

5779 - Deuteronomy 29-30 – Nitzavim (You are standing)

^{29:10}All of you are standing today in the presence of the LORD your God—your leaders and chief men, your elders and officials, and all the other men of Israel, ¹¹together with your children and your wives, and the foreigners living in your camps who chop your wood and carry your water.

¹²**You are standing here in order to enter into a covenant with the LORD your God, a covenant the LORD is making with you this day and sealing with an oath, ¹³to confirm you this day as his people, that he may be your God as he promised you and as he swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. ¹⁴I am making this covenant, with its oath, not only with you ¹⁵who are standing here with us today in the presence of the LORD our God BUT ALSO WITH THOSE WHO ARE NOT HERE TODAY.**

1. ¹³to confirm you this day as his people, that he may be your God as he promised you and as he swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

a. Genesis 17:7; b. Exodus 6:7; c. Deuteronomy 28:9

2. ¹⁴I am making this covenant, with its oath, not only with you ¹⁵who are standing here with us today in the presence of the LORD our God **BUT ALSO WITH THOSE WHO ARE NOT HERE TODAY.**

a. Deuteronomy 29:14 (PJE¹)

¹⁴but all the generations which have arisen from the days of old stand with us today before the Lord our God, **and all the generations which are to arise unto the end of the world**, all of them stand with us here this day.

1) **IF descendants of the people who stood before God at Mt. Sinai still exist, THEN this covenant still exists! It is being continually confirmed in the life of each new generation of descendants connected to the twelve tribes of Israel. JUST LIKE IN THE TIME OF MOSES' LAST WORDS – many of those who were a part of God's people at that time were NOT alive a generation earlier when the commandments were first given.**

2) Deuteronomy 5:3

¹ Targum Pseudo-Jonathan is a western targum (translation) of the Torah from the land of Israel (as opposed to the eastern Babylonian Targum Onkelos). Its correct title was originally Targum Yerushalmi (Jerusalem Targum), which is how it was known in medieval times. But because of a printer's mistake it was later labeled Targum Jonathan, in reference to Jonathan ben Uzziel (a disciple of R. Hillel). Some editions of the Pentateuch continue to call it Targum Jonathan to this day. Most scholars refer to the text as Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, or with the acronym TPJ.

b. Midrash Tanchuma, Devarim, Nitzavim 4

"In order to establish you [as a people]." I will not retract what I swore to your forefathers. Not only with you alone [did I make a covenant] but even concerning the generations to come were there at that time, as I stated, "For those who are here, [etc.]" Rabbi Abahu² said in the name of Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmani³: Why it is written, "For those who are here [standing with us today] and with those who are not here [with us today]"? For **their souls were there although their bodies had not yet been created**. Therefore, the term "standing" is not written in reference to those who were not there.⁽¹³⁾

(13) Note the difference here between the two clauses. The word "standing" is mentioned only with reference to those physically there at the time. The Tanchuma explains that for those who only their souls were there but without their bodies, the word "standing" is not used in reference to them.

c. Hebrews 7:1-10

¹This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, ²and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, the name Melchizedek means "king of righteousness"; then also, "king of Salem" means "king of peace." ³Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, **resembling** the Son of God, he remains a priest forever.

⁴Just think how great he was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder! ⁵Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from ... their fellow Israelites—even though they also are descended from Abraham (Num 18:21, 25-26). ⁶This man, however, did not trace his descent from Levi, yet he collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. ⁷And **without doubt the lesser is blessed by the greater ...** ⁸**One might even say that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham,** ⁹**because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the body of his ancestor.**

¹¹If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood—and indeed the law given to the people established that priesthood—**why was there still need for another priest to come, one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron?** ... ¹³He of whom these things are said belonged to a different

² Rabbi Abbahu was a Talmudist who lived in the Land of Israel from about 279-320 (3rd generation of amoraim). He is sometimes cited as *Rabbi Abbahu of Kisrin* (Caesarea).

³ Samuel ben Nahman or Samuel [bar] Nahmani was a rabbi of the Talmud, known as an amora, who lived in the Land of Israel from the beginning of the 3rd century until the beginning of the 4th century.

tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar. ¹⁴For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.

¹⁵And what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears, **one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life.** ¹⁷For it is declared: "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek" (Psa 110:4) ...

- 1) **"Melchizedek's priesthood was a source of numerous post-biblical speculations,** which were intensified by the difficult verse Psalms 110:4: "The Lord has sworn/and will not repent/Thou art priest for ever/after the manner of **Melchizedek**" (אַתָּה־כֹּהֵן לְעוֹלָם) (על־דַּבְּרֹתַי מֶלְכִּי־צֶדֶק). It is generally believed that the Melchizedek mentioned here and the one in Genesis are the same. Some interpreters ... maintain that the Melchizedek of Psalms is not a person but a title, "my righteous king," presumably because the name is written as two separate words (מֶלְכִּי־צֶדֶק).⁴
- 2) Zohar, Bereshith, Section 1, Page 87a
... 'Melchizedek' (lit. king of righteousness) 'king of Salem' (lit. completeness), i.e. the king who rules with complete sovereignty. When is he completely king? On the Day of Atonement, when all faces are illumined. According to another explanation, **'Melchizedek' alludes to the lower world, and 'king of Salem' to the upper world; and the verse indicates that both are intertwined inseparably, two worlds like one, so that the lower world also is the whole, and the whole is one.** 'Brought forth bread and wine': signifying that both of these are in it. AND HE WAS PRIEST OF GOD MOST HIGH: i.e. **one world ministers to the other.** 'Priest' refers to the Right, and 'Most High God,' to the upper world; and hence a priest is required to bless the world. For this lower world receives blessings when it is associated with a High Priest; hence there is a special force in the words 'and he blessed him and said, Blessed is Abram to the Most High God.'
- 3) ³**Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever.**
CJB—**There is no record** of his father, mother, ancestry, birth or death; rather, like the Son of God, he continues as a *cohen* for all time.

- a) It is NOT that he didn't have a "father, mother, ancestry, birth or death," but that this information is NOT KNOWN.
- 4) ⁷*And without doubt the lesser is blessed by the greater.*
 - a) Rosh HaShana 25b
HE TOOK HIS STAFF AND HIS MONEY IN HIS HAND. Our Rabbis taught: When he [Rabban Gamaliel] saw him, he rose from his seat and kissed him on his head, saying, Peace to thee my teacher and my disciple—my teacher, because thou hast taught me Torah publicly, my disciple because I lay an injunction on thee and thou dost carry it out like a disciple. **Happy is the generation in which the greater defer to the lesser, and all the more so the lesser to the greater!** [You say] 'All the more so!' It is their duty!⁽⁷⁾—What it means is that because the greater defer to the lesser, the lesser apply the lesson to themselves with all the more force.⁽⁸⁾
 - (7) We naturally suppose the words to mean, 'all the more so where the lesser defer to the greater,' which would imply that such a thing is not ordinarily to be expected.
 - (8) I.e., they say, 'how much more should we defer to the greater.'
 - b) Ta'anith (Fasts) 7a
Rab Judah said: The day when rain falls is as great as the day when the Torah was given, as it is said, My doctrine shall drop as the rain:⁽²⁾ and by 'doctrine' surely, Torah is meant as it is said, For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my Torah.⁽³⁾ Raba said: It is even greater than the day when the Torah was given, as it is said, My doctrine shall drop as the rain.⁽⁴⁾ **Who is dependent upon whom? You must needs say, the lesser upon the greater.**⁽⁵⁾
 - (2) Deut. XXXII, 2.
 - (3) Prov. IV, 2.
 - (4) E. V. 'my teaching.' Deut. XXXII, 2.
 - (5) Hence **the Torah, which is compared to rain, is the less important.**
- 5) ⁹*One might even say that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham, ¹⁰because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the body of his ancestor.*
 - a. **If one does not appreciate the midrashic application of this verse as simply comparing the priesthood of Melchizedek to the priesthood of Levi, then it makes Yeshua inferior to Melchizedek too. Why? Because he was "in the body of his ancestor" (i.e., Judah) when the tithe was offered as well.**

6) **The implication of this midrash is clear—the Levitical priesthood is designed to facilitate mankind’s relationship to God on earth. The priesthood of Yeshua is “greater” than that of Aaron because his priesthood facilitates mankind’s relationship to God in the Olam HaBah.**

a) Hebrews 2:5

⁵It is ... **the world to come, about which we are speaking.**

7) Romans 6:5-11

¹¹In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God **in Messiah Yeshua.**

a) Ephesians 2:11-13

¹³But now **in Messiah Yeshua** you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Messiah.

^{29:16}You yourselves know how we lived in Egypt and how we passed through the countries on the way here. ¹⁷You saw among them their **detestable images** and idols of wood and stone, of silver and gold. ¹⁸Make sure there is no man or woman, clan or tribe among you today whose heart turns away from the LORD our God to go and worship the gods of those nations; **make sure there is no root among you that produces such bitter poison.** ¹⁹When such a person hears the words of this oath, he invokes a blessing on himself and therefore thinks, **"I will be safe, even though I persist in going my own way." This will bring disaster on the watered land as well as the dry.** ²⁰The LORD will never be willing to **forgive him**; his wrath and zeal will burn against that man. All the curses written in this book will fall upon him, and **the LORD will blot out his name from under heaven.**

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan⁵—¹⁸Beware, then, lest there be among you now or hereafter a man, woman, family, or tribe, whose heart may be turned away to wander any day from the service of the Lord our God to worship the idols of those nations; or **lest there be among you the error which striketh root (in them) whose heart wandereth after his sin; for the beginning of sin may be sweet, but its end is bitter as the deadly wormwood ...**

1. ¹⁷You saw among them their **detestable images** ...

a. 16. **detestable things** Hebrew: *shikkutzim*, a disparaging term used in the Bible for idols. It comes from the verb *shakketz* (spurn, reject as abominable); see 7:26. It is commonly employed in connection with the ban on impure foods.

5 Targum Psuedo-Jonathan is a translation of the Torah from the land of Israel. Its correct title is Targum Yerushalmi ("Jerusalem Targum"), which is how it was known in medieval times. But because of a printer’s mistake it was later labeled Targum Jonathan, in reference to Jonathan ben Uzziel.

1) Deuteronomy 7:26

Do not bring a **detestable thing** into your house or you, like it, will be set apart for destruction. **Regard it as vile and utterly detest it, for it is set apart for destruction.**

2. ¹⁸make sure there is no root among you that produces such bitter poison.

a. Hosea 10:4, 13

... ¹³But **you have planted wickedness, you have reaped evil**, you have eaten the fruit of deception.

b. Amos 6:12

But **you have turned justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into bitterness.**

c. Acts 8:14-24

²¹**You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God ...** ²³**For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin.** ²⁴Then Simon answered, "Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me."

d. Galatians 6:7-8

⁸**The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction;** the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

e. Hebrews 12:15

See to it that no one misses the grace of God **and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.**

3. ^{19c}"I will be safe, even though I persist in going my own way."

a. Isaiah 5:21; b. Proverbs 28:26 (cf. Prov 29:1)

c. Matthew 3:7-10

⁹I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰The ax is already at the root of the trees, and **every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down** and thrown into the fire.

d. 2Peter 2:4-10

—⁹**if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to hold the unrighteous for punishment** on the day of judgment.

¹⁰This is especially true **of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority.** Bold and arrogant, these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings ...

4. ^{19d}*This will bring disaster on the watered land as well as the dry.*

a. **moist and dry alike** The unique and problematic Hebrew phrase probably is an expression meaning “everything.” Moses is comment-

ing on the consequences of the sinner's delusion: God will sweep away everything that belongs to the sinner or to the entire nation.⁶

CJB—so that I, although "dry," [sinful,] will be added to the "watered" [righteous].'

JPS—that the watered be swept away with the dry ...

LXX—lest the sinner destroy the guiltless with *him*:

PJE—so that he will add presumption to the sins of ignorance.

1) *Rashi* interprets ... *the watered*, as unintentional sins, and ... *the thirsty*, as intentional sins. If a person deludes himself that he may act as he wishes, then God holds him responsible for his unintentional sins as well. Thus, the verse is saying that HaShem will add an additional punishment for a man's unintentional sins if he continues to sin intentionally.⁷

b. Luke 23:31

²⁶As they led him away ... ²⁷A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned ... for him. ²⁸Yeshua turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, **do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children.** ²⁹For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' ³⁰Then they will say to the mountains, 'Fall on us!' and to the hills, 'Cover us!' ³¹For if men do these things **when the tree is green**, what will happen **when it is dry?**"

1) Ezekiel 20:45-21:7

⁴⁵The word of the LORD came to me ... ⁴⁶"preach against the south and prophesy against the forest of the southland. ⁴⁷Say to the southern forest: 'Hear the word of the LORD. This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am about to set fire to you, and it **will consume all your trees, both green and dry.** The blazing flame will not be quenched, and every face from south to north will be scorched by it. ⁴⁸Everyone will see that I the LORD have kindled it; it will not be quenched.'" ⁴⁹Then I said, "Ah, Sovereign LORD! They are saying of me, 'Isn't he just telling parables?'"

^{21:1}The word of the LORD came to me: ²"Son of man, set your face against Jerusalem and preach against the sanctuary. Prophesy against the land of Israel ³and say to her: 'This is what the LORD says: I am against you ... I will ... ⁴cut off from you both **the righteous and the wicked** ... ⁶Therefore groan, son of man!

Groan before them with broken heart and bitter grief. ⁷And when they ask you, 'Why are you groaning?' you shall say, 'Because of the news that is coming. Every heart will melt and every hand go limp; every spirit will become faint and every knee become as weak as water.' It is coming! It will surely take place, declares the Sovereign LORD."

a) The "**green tree is the righteous—the dry tree is the wicked.**

b) Like Ezekiel, Yeshua is heartbroken because of the terrible destruction which would soon befall the city of Jerusalem and the people of Judah.

c) The Greek text reads literally, "if they do these things *in* a green tree."

1] To "do in" (someone) is a Hebrew idiom which means to "do to" (someone).

d) This idiom has confused our translators and many have tried to make sense of it by translating the verse; "For if they do this **when the wood is green**, what will happen **when it is dry?**" (NIV, RSV).

1] Matthew 17:12

But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done **to (lit., in) him** everything they wished ..."

e) **Yeshua is saying; "Don't weep for me, weep for yourselves. If they do this to me, what will they do to you?"** In other words, if this is done to the "Green Tree" of Ezekiel 20:47 (i.e., to Yeshua), what will happen to the "dry trees" (i.e., to the less than perfectly righteous)?

f) Hosea 14:1-9

⁸O Ephraim, what more have I to do with idols? I will answer him and care for him. **I am like a green pine tree;** your fruitfulness comes from me."

g) Genesis Rabbah LIII:1

1. AND THE LORD REMEMBERED SARAH AS HE HAD SAID (XXI, 1). It is thus that Scripture writes, And all the trees of the field shall know that I the Lord have brought down **the high tree**, have exalted **the low tree**, have dried up **the green tree**, and have made **the dry tree** to flourish; I the Lord have spoken and done it (Ezek. XVII, 24). R. Judan said: Not like those who speak but do not perform. R. Berekiah said on the verse, 'I the Lord have spoken and done it': Where did He

6 David L. Lieber, *Etz Hayim, Torah and Commentary*, (The Jewish Publication Society), p. 1167.

7 Rabbi Elie Munk, *The Call of the Torah, Devarim*, (Mesorah Publications, Ltd.), p. 320.

... speak it?—At the set time I will return unto thee ... and Sarah shall have a son (Gen. XVIII, 14). And I have done it—AND THE LORD DID UNTO SARAH AS HE HAD SPOKEN. ‘And **all the trees of the field shall know**’ refers to the people, as you read, For **the tree of the field is man** (Deut. XX, 19); ‘That I the Lord have brought down **the high tree**’ alludes to Abimelech; ‘Have exalted **the low tree**’—to Abraham; ‘Have dried up **the green tree**’—to Abimelech’s wives, as it is written, For the Lord had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech (Gen. XX, 18). ‘And have made **the dry tree** to flourish’ alludes to Sarah ...

^{29:29}"The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this Torah."

1. **This is an important idea—God has revealed some things to us—He has granted us only glimpses of other things—and some things remained closed.**

a. There are a great many things we do NOT know ... things that the Scriptures have only hinted at—and even though Yeshua is a crucial revelation of God—even he is not God’s entire *revelation* of “secret things.”

b. FFOZ—***“It is ironic that things which are essentially unknowable and intangible are the things which divide us, one from another, the most deeply. Differences of opinion and interpretation on theological issues typically define the borders between one denomination and another, one sect and another, one congregation and another, one brother and another. Differences are often over matters of conjecture—things inferred from the Scriptures but left ultimately unanswered. Though we may have different theories regarding theology and biblical eschatology, we all have the certain obligation to heed the commandments. If only we could learn to let the secret things remain the LORD’s and spend all our energy on accomplishing that which has been clearly revealed!”***

—Then we would be too busy trying to live our lives according to God’s will rather than separating ourselves from one another.

c. Daniel 12:1-10

... ***“But you, Daniel, roll up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge.”***

⁵Then I, Daniel ... ⁸asked, ***“My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?”*** ⁹He replied, ***“Go your way, Daniel, because the words***

are rolled up and sealed until the time of the end. ¹⁰Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. ***None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand ...***

d. Proverbs 25:2

e. Matthew 11:27

²⁷***All things have been committed to me by my Father.*** No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son ***and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.***

1) Matthew 24:32-36 (Mark 13:32; Acts 1:6-8))

³⁶***“But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”***

f. Romans 11:33

g. Romans 16:25-26 (cf. Eph 3:1-6)

²⁵Now to him who is able to establish you ... according to the revelation of ***the mystery hidden for long ages past,*** ²⁶***BUT NOW REVEALED and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God,*** so that all nations might believe and obey him.

h. 1John 3:2

... ***when Messiah appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.***

^{30:2}and when you and your children return to the LORD your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today, ³***then the LORD your God will restore YOUR FORTUNES and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you.*** ⁴Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the LORD your God will gather you and bring you back. ⁵He will bring you to the land that belonged to your fathers, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers. ⁶The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.

1. ³***then the LORD your God will restore YOUR FORTUNES and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you.***

a. **Notice—“restore YOUR FORTUNES”—NOT RE-REDEEM YOU!—NOT RE-SAVE YOU!**

^{30:11}Now **what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach.** ¹²It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, "Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" ¹³Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, "Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" ¹⁴No, **the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.**

1. Deuteronomy Rabbah VIII. 6

Another explanation: IT IS NOT IN HEAVEN. Israel said to Moses: 'Our teacher Moses, lo, you say to us, IT IS NOT IN HEAVEN, NEITHER IT IS BEYOND THE SEA, then where is it?' He answered them: 'It is in a very near place, IN THY MOUTH, AND IN THINE HEART, THAT THOU MAYEST DO IT (ib. 14), it is not far from you, it is near you.'

2. Romans 10:4-13 (CJB)

⁴For the goal at which the *Torah* aims is the Messiah, who offers righteousness to everyone who trusts.

⁵For Moshe writes about the righteousness grounded in the *Torah* that the person who does these things will attain life through them (Lev 18:5). ⁶**Moreover**, the righteousness grounded in trusting says: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend to heaven?'" (Deu 30:12)—that is, to bring the Messiah down—⁷or, "'Who will descend into Sh'ol?'" (Deu 30:13)—that is, to bring the Messiah up from the dead. ⁸What, then, does it say? **"The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart"** (Deu 30:14)—**that is, the word about trust which we proclaim**, namely, ⁹that if you acknowledge publicly with your mouth that Yeshua is Lord and trust in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be delivered. ¹⁰For with the heart one goes on trusting and thus continues toward righteousness, while with the mouth one keeps on making public acknowledgement and thus continues toward deliverance. ¹¹For the passage quoted says that *everyone* who rests his trust on him will not be humiliated. ¹²That means that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—*ADONAI* is the same for everyone, rich toward everyone who calls on him, ¹³since *everyone* who calls on the name of *ADONAI* will be delivered.

—Leviticus 18:5

³Keep my decrees and laws, for the person who obeys them will live by them. I am the LORD.

a. 5 - "Should there be any doubt whether the righteousness that results from obeying God's statutes and judgments leads to eternal life, the verse says, 'he will live by them,' on which Rashi (quoting the Sifra, a fourth-century collection of *midrashim* related to Leviticus), comments: **'It refers to the world to come:** for if you say it re-

fers to this world, doesn't everyone die sooner or later?' Thus I translate the phrase, **he will attain life through them—eternal life.**

The word for 'live' or 'attain life' is the same as that used at (Romans) 8:12-13 to describe what will happen to the believer who 'by the Spirit' keeps 'putting to death the practices of the body.' Conclusion: Sha'ul affirms that the *Torah* and *Ruach HaKodesh* offer one and the same eternal life. This is consistent with and suggested by the fact that the Holy Spirit came to the first believers on *Shavu'ot* (Pentecost), the same day the *Torah* was given to Moses.⁸

The two most important of the 'statutes and judgments' referred to in Leviticus 18:5 are stated by Yeshua at Mark 12:28-31: (1) loving God (the *Sh'ma*, Deuteronomy 6:4-5) and (2) loving one's neighbor as oneself (Leviticus 19:18). Both are predicated on trusting in God: you can't love God if you don't believe in him as who he says he is, and since both you and your neighbor are made in God's image you can't love your neighbor as yourself in the sense that the *Torah* demands without believing in the God who made both of you.

Therefore, Leviticus 18:5, quoted here by Sha'ul, backs up this point that obeying the *Torah* requires trust, not legalistic works.

6-8 - Verse 6 commences with "Moreover." Conjunctions are little words easily ignored, but in a closely reasoned argument they can be of critical importance, even to the point of changing its entire sense. This is an instance. The Greek conjunction "*de*," used here, is confusing to English-speakers because it can have any of these three very different meanings:

- (1) "*And, moreover, furthermore*," implying that what follows is not in contrast with the preceding thought but does limit, condition or modify it in some way. Example: "I love you, *and* I will love you always."
- (2) "*But, rather, in contrast, on the contrary*," implying that what follows is different from and contrasts with the preceding thought. Example: "I love you, *but* you don't love me."
- (3) "*But, but only if*," implying that what follows is not in contrast with the preceding thought but does limit, condition or modify it in some way. Example: "I love you, *but* I need you to return my love."

Greek could use "*de*" in all three sentences.

Again, erring for the same reason as in v. 4, namely, deeply rooted anti-Semitism, all the major English translation and most commentators take "*de*" as "but" in the sense of (2). This makes vv.

⁸ David H. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, (Jewish New Testament Publications), pp. 397-400.

6-8 contrast with v. 5 instead of continuing or modifying its thought, thusly: “The righteousness based on the *Torah* says one thing (v. 5), *but, in contrast*, the righteousness based on faith says something else (vv. 6-8).” This interpretation, like the one that makes v. 4 speak of terminating the law, is anti-Semitic, even if today it is unintentionally so.⁹ It flows out of the Christian theology which mistakenly minimizes the importance of the Mosaic Law. This, in turn, is the fruit of the Church’s effort during the second through sixth centuries of the Common Era to eliminate, hide or finesse the Jewishness of Christianity ... It is crucial, therefore, to insist that vv. 6-8 do not present the righteousness based on faith in the Messiah Yeshua as *different* from the righteousness based on the *Torah*, but as *the same*—the same righteousness based on the same trust and leading to the same eternal life.

The chief reason vv. 6-8 should be seen as explaining v. 5 and not as presenting something new is that the quotation from Deuteronomy 30:11-14 which Sha’ul uses to make his point is the *Torah* itself, the very *Torah* that is wrongly understood to teach legalism (both by the non-Messianic Jews Sha’ul is opposing and by the Christian interpreters I am opposing). Sha’ul quotes from the *Torah* in order to show that **the righteousness grounded in trusting** (v. 6) is exactly the *same* as “the righteousness grounded in the *Torah*” (v. 5). He proves this by showing that the very trust implicit in the Torah quotation of v. 5 ... is taught explicitly as well—the Torah itself commands the very trust Sha’ul is talking about, trust in God and in his Messiah when he comes. Thus vv. 6-8 sharpen the meaning of v. 5 which is then seem to imply that the person who practices “the righteousness grounded in the *Torah*” (v. 5) will necessarily have **the trust** in Yeshua the Messiah **that we proclaim** (v. 8). That is, he will see that the *Torah* itself guides him toward the goal of trusting Messiah Yeshua (v. 4). Therefore, understanding “*de*” (v. 6) in sense (1), I have rendered it “**Moreover**” in the JNT, so that vv. 6-8 add to the point already made in v. 5 instead of contrasting with it.

... (So), the righteousness grounded in *Torah* (v. 5) says that you must trust, not that you must do legalistic works. It is true that the person who “does these things” (v. 5) will attain life and righteousness, but the “doing” of “these things” can only be accomplished in faith; it is by definition impossible to do them by self-effort, for that would contradict what the *Torah* itself requires ...

Perhaps the most cogent reason for rejecting sense (2) for “*de*” is that Greek has a different word, “*alla*” which is a strong adversative, which Sha’ul could have used had he meant to present an alternative way of being considered righteous by God. Had he written “*alla*,” it could only be translated, “*but, on the contrary, in contrast*” ...

As I said, I believe Sha’ul quotes Deuteronomy to prove the *Torah* itself teaches that righteousness requires trust. But, some think Sha’ul misuses the *Torah* by quoting selectively in order to apply the passage to the Messiah, whereas the original refers clearly and only to the *Torah* ...

However, Sha’ul is not picking and choosing. He plays by the rules. According to the canons of rabbinical citation, the context is assumed as given—even a brief quotation is supposed to call to the reader’s mind the entire passage of which it is a part ... Sha’ul knows this: he knows his readers cannot be “deceived” into ignoring the context, particularly the words adjacent to the ones he cites. Therefore, far from changing the *p’shat* (“simple sense” ...) of the text, Sha’ul is assuming his readers know that *p’shat* already, so that he can base upon it a *drash* (“teaching”) which should win the acceptance of anyone who approaches the Torah in a spirit of trust ...

In v. 7 Sha’ul’s substitution of “**descend into Sh’ol**” for “cross the sea” does not seriously alter the underlying thrust of the *p’shat*, but it does make its application to Messiah clearer. Just as no human effort is needed to bring the *Torah* from heaven, where, according to Jewish tradition, it existed from eternity past, before God gave it to Moses on Mount Sinai; so likewise, no one needs to **ascend to heaven**, where the Messiah once was (Yn 6:36 ...)—even, according to Jewish tradition, from eternity past (compare Micah 5:1(2)—in order **to bring Messiah down**. Nor need one **descend into Sh’ol**, according to the *Tenakh*, the place of the dead, where Yeshua also was (for three days; Psalm 16:10, Mt 12:39-40, Yn 2:19-22, 1 Ke 3:19), **to bring the Messiah up from the dead**, because God has already done it (Acts 2:24-32). If there is no need to bring the Messiah from where he has once been (Sh’ol), all the more is there no need to bring him from where he has not been (“beyond the sea”); this is an implied *kal v’ chomer* argument ... In any case, the purpose of both the Deuteronomy passage and this one is to show that self-effort is neither necessary nor possible: both *Torah* and Messiah were given by God’s grace, without human assistance, so that Israel might “hear ... and do.”

1) Matthew 6:30

⁹ Virtually all translations render v 4 as does the NIV: “(Messiah) is the culmination (or the “end”) of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.