill the bullock before YHWH; and Aharon's sons, the priests, shall present the blood, and sprinkle the blood round about upon the altar that is at the door of the tent of meeting.”

Likewise, the kohenim, which are a part of the tribe of Levi, are even more set-apart, and they are charged with keeping the services of the mishkan. No other tribe is commanded to do so. Their calling is different than the other tribes. There is one Torah.

There is one Torah. Yes, there are many aspects, standards, and sub-groups within Israel, and not every man lives by the same commandments from YHWH. Yet, all these commandments are from YHWH. Each person must learn to hear and obey His Voice according to the task YHWH has set him apart to do. Regardless of the task, YHWH has only one Voice. It is His Voice by which a man shall live or die. Are there many standards? Yes! However, YHWH is echad (one), and if Israel is to follow her Maker properly, then she must adhere to His one Torah in the appropriate manner.

“Shema Yisrael, YHWH our Elohim YHWH echad.”

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 6:4

When each member of Israel hears and obeys the Voice of YHWH in the way which is pleasing to YHWH, then Israel is keeping all of Torah. Israel is echad.

Yochanan (John) 17:21

“that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that You did send Me.”

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