

Is the Goal of Torah the Messiah or the Goal of Messiah the Torah?

To reword the question, what is the goal of Messiah; is it Torah or Righteousness, and what is the goal of Torah? Is the goal of the Torah of Messiah the uniting of all peoples in righteousness before the Creator and King of the Universe?

These are not simple questions as there appear to be some conflicting answers, and in particular some conflicting and perhaps contradictory passages on this topic in the New Testament.

To appreciate why I have even raised this question, consider this quote from Frank Selch, in 'Torah: Divine Instructions or Mosaic Law':

"One major error, in correctly representing the mind of Paul, is found in Romans 10:4. It is in relation to the above paragraph. Most translations say the following, or very similar: '...for Christ (Messiah) is the end¹ of the law to righteousness for everyone who believes...'

This verse is read by many to mean that Christ put an end to the law, ie. the Jewish Torah. (We are now under grace!) But what a contradiction in terms! Yeshua Himself stated emphatically that He had not come to destroy the Torah! Yet, Christians took it upon themselves to do this very thing. As a result, hatred spread from church pulpits and fanatical, misled Christians went and confiscated Torah scrolls and burned them, as well as other sacred Jewish writings, in special bonfires.

Is it so difficult to grasp why Rabbis throughout the centuries called upon their congregations to reject THE WAY --- Yeshua, if His followers could treat the Holy Scriptures with such contempt?

However, this is not what Paul had written. The phrase, when interpreted correctly, is clearly a Hebrew one. It summarises the hope of Israelites of many centuries. Therefore, if we were to translate this verse from a Hebrew perspective, it would read thus; **'For Messiah is the GOAL, AIM or PURPOSE of Torah, for righteousness to everyone, who believes...'**

Did not Yeshua Himself speak of the very same thing as He walked with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus; and again just before His Ascension into glory, (c/f Lk.24:26---27, 32, 44---45)?

'And beginning from Moses (Torah) and from all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning himself in all the scriptures!'

The statement of Romans 10:4 belongs to the very heart of all disputes that have raged in the first century --- and since --- concerning the question of 'THE LAW'. It was inconceivable for the God-fearing Jew of the first century -- and since -- that God could abolish that, which He has said would last forever. It is therefore only natural, that they would object to such teaching. It would also be totally inconsistent with Paul's understanding of the Torah.

In fact, some of the ancient Rabbis stated that, when Messiah comes, He will explain the unclear portions of Torah. It is recorded in John's Gospel that even the Samaritans held such a hope: e.g. **'The woman said to Him (Yeshua), "I know that Messiah is coming; when He comes, He will declare all things to us".** --- John 4:25

To this very day, Jewish People all over, can be heard echoing this sentiment. If then the above is true, then the meaning of the word, which Yeshua used in the Matthew passage, has to be: 'to complete'. In other words, Yeshua, the Messiah of Israel **completes** God's instructions to the Children of Israel and humanity as a whole." -- end quote.

The Tanakh:

So, while Frank Selch has already addressed this question in this quote, and his great book, let us turn first to the Tanakh (OT) and ask a couple of significant questions.

Firstly, what were the prophecies, attributes and purpose of the Messiah as declared in the Tanakh? That is, does the Tanakh inform us of the Messiah's purpose and goal? Then, we can look in the NT to see if there is agreement, and

¹ τέλος (telos) from a primary tello (to set out for a definite point or goal); TDNT - 8:49,1161; the core meaning of telos is end to which all things relate, the aim, purpose. It is worth noting that the NASB, published by Holman Bible Publishers, indicates in the margin of Ro.10:4 that 'goal' is an alternate reading to 'end'. Why is this understanding not incorporated into the text, if not for doctrinal purpose?

perhaps even an expansion of this goal or purpose.

Another question we might ask is, what does the Tanakh say of itself in terms of its goal and purpose, and in particular the goal and purpose of the Torah (primarily defined here as the instructions of God as most clearly described in the first 5 Books of Moses).

If through these questions and our answers we can derive a fairly clear answer to the original questions, we may then be better equipped to tackle the possible contradictions or alternative understandings that some may see as presented by some passages in the NT.

The Prophecies and Purpose or Goal of the Messiah:

Firstly, we see from Deuteronomy 18 that he was to speak perfectly the Words of the Father (not his own), that is, at all times he was to point people to the Father not himself. In fulfilling the prophecy that the Almighty declared to Moses; the prophecy that he would send one from amongst Moses brethren (that is an Israelite) who would speak exactly what the Adonai (Almighty God) told him, clearly indicates that his speech is on behalf of Adonai, making him the agent of Adonai, and thus pointing his hearers to Adonai.

His seven main attributes are described in Isaiah 11:1---10 and they are:

- “(1)... and the spirit of Adonai will rest upon him,*
- (2) the spirit of wisdom,*
- (3) and understanding,*
- (4) the spirit of counsel,*
- (5) and might,*
- (6) the spirit of knowledge,*
- (7) and the fear (awesome respect) of Adonai. ...”*

None of this is self-serving, or self-promoting or even suggesting of exclusivity. That is, his goal, his whole focus is to point others to Adonai, through Torah.

But there's more! Let us look at Isaiah 11:1---10 again:

- 1 But a branch will emerge from the trunk of Yishai, a shoot will grow from his roots.*
- 2 The Spirit of Adonai will rest on him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and power, the Spirit of knowledge and fearing Adonai —*
- 3 he will be inspired by fearing Adonai. He will not judge by what his eyes see or decide by what his ears hear,*
- 4 but he will **judge** the impoverished **justly**; he will decide fairly for the humble of the land. He will strike the land with a rod from his mouth and slay the wicked with a breath from his lips.*
- 5 Justice will be the belt around his waist, **faithfulness** the sash around his hips.*
- 6 The wolf will live with the lamb; the leopard lie down with the kid; calf, young lion and fattened lamb together, with a little child to lead them.*
- 7 Cow and bear will feed together, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox.*
- 8 An infant will play on a cobra's hole, a toddler put his hand in a viper's nest.*
- 9 They will not hurt or destroy anywhere on my holy mountain, for the earth will be as full of the knowledge of Adonai as water covering the sea.*
- 10 On that day the root of Yishai, which stands as a banner for the peoples — **the Gentiles will seek him out**, and the place where he rests will be glorious.*

We can also see that his faithfulness to Adonai will be most significant and that he will do something so amazing that this Anointed One of Israel will be sought out by the pagan world, by the Gentiles!

The Gentile prophet Balaam also prophesies that the return of the Israelites to Eretz Israel (the Land of Israel) will be led by the Messiah:

Numbers 24:17–20 *“I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not nigh; There shall step forth a star out of Jacob, And a sceptre shall rise out of Israel, And shall smite through the corners of Moab, And break down all the sons of Seth. And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also, even his enemies, shall be a possession; While Israel doeth valiantly. And out of Jacob shall one have dominion, And shall destroy the remnant from the city. And he looked on Amalek, and took up his parable, and said: Amalek was the first of the nations; But his end shall come to destruction.”*

The goal of this still future event is the return to Israel, (and to right relationship with Adonai) of the Jewish people, a goal to be accomplished, at least in part, through Messiah².

Jacob refers to Messiah by the name Shiloh. Genesis 49:10 *"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, As long as men come to Shiloh; And unto him shall the obedience of the peoples be."*

From the context of this blessing of Jacob to his sons, the 12 tribes, it appears that the meaning is that Israel is obedient to the Messiah, or that it is thanks to his leadership, his teaching and guidance that the people are obedient to Adonai.

That is, the Messiah gets the credit for their obedience. I find this interpretation a better fit given his emphatic goal as the perfect agent of the Almighty.

It seems clear from the many prophecies in the Tanakh that the Messiah will incessantly campaign for Torah observance among Jews, and possibly for observance of the seven universal Noahide laws by the Gentiles. The Messiah will be scrupulously observant, and encourage the highest standards from others.

The Messiah will be recognized as a true Jewish King, a person who leads the way in the service of Adonai.

The great Jewish Rabbi, Maimonides states in his Mishneh Torah that the Messiah will first rebuild the Temple and then gather in the exiles and that Jerusalem and the Temple will be the focus of divine worship, and *"from Zion shall go forth Torah, and the word of the ADONAI from Jerusalem."* (Isaiah 2:4)

So in summary, these few Scriptures that we have touched on certainly point to the prominence of the Messiah, but that his place and authority is ultimately to bring glory to God and to bring the nations into obedience and righteousness.

From what we have looked at so far, it may be clear that the Torah does indeed point to the Messiah; that the goal of the Torah is the Messiah, because he is so prominent in the last day's events that bring in the Kingdom of God and **complete**³ the narrative that is contained in the Torah and Tanakh. And yet, we can also hopefully see that this prophet, this Anointed One and King of the Jews, will be a leader in bringing Israel back to the Torah; and hence back to God.

We see then that the Messiah was to 'complete' the Torah and in this sense is indeed the goal or purpose or end---point at which the Torah points, and yet, the purpose of the activities of the Messiah is to point Israel and the nations to the Almighty's instructions (Torah) and to the Almighty Himself!

So if we pause in our study to ask the question again at this stage; if the goal of Torah the Messiah or the goal of Messiah the Torah, we may still have a little difficulty in answering this question, as there is truth in both positions.

To better appreciate this conundrum though, consider this illustration: Some researchers wanted to study the differences between the Western and Eastern (including Hebraic) mindset. They did a number of surveys where they asked a representative sample of 'Westerners' and then 'Easterners' some questions like this one.

They showed each person a photo of a Monkey; a Polar Bear and a Banana and asked them which was the odd one out. The great majority of Westerners said the Banana because the other two were animals and the great majority of the Easterners said the Polar Bear, because Monkeys eat Bananas. That is, the Eastern Mindset saw relationships as more significant than 'likeness' or labels.

From the Eastern and Hebraic mindset then, I suggest that the relationship between the Torah and Messiah is more important than which came first or which is the goal or end---point of the other. That is, the answer to the original question may well be that both answers are correct. Rather than rational logic, think laterally and recognize that the inter---dependence requires that both be true.

While most righteous and observant Jews continue to pray and look for the coming of this prophesied Messiah, some share with the followers of Yeshua, the belief that Yeshua is this Messiah and that he will return and complete these great prophecies⁴.

² See my article: ['Israel: Return in Belief or Unbelief'](#) for details.

³ Refer back to quote of Frank Selch

⁴ I discuss in some depth some of the amazing events that will occur when Messiah comes in my commentary on Isaiah 49. See <http://www.circumcisedheart.info/Isaiah%2049%20-%20a%20commentary.pdf>

The New Testament:

So now let us turn to the NT and consider the over---all message of the life (and death and life) of Yeshua. Does it fit all these prophecies?

No. Some, in fact many, are clearly still to come to pass, but has his life to date fitted into this plan? It would certainly appear so to me.

Yeshua declared what his goal and mission were in Luke 4:43 and Mark 1:38, and that his mission was to announce the Good News of the Coming Age, the Kingdom of God. He declared that the Kingdom was not far off (the Prince of the Kingdom was after-all in their midst), and that the lost sheep of Israel need to repent and turn back to the Father (note that he didn't say they were to turn back - repent -- to him).

He also declared that in helping to announce and bring in the Kingdom he would ultimately destroy evil (the 'works of the devil' – 1 John 3:8 – see also Numbers 24:17-20 quoted above).

All that we read about Yeshua, most particularly in the Synoptics (the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke), was that his life was always about the Almighty, and about serving others. His parables; his lifestyle; his love and mercy directed his brethren to the Father, not the Son. Did he not say when called 'good', 'only the Father is good' (Matt 19:17).

And then what was his practical conclusion to the Father being good? Obey me, look at me, worship me, exalt me? No, it was obey the commandments! Obey the Words of God! Obey Torah!

Let us consider a few other NT verses though, that speak about goals and the Coming Age.

In Matthew 19 we have the story about a rich young man who asked Yeshua how he could attain the great goal of eternal life.

“16 And behold, a man came up to him, saying, Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?”

17 And he said to him, Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.

18 He said to him, Which ones? And Yeshua said, You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness,

19 Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as

yourself. 20 The young man said to him, All these I have kept. What do I still lack?

21 Yeshua said to him, If you would be perfect [or as the CJB puts it 'if you are serious about reaching the goal'], go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.

So here we see that Yeshua was very much part of the goal as he asked the man to follow him, but we can also see the ultimate goal was eternal life and the path to that goal was Torah (specifically the 10 Words)!

Also the leader in Jerusalem of the sect of followers of Yeshua after his ascension, Yaa'cov (James) said *“If, however, you are fulfilling the Torah of the King⁵, according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” (Lev 19:18) you are doing well.”* (James 2:8).

Here also, we see obeying the 10 Words (Leviticus 19:18 in context being a summary of the 10 Words), as the goal of life with the King of Israel, the Messiah.

What about the Apostle Paul/Rav Shaul?

He appears to have much to say on this question. I will focus on Romans, but firstly a couple of quotes from Colossians and Philippians:

Colossians 1:27---29 *“We, for our part, proclaim him; we warn, confront and teach everyone in all wisdom; so that we may present everyone as having reached the goal, united with the Messiah.”*

Philippians 3:12 ---14 *“... leave the past behind and with hands outstretched to whatever lies ahead I go straight for the*

⁵ Many translations have 'royal law' here.

goal—my reward, the honour of being called by God in Messiah.”

In these verses the goal certainly is very much centered on the Messiah. Consider his introduction to Romans, that sets the tone for this epistle:

Romans 1:1-6 *“1. From: Sha’ul, a slave of the Messiah Yeshua, an emissary because I was called and set apart for the Good News of God. 2 God promised this Good News in advance through his prophets in the Tanakh. 3 It concerns his Son — he is descended from David physically; 4 he was powerfully demonstrated to be Son of God spiritually, set apart by his having been resurrected from the dead; he is Yeshua the Messiah, our Lord. 5 Through him we received grace and were given the work of being an emissary on his behalf promoting trust-grounded obedience among all the Gentiles, 6 including you, who have been called by Yeshua the Messiah.”* (CJB)

Clearly the Apostle Paul is speaking to the Gentiles of their ‘obedience of faith’.

The Apostle Paul goes on in this epistle to make it clear that the **“Gentiles are forbidden to become Jews not because becoming Jewish and keeping Torah are no longer valid acts of faith; they are forbidden because to do so would he to deny the universalistic oneness of God (he is the One God of all the nations), which would implicitly deny his election of Israel and the privilege of Torah, because if he is not the One God of all outside Israel who believe in him then he is not the One God of Israel; he is not the One God at all”** --- see ‘The Mystery of Romans’ by Prof Mark Nanos (p 184).

The Apostle Paul also states that Yeshua establishes Torah and is its goal in Romans 15:8-9 *“Now I say that Messiah Yeshua was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, ‘For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name’⁶.”*

In Romans 15:5---12, we read:

*“5 And may God, the source of encouragement and patience, give you the same attitude among yourselves as the Messiah Yeshua had, 6 so that with one accord and with one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah. 7 So welcome each other, just as the Messiah has welcomed you into God’s glory. 8 For I say that the Messiah became a servant of the Jewish people in order to show God’s truthfulness by making good his promises to the Patriarchs, 9 and in order to show his mercy by causing the Gentiles to glorify God — as it is written in the Tanakh, “Because of this I will acknowledge you among the Gentiles and sing praise to your name.” 10 And again it says, “Gentiles, rejoice with his people.” 11 And again, “Praise Adonai, all Gentiles! Let all peoples praise him!” 12 And again, Isaiah says, On that day the root of Yishai, which stands as a banner for the peoples — **the Gentiles will seek him out**, and the place where he rests will be glorious.”* (Isaiah 11:10)

So we see here that the Apostle Paul saw that Yeshua had already fulfilled verse 10 of Isaiah, as the Gentiles he was addressing in Rome had turned from their idolatry and sought Yeshua the Messiah.

it would seem to me that the Apostle Paul saw Yeshua as perfectly fitting the picture that the Tanakh prophesies for the Messiah and therefore surely supporting the Tanakh’s view of the Messiah both as a goal of Torah and a ‘ensign’ or ‘banner’ to point both the lost sheep of Israel and the God---fearing gentiles back towards Torah and Adonai.

So in conclusion, I believe that the New Testament supports the Tanakh in declaring both that the goal of Torah is Messiah and that the Torah is the goal of Messiah!

But the ultimate goal and conclusion of Torah and Messiah is surely the uniting of all peoples in righteousness before the Creator and King of the Universe!

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⁶ Psalm 18:49