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WHERE NEW LIFE BEGINS

Understanding Romans Through Jewish Eyes: A Fresh Look at Paul's Message

If you've never explored the **Jewish-Hebrew perspective** behind the writings of Paul, then you may not realize how much depth you've been missing. Many Western Christian interpretations of the book of Romans overlook crucial historical and cultural context — particularly the first-century Jewish mindset that shaped Paul's teaching.

Here, we'll walk through some key chapters and verses, unpacking how understanding Paul as a Jewish rabbi changes everything — not just for theology but for how we live out our faith today.

Paul: Rabbi and Apostle to the Nations



First, remember who Paul really was. Known in Hebrew as **Shaul**, he was a top student of Rabbi **Gamliel**, the president of the Sanhedrin and the most respected teacher of that era. Acts 22:3 tells us:

"I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law..."

So while we often picture Paul as simply a Christian missionary, in reality, he was a **Jewish rabbi**, fully immersed in the Torah and Jewish tradition. God specifically chose this scholar to bring the good news of the Messiah — first to his own people, and then to the Gentiles. Why? Because Gentiles didn't know the Scriptures; they needed someone who did.

What Romans Is — And Is Not

The book of Romans isn't a stand-alone theological textbook. It's a pastoral letter to a mixed community: **Jewish believers and Gentile converts worshipping together** in Rome. It addresses real tensions: Jews judging Gentiles for not keeping certain customs, and Gentiles misunderstanding grace as permission to live however they pleased.

Paul's aim is to clarify **the purpose of the Torah**, the power of faith in Messiah, and the unity God desires for His people.

The Heart of the Matter: All Have Sinned

Paul opens with a sweeping reminder that **both Gentiles and Jews fall short** of God's standard. He writes:

*“...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...”
(Romans 3:23)*

In chapter 1, he exposes the moral collapse of Gentile culture. In chapter 2, he rebukes the Jews for hypocrisy:

“For not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified.” (Romans 2:13)

This echoes James 1:22–25: “*Be doers of the word, and not hearers only...*” The Torah (God's law) is not the problem — the misuse of it is.

Torah vs. Halakha: Knowing the Difference

One key misunderstanding is that first-century Judaism didn't revolve strictly around the written Torah (Genesis to Deuteronomy) but around **Halakha** — the **traditions and rulings of the rabbis** that built fences around the Torah. Jesus (Yeshua) Himself challenged these traditions when they nullified God's commandments (Mark 7:8–9).



Many early Jewish believers brought these man-made traditions into their faith in Yeshua. Paul corrects this: righteousness doesn't come by rabbinic tradition but by **faith and obedience to God's true Word**.

One Law for All

Paul emphasizes that God's commandments apply equally to Jew and Gentile — just as the Torah always said:

*“One ordinance shall be for you of the assembly and for the stranger who dwells with you, an ordinance forever throughout your generations...”
(Numbers 15:15–16)*

Paul agrees: everyone stands equal before God’s law — and everyone has broken it (1 John 3:4: “*Sin is lawlessness*”). Therefore, everyone needs a Savior.

Faith Establishes the Law

One of the biggest misunderstandings comes from assuming faith cancels the law. Paul tackles this directly:

*“Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.”
(Romans 3:31)*

And later:

*“Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.”
(Romans 7:12)*

Clearly, Paul loved God’s Torah — he delighted in it (Romans 7:22). What he rejects is using the law as a ladder to climb to righteousness. Messiah alone saves; the law teaches us how to walk as saved people.

Under the Law vs. In the Law

Romans 6 clarifies another confusion:

“For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.” (Romans 6:14)

To be “**under the law**” means to stand condemned by it — under its penalty. To be “**in the law**” means living within its guardrails. Paul’s point: grace frees us from condemnation, not from holy living.

He writes plainly:

“What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!” (Romans 6:15)

The Law Reveals Our Need

In Romans 5:20, Paul says:

“Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound...”

The law exposes sin so that we see our need for mercy. Without the law, we wouldn’t recognize sin — and wouldn’t see our need for the Savior.

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23)

No Condemnation for Those in Messiah

After describing the inner battle with sin, Paul bursts out:

“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” (Romans 8:1)

God’s law is still holy, but the penalty has been nailed to the cross. We walk free, empowered by the Spirit to live righteously.

Romans isn’t an argument to abandon God’s commandments. It’s a passionate plea to understand them rightly: as a gift, not a burden; as a guide, not a savior. Messiah fulfilled the penalty we deserved — but the law still shows us how to live like Him.

So let’s read Romans as Paul intended: a call to unity, humility, and holy living — Jews and Gentiles, one people, walking together in the grace and truth of our Messiah.

Key Scriptures to Reflect On

- **Romans 2:13** — Be doers of the law
- **Romans 3:23** — All have sinned
- **Romans 3:31** — Faith establishes the law
- **Numbers 15:15–16** — One law for all
- **Romans 6:14–15** — Not under condemnation but under grace
- **Romans 7:12, 7:22** — The law is holy and a delight
- **Romans 8:1** — No condemnation in Messiah
- **1 John 3:4** — Sin is breaking God’s law
- **James 1:22–25** — Be doers, not just hearers

It’s time to bridge the gap between Paul’s first-century world and our modern faith. Let’s seek to know not just what he wrote, but **why he wrote it** — and let it transform us from the inside out.

May we live as Paul did: rooted in the Word, saved by grace, and walking in obedience — for the glory of our Messiah Yeshua. One of my favorite verses in all of Romans is found in chapter 8, verse 28:

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”

Friend, if you needed to hear that today, let it sink deep into your spirit: *God is working every detail of your life together for good.* But notice the condition — *this promise is for those who love Him.*

So, what does it really mean to love God? It’s more than saying, *“I love You, Lord”*. True love for God is loving Him *His way* — on His terms, not ours. Remember how Israel made a golden calf in the wilderness because they wanted to worship in a way that suited them? Let’s not repeat that mistake. Jesus said plainly:

“If you love Me, keep My commandments.” (John 14:15)

So, love Him as He desires to be loved — by obeying Him and by loving your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:37–39). Better yet, love your neighbor even more than yourself — selfless love is a fragrance that pleases God deeply.

And alongside that love, hold on to trust. Stand firm in faith that Romans 8:28 is true for you. Rejoice even in your trials, because your Father is at work behind the scenes. He’s shaping you like a potter shapes clay on the wheel — pressing, spinning, smoothing out the rough edges. Yes, it’s uncomfortable. But in the end, you will be exactly what the Master Potter intended you to be: *the image of His Son.*

“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image...” (2 Corinthians 3:18)

Chapters 9–12: Faith, Not Just Works

In Romans 9:30–32, Paul hits another core truth:

“What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness... but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained... Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law...”

Israel missed the point — they were faithful in keeping the law’s customs and traditions (the *Halakha*), but they relied on those works instead of having a living faith. Sadly, many today repeat the same mistake: striving to be “good people” without truly knowing the One who makes us righteous.

Salvation is a walk of *faith*, not a checklist. Paul reminds us: it's not about the list — it's about the *Lord* who wrote it!

A Misunderstood Prophecy

Romans 9:25–27 quotes Hosea and Isaiah:

*“I will call them My people who were not My people...”
“Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant
will be saved.”*

Many assume Paul is talking about Gentiles here, but understanding Israel's two houses brings clarity: the northern kingdom (house of Israel) was scattered and lost their identity; yet God promised to bring them back and call them His people again. So, Paul is reminding everyone: *God keeps His covenant promises — He restores and redeems even what seems lost.*

Christ, the Goal of the Law

Romans 10:4 is another misunderstood gem:

“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”

The word “end” here is the Greek *telos* — meaning *goal, purpose, or completion*. Christ is not the termination of the law but its *goal*. He is the ultimate purpose for which the law was given.

“Receiving the end (telos) of your faith — the salvation of your souls.” (1 Peter 1:9)

In other words, the law points us straight to Christ, who is our righteousness.

God is Not Done with Israel

In Romans 11, Paul reassures us:

*“I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an
Israelite...” (Romans 11:1)*



Israel's blindness is partial and temporary:

“Blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved...” (Romans 11:25–26)

God's plan includes both the natural branches (Israel) and the wild branches (Gentiles) grafted into the same olive tree — Israel. So, Paul warns: don't boast in arrogance. If God grafted you in by grace, He can prune you too. Stay humble!

Living Sacrifices — Romans 12

Romans 12 shifts to powerful, practical instructions:

“I beseech you therefore, brethren... that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.” (Romans 12:1)

God does not ask you to die for Him — He asks you to *live for Him*. Lay down selfishness. Love sincerely. Forgive generously. Serve passionately. Let your life itself preach the gospel.

Romans 13:1 says:

“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities...”

This doesn't mean blind obedience to ungodly commands. Paul's context addresses a tense situation for believers under Roman rule: *as far as you can, live peaceably and don't provoke unnecessary conflict*. Pay taxes, be honorable, but obey God above all (Acts 5:29).

Judging and Freedom — Romans 14

Paul also clears up a big source of confusion: eating meat and observing certain days. This isn't about the Sabbath; it's about whether food bought at the market had been offered to idols — and about fasting days.

He says: *Respect each other's convictions*. If a brother won't eat meat out of conscience, don't judge him. If someone fasts on a certain day, don't argue — honor their devotion.

“Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.” (Romans 14:19)

Closing Thoughts

Finally, Romans 15:4 reminds us:

“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”

Friend, this entire letter is a masterpiece teaching us to trust God’s promises, to walk by faith, and to love each other deeply.

May these truths encourage you, challenge you, and remind you of how wide and deep the love of God is. If any part spoke to you, share it with someone today — *and let’s walk this faith journey together.*

Watch full teaching here: https://youtu.be/JSQhqXQ_n70



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