

Title: The Essence of Torah
Pastor: Hennie Swart
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Introduction

The essence of Judaism was Temple and Torah.

Only two types of Judaism survived the destruction of the temple in 70 AD:

- Pharisaic (Rabbinic) Judaism: no temple.
- Messianic (Christian) Judaism: new temple.

Matthew wrote to the descendants of these two Judaisms about what it means to remain faithful to the covenant by obeying Torah.

Separation of possessions

Leviticus 19:18-19

¹⁸ You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

¹⁹ "You shall keep my statutes. You shall not let your cattle breed with a different kind. You shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed, nor shall you wear a garment of cloth made of two kinds of material.

Separation of food

Leviticus 20:24-26

²⁴ I am the LORD your God, who has separated you from the peoples.²⁵ You shall therefore separate the clean beast from the unclean, and the unclean bird from the clean. You shall not make yourselves detestable by beast or by bird or by anything with which the ground crawls, which I have set apart for you to hold unclean.²⁶ You shall be holy to me, for I the LORD am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine.

Separation of food/possessions

Matthew 23:23-24

²³ Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.²⁴ You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!

Separation of time/space

Matthew 12:1-2 & 5-8

¹At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat.² But when the Pharisees saw

it, they said to him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.+

⁵ Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless?⁶ I tell you, something greater than the temple is here.⁷ And if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless.⁸ For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.+

Separation of people

Matt 9:9-13

⁹As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him.

¹⁰And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples.¹¹ And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"¹² But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick."¹³ Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.+

Separation of people

If we try and separate from those who need love for the sake of holiness we are breaking the law, not fulfilling it.

The Pharisaic practice of ~~enforcing~~ the law created even more rules and made the problem worse.

The essence of Torah

Matt 5:43-48

⁴³"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?⁴⁸ You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Matt 7:12

"So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

Matt 22:36-40

³⁶ "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?"³⁷ And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."³⁸ This is the great and first commandment.³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

The direction of contamination

Under the Old Covenant with its external law the direction of contamination was from unclean to clean, from common to holy.

Under the New Covenant with its internal law the direction of contamination is from clean to unclean, from holy to common.

e.g. When Jesus touched lepers (**Matt 8:3**), a woman with a flow of blood (9:20), the dead (**Matt 9:24-25**), or sinners (**Luke 7:36-50**), they were contaminated, not Him.

Conclusion

Old Testament → Centripetal evangelism (come)

New Testament → Centrifugal evangelism (go)

You are contagious . freely you have received, freely give (**Matt 10:8**)

The key to interpreting and applying Torah is not separation, but love.

Don't interpret the law in a way that separates you from the people who need God's love or that prevents you from reflecting God's character.