



The Most Important Mitzvah

The Centrality of the Gospel Message

The single most important mitzvah of all Scripture is to trust in Yeshua as your LORD and Savior. Everything else centers on this. The two “great commandments” are the *Ve’ahavta* (“Love the LORD with all your heart”) and the obligation to love others as yourself (Matt. 22:36-40). These two commandments presuppose, however, that: 1) you believe that the LORD is real, personal, loving, and accessible, and 2) you are in fact *able* to love the LORD and others *in the truth*. As I mentioned recently, however, apart from genuine spiritual rebirth and the new life imparted through Yeshua (i.e., *chayim chodashim*: תַּיִם הַדְּשִׁים), it is literally *impossible* (ἀδύνατος) to fulfill these commandments. Those who are “in the flesh” *cannot* please God (Rom. 8:8). Indeed, the principle (νόμος) called the “law of sin and death” (תּוֹרַת הַחַטָּא וְהַמָּוֶת) is invoked whenever someone attempts to draw close to the LORD apart from faith in His appointed Sacrifice and Mediator for sin. The idea that your “good deeds” can merit access to the LORD’s Presence and favor is ultimately the *negation of the cross*. The Apostle Paul warned that those who perverted the message of the gospel by adding *any* form of “works of law” (מַעֲשֵׂי תְּהוֹרָה) were under a divine curse (Gal. 1:8-9). Yes, it’s that serious of an issue...

The New Testament states that believers in Yeshua are “declared righteous” (δικαιόσω) *apart from* the works of the law (Rom. 3:28, Gal. 2:16). The “declared righteous one” shall live by *faith* (Rom 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38). The Hebrew word for “faith” (i.e., *emunah*: אֱמוּנָה), occurs for the first time in the Torah in connection with Abraham (Gen. 15:6). But what was the nature of Abraham’s faith that God declared him righteous? Was it based on works of the law? After all, Abraham understood the commandments, statutes, and laws of God (Gen. 26:5). But what law called for *human sacrifice*? Could you imagine seeing Abraham on the way to offer Isaac upon the altar at Moriah? If you were to ask him what he was doing, what would he be able to reply? If you were to later see him slowly raising his knife to slay his son, would you think that he was obeying the law of God or rather that he had gone insane and lost his mind?



(Of course we know - *after the fact* - that Abraham's hand was stopped by the Angel of the LORD, but remember that he did not know the LORD's intervention was imminent. Abraham traveled three long days to Moriah with the intent to offer his "only begotten son" (בֶּן יְחִידָה) as a sacrifice, and surely Isaac understood the purpose of the mission as well. We miss the incredible drama and significance of this test if we forget this.)

As Kierkegaard pointed out, "faith" is its own category or mode of existing: "Faith is the contradiction between the infinite passion of inwardness and objective uncertainty." When Abraham was tested with the Akedah, he was willing to give up his rational understanding of the moral law in obedience to God. He believed God could do the impossible (Matt. 17:20; Luke 1:37). Abraham was declared *tzaddik* (righteous) because he *trusted* that God would fulfill his promise made to him, even if he slew his promised heir upon the altar (Heb. 11:17-19). Through his faith, Abraham foresaw the redemption of the world (the Messiah) and believed in God's promise of salvation (John 8:56). As Paul states, "For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law (הַתּוֹרָה) but through the righteousness of faith" (Rom. 4:13). The works of the law (מַעֲשֵׂי הַתּוֹרָה) and the righteousness of faith (הַאֲמוּנָה הַצְּדִיקָה) are therefore *antithetical* and contrary concepts (Rom. 9:32). Those who accept this truth are called "the children of Abraham" and are partakers of his blessings (Gal. 3:7,9). Paul even went further by forcefully saying that "all who rely on works of the law are under a curse" (Gal. 3:10). It was solely through the righteousness of Yeshua as *Adonai Tzidkenu* (יְהוָה צְדִיקָנוּ) that we are saved from the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13).

Why, then, was the law at Sinai given? "It was *added* (προστίθημι) because of transgressions" (Gal. 3:19). The law was "set forth" to teach us about the holiness of God and to function as a mirror of our inward condition. The "lawful use of the law" is intended to convict us of our sin and thereby lead us to the message of the gospel (1 Tim. 1:8-11). It is only by means of the law's verdict against us that we recognize our need for God's salvation. The law itself is powerless to save, but it does speak the truth about God's righteous demands as our Creator and Judge.



The law was also given to serve as a “tutor” or “guardian” (παιδαγωγός) to *lead us* to the School of the Messiah (Gal. 3:19-25). Note that the Greek word used here (“paidagogos”) referred to a trusted servant who would supervise the life and morals of boys belonging to the upper class. Before arriving at the age of manhood, boys were not allowed to leave their house without being escorted by their “paidagogos.” Followers of the Messiah are admonished not to revert to childish thinking but to understand matters *maturely* (1 Cor. 13:11, 14:20, Heb. 5:12-14). We are now led by the Spirit of God as God’s sons and are therefore no longer “subject” to religious regulations (δόγμα) that command us to “touch not, taste not, handle not.” We are now called to seek those things that are above, where the Messiah reigns from on high (Col. 2:20-3:1). “Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is” (Eph. 5:17). Yeshua came to bear witness to the truth: “Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice” (John 18:37). The truth sets us free to become co-heirs with the Messiah in the Kingdom of God (Rom. 8:17, Titus 3:7, John 8:32). If we love the Messiah, we will honor His covenant and His Torah (2 Cor. 10:5).

Many of us, I am afraid, don’t really want to be free... It’s so much easier for us to justify ourselves as pleasing to God on the basis of some litany of rules we are keeping (i.e., ‘Torah Observance,’ keeping ‘kosher,’ attending religious services, etc.) or through some ritual acts that we are performing (i.e., ‘Shabbat observance,’ ‘communion,’ ‘liturgy,’ and so on). We feel more comfortable in a group, as part of a crowd. We do not want to live as truly free individuals before the LORD because this implies that we are responsible for our individual lives. But genuine freedom only comes through individual and personal faith (אמונה). We must inwardly *trust* that we have direct access to the Throne of Grace (כסא הַחַסֵד) and are *accepted* by God as His own beloved child (Heb. 4:16, Rom. 8:15). God has made us “graceful” (χαριτώω) in the beloved (Eph. 1:6). This is the first step, and all the rest will take care of itself if we really do business there...

Trusting in the LORD is *foundational* to all that may rightly be called Torah. The Talmud (Makkot 23b-24a) says, “Moses gave Israel 613 commandments, David reduced them to eleven (Psalm 15), Isaiah to six (Isaiah 33:15-16), Micah to three (Micah 6:8), Isaiah reduced them again to two (Isaiah 56:1); but it was Habakkuk who gave the one essential commandment: *tzaddik be’emunato yich’yeh*, literally, “the righteous, by his trust, shall live.” In the New Testament (long before the compilation of the Talmud), the apostle Paul had first distilled the various commandments of the Torah to this same principle of faith (see Rom. 1:17, Gal. 3:11, and Heb. 10:38).



וְצַדִּיק בְּאֵמוּנָתוֹ יֵחִיָּה

ve-tzad-dik be-e-mu-na-to yich-yeh

ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεώς μου ζήσεται

“But the righteous shall live by faith” (Hab. 2:4)



This small phrase, consisting of only three Hebrew words, is the central axis upon which our salvation turns, since it distills the requirement that we are justified by our *faith* in God’s righteousness (צְדָקָה אֱלֹהִים) and not by “works of righteousness (מַעֲשֵׂי הַצְּדָקָה) which we have done” (Titus 3:5). Regarding the righteousness that comes by faith and its relationship to the works of the law, Paul writes: “To the one who does not work (τῷ μὴ ἐργαζομένῳ) but trusts in him who justifies the ungodly (πιστεύοντι δὲ ἐπὶ τὸν δικαιοῦντα τὸν ἄσεβῆ), his faith is counted as righteousness” (Rom. 4:5).

There are many false teachers at work today, including many who teach error in the name of the “Messianic movement.” These teachers invariably claim that something more is needed than simple faith in the truth of the gospel message. The author of the Book of Hebrews states: “For the law made nothing perfect, but now a better hope has taken its place. And that is how we draw near to God (Heb. 7:19). He goes on to warn: “For yet a little while, and the Coming One will come and will not delay; but my righteous one shall live by faith (וְצַדִּיק בְּאֵמוּנָתוֹ יֵחִיָּה), yet if he shrinks back my soul has no pleasure in him” (Heb. 10:37-40). Likewise, the Apostle Paul warned believers not to be seduced with the demands of the law once again: “Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?” (Gal. 3:2-3). He goes on to liken those who wish to return to Sinai as slaves, whereas those who press on to Zion as free.

In yet another analogy, Paul says that a widow is released from her obligation to her deceased husband and is therefore free to remarry another: “Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law (ὁμοῖς ἐθανατώθητε τῷ νόμῳ) through the body of Messiah, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God” (Rom. 7:4). In terms of this analogy, a “return to the law” is like a form of *spiritual adultery*, since it betrays the new covenant that God has given to us who believe (Rom. 7:1-4).



When the Lord Yeshua came there was *a change in the law*, because there was a change in the priesthood (see Heb. 7:11-12). This priesthood of Yeshua is said to be after the “order of Malki-Tzedek” (מַלְכֵי־צֶדֶק), based on a direct oath from God, that *predates* the operation of the Levitical priesthood (for more information about the role of Yeshua as our High Priest, see the article “Yom Kippur and the Gospel”). This is not unlike the office of King/Priest that Moses held when he commanded the sacrifice of the Passover lambs during the Exodus. The *korban pesach* (sacrifice of Passover) was not originally instituted through the Levitical priesthood (i.e., the Mishkan), but rather *predated* the giving of the law to the priests. It is no coincidence that Yeshua explicitly referred to this (pre-Levitical priesthood) event to speak of His role as *Seh Elohim*, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 3:1-12).

Indeed, the Levitical priesthood “made nothing perfect” and therefore a “new priesthood” was required to finally reconcile us back to God (Heb. 7:19; Psalm 110:4). “For when there is a change (μετατιθεμ□νης) in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change (μετάθεσις) in the law as well” (Heb. 7:12). The word translated “change” here comes from the verb μετατίθημι (from *meta*, “after” + *tithemi*, to “set”) which would be better translated as “transposed.” The idea is the priesthood *reverted* back to the original priesthood of Zion and therefore required a corresponding “transfer” of authority (μετάθεσις) to the original kingship as well (Heb. 7:12). Yeshua is our great *Kohen Gadol* (High Priest) after the order of Malki-Tzedek (Heb. 5:10, 6:20; 7:1-28), just as He is our King and the final authority of the Torah. Those who follow Him are called to be *mamlekheth kohanim v’goy kadosh*, “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” forever (Exod. 19:6, 1 Pet. 2:9, Rev. 1:6, 5:10). Followers of Yeshua have an altar “from which those who serve in the Tabernacle are not permitted to eat” (Heb. 13:10).

Today we don’t offer sheep and goats upon altars in our services because we understand that this is no longer the way to come before the LORD. We have a better hope before the Throne of Grace (Heb. 4:16, 7:19). (For more on this important subject, see the article, *Rabbis who Deny Blood Atonement*). So what are you going to trust, your religious zeal for righteousness or God’s gracious salvation? To put it another way, when you face the coming day of judgment, will you be trusting in your own merit or in the merit of Yeshua?



If you listen to some Messianic teachers out there today, you'll hear that the Christian Church is either an entirely self-deceived social institution or else that "Christians" are woefully deficient regarding matters of spiritual truth. In short, these teachers insist that something *more* needs to be added, some additional knowledge, practice, awareness, insight, and so on. And of course these teachers position themselves as the ones who can "disabuse" you of your pagan misconceptions, etc. We see this trend in both the "Torah observant" schools of Messianic Judaism as well as in the "new wave" of "mystical Messianic Judaism" that is beginning to become more and more commonplace.

Such spiritual pride is insidious, seductive, self-flattering, and therefore dangerous. Indeed, the term itself is an *oxymoron* (e.g., like "bittersweet"), since genuine spirituality is always rooted in *humility*. The humble soul understands its finitude and radical contingency -- and therefore understands its absolute need for God's help. The proclamation of the Cross of Yeshua as the *sole means* of atonement with God is inherently offensive to the idea of "meritocracy" taught in traditional Judaism (and in other "karma-based" religions).

Let me repeat the main point I am trying to make here. The single most important mitzvah of ALL of Scripture is to trust in Yeshua as your LORD and Savior, since He *alone* is the one who gives us true spiritual life. "Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which *you could not be freed by the law of Moses* (Acts 13:38-39). Yeshua is the way (הַדֶּרֶךְ), the truth (הָאֵמֶת), and the life (הַחַיִּים); no one comes to Father apart from Him (John 14:6, Acts 4:12). As Jesus said, "The Father judges has given all judgment to the Son, so that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father" (John 5:23-24). "Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life" (1 John 5:12):

מִי אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ הַבֶּן יֵשׁ-לוֹ חַיִּים
וּמִי אֲשֶׁר אֵין-לוֹ בֶּן-הָאֱלֹהִים אֵין-לוֹ חַיִּים

mi a-sheer lo ha-ben yesh lo chay-yim
u'mi a-sheer ein lo ben ha-E-lo-him ein lo chay-yim

Whoever has the Son has life; and whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. (1 John 5:12)



Finally, let me restate something important whenever we consider these things. We do not impugn the Torah when we say that God has made a *better covenant* based on better promises (Heb. 8:6). The LORD is the same yesterday, today, and forever: He is one.... The revelation and grace of God is manifest at Sinai as it is at Zion. What's changed is the *covenant* -- and our response to that new covenant in light of the full counsel of the Scriptures. An honest reading of the New Testament shows that Paul was not simply rejecting legalism, but *any form* of work-based salvationism. Israel should have known this, since the Torah (and prophets) prophesied that a new era of “circumcised hearts” would come. Therefore Paul puts forward the idea that salvation by the grace of God is in perfect harmony with the overall teaching of Torah.

Please do not be confused about all this. Torah study is good and Christians are expected to understand the writings of Moses (and the prophets) and how they reveal Yeshua as the Messiah (Luke 24:27; Acts 3:22). When Paul wrote to the Gentile churches, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17), he was of course referring to the Jewish Scriptures, since the New Testament had not yet been compiled for the church. By all means then should followers of the Jewish Messiah study the Torah of Moses and be aware of how it glorifies the LORD. But Torah study must be informed with the Spirit of Truth (רוּחַ הָאֱמֶת). Yeshua is the central character of the story of redemption, the “Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8).

We are commanded to “rightly divide” (i.e., *orthotomeo*, ὀρθοτομέω, lit. “cut straight”) the “word of truth” (דְּבַר הָאֱמֶת, see 2 Tim. 2:15). Therefore, in order to avoid confusion regarding the relationship between the words of Moses and the words of Yeshua, we must bear in mind that Torah (תּוֹרָה) is a *general* word that means “instruction” and always is a *function* of the underlying covenant (בְּרִית, “cut”) of which it is part. In other words, Torah is *our responsibility* to the covenantal actions of the LORD God of Israel. Followers of Yeshua are therefore not “anti-Torah” even if they understand this word in relation to the new and better covenant of God (Heb. 8:6). There is indeed a Torah of the New Covenant, just as there is Torah of the older one. Messianic believers are called to adhere to the instruction of King Yeshua who is the embodiment of all genuine truth from God (John 1:17). The all-important matter is to understand our response to God's covenantal actions as mediated through God's promised Messiah (1 John 5:11-12).



So does all this mean - in practical terms - that we can disregard the Torah and ignore what it teaches? *By no means.* We cannot even begin to understand the idea of the New Covenant (בְּרִית הַדְּשָׁה) or even the nature of salvation itself (יְשׁוּעָה) apart from thoroughly understanding the law of Moses (תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה). (Psalm 1:1-2, 19:7, 119:97, etc.) Again, Yeshua plainly said that Moses and the prophets wrote of Him (John 5:46, Luke 24:27), and the Apostle Paul stated that faith in the Messiah upholds the “lawful” use of the law (1 Tim. 1:8, Gal. 3:19-24, Rom. 3:27-28, etc.). This is the “law of faith” (תּוֹרַת הָאֱמוּנָה) that precedes and underlies all that was given at Sinai to the Jewish people. It is the “deeper Torah” of trust that Abraham and the prophets understood. As Paul wrote, “Does it follow that we abolish (καταργέω, “make useless”) Torah by this trusting? Heaven forbid! On the contrary, we establish (ἵστανται, “make stand”) the truth of the Torah” (Rom. 3:31).

Just as there is a deeper sense of *Torah* that Paul appealed to make his case that he was not teaching “against the law” (e.g., Gal. 3:16-18), so there is a deeper sense of *rest* (שְׁבִיחַ) that God promised those who are trusting in Him (מְנוּחַת שְׁבִיחַ, Heb.4:9). This rest comes from relying on the finished work and ongoing mediation of Yeshua the Messiah for our righteousness before the Father. *May you turn to Him for life and peace now!*



Addendum #1: The Gospel is Jewish

When considering the contrasts between “the law and the gospel,” it’s vital that remember that we are discussing something inherently Jewish. The ideas of grace, salvation, faith, and so on are all 100% Jewish concepts given throughout the Jewish Scriptures -- both in the Tanakh and in the New Testament writings. “Two mountains, two covenants,” yes - but *both* are Jewish... There is a unity of revelation in Scripture, and the LORD God of Israel is the same today, yesterday, and forever. Keeping this in mind will guard you from the egregious errors of Replacement Theology.

כִּי הַיְשׁוּעָה מִן־הַיְהוּדִים הִיא

ki ha-ye-shu-ah min ha-ye-hu-dim hi

“Salvation is from the Jews” (John 4:22)



Addendum #2: The use of the word “law” in the NT



A source of potential confusion for readers of the New Testament concerns how the word “law” is to be understood. Does “law” always refer to the Torah of Moses or to the Old Testament? Put the other way, is it right to substitute the word “Torah” for the word “law” when we read the New Testament?

The word *nomos* (νόμος, “law”) has a range of semantic meanings in Koine Greek and therefore should not necessarily be regarded as an exact equivalent for the term *Torah* (תּוֹרָה). As explained elsewhere on this site, the word “Torah” is derived from the verb *arah* (אָרָה) meaning to “shoot” (as an arrow), or to indicate direction. It is therefore a *general* term that refers to instruction or guidance, and should be carefully distinguished from other Hebrew words such as “commandment” (i.e., *mitzvah*: מִצְוָה), “statutes” (i.e., *chukkim*: חֻקִּים), “judgments” (i.e., *mishpatim*: מִשְׁפָּטִים), and so on. To traditional Jewish thinking, the legal aspect of Torah is generally called *halakhah* (from *halakh*: הָלַךְ, “to walk”) and includes the ideas of case law (תְּקֵנָה), custom (מִנְהַג), and the use of tradition (מִסְכָּרָה) as expressed within the Oral Law. The legal aspects of Torah have roots in the system of judges (שֹׁפְטִים) that Moses commissioned (Exod. 18:13-24; Deut. 16:18, 19:17-18, etc.) and in the Bet Din (בֵּית דִּין), or religious system of justice that culminated in the supreme court of Israel called the Sanhedrin (סַנְהֶדְרִין). These legal aspects of Torah are usually distinguished from the homiletic or exegetical understanding of the Scriptures (e.g., midrash), which is generally called *aggadah* (אַגְדָּה).

In light of these distinctions, it is unfortunate that the ancient Jewish translators of the Scriptures (i.e., the Septuagint) chose to use the word “law” (i.e., *nomos*) for the word *Torah*, since this can lead to essential misunderstanding about the meaning of the *Torah*. For example, they chose to translate the Hebrew name of the last book of Moses (i.e., *devarim*: דְּבָרִים, “words”) as “the Second Law” (i.e., Δευτερονόμιον, fr. *deutero* + *nomos*), since many Hellenistic Jews at that time regarded the book as a summary (or retelling) of the various laws of Moses. Indeed, in most cases the Septuagint translates the word



“Torah” (תּוֹרָה) as “nomos” (νόμος). In Deuteronomy 4:8, for instance, the word *nomos* is used to denote to the collection of *mishpatim*, *chukkim*, and *mitzvot* representing all of Israel’s covenantal obligations before the LORD. This idea that “Torah” meant “nomos” was carried over to New Testament usage, of course, and the distinction between the idea of “law” and “instruction” was thereby made unclear...

To the classical Greek mind, *nomos* referred to an idealized standard, often linked with the ontology of Plato’s forms (ιδέες) or the laws of nature, though in other senses it referred to social standards and norms of the community (i.e., the legal definition). The Jewish Hellenistic theologian Philo of Alexandria (20 BC - 50 AD), for example, attempted to harmonize Platonic philosophy with the Torah, and therefore combined the idea of moral law with cosmic law and the order of nature (i.e., ὁ λόγος). For Philo, the idea of “Torah,” then became reduced to the concept of natural law (i.e., *nomos* as expressed as *logos* in Greek speculations).

ΛΟΓΟΣ

In the New Testament, *nomos* is used in varied ways. James used it to refer to the moral will of God (James 2:9-11, 4:11). The Apostle John quotes Yeshua using it to refer to the Tanakh in general (John 10:34; 15:25), though it is most often used to refer to the writings of Moses in the Gospels (Matt. 11:13, Luke 16:16; 24:44; John 12:34; Acts 13:15; 28:23). Certainly the moral and ritual aspects of the writings of Moses are represented using the word (Matt. 7:12; 22:40; Luke 2:22,39;8:5; John 1:17; 7:19,23, etc.).

In Paul’s letters, the use of the word *nomos* is likewise varied. In most cases it follows the Septuagint’s usage by regarding it as the collective set of commandments given by Moses (Rom. 2:12-29; 3:19; 5:20; 7:7; Gal. 3:21; 1 Cor. 9:8; 14:34), whereas in other places it refers to the Tanakh in general (Rom. 3:19, 1 Cor. 14:21). Still in other cases, *nomos* appears to be used by Paul to refer to “principles,” such as his description of the “law of sin and death” as opposed to the “law of the Spirit of life” (Rom. 7:23, 8:2). For Paul, the overarching principle of the law is the ethic of love (Gal 5:14; Rom. 13:8-10). In each case of Paul’s use of the word *nomos*, however, we must carefully examine the flow of Paul’s reasoning as well as the historical context of a given letter.



Some have claimed that Paul sometimes used “nomos” to refer to a legalistic *perversion* of the law imposed by the oral tradition of the sages, and therefore the statement that “no one is justified by the law” (ἐν νόμῳ οὐδεὶς δικαιοῦται) should be understood in this light (Gal. 3:11). However, in Galatians 3:21, Paul *clearly* used nomos (νόμος) to refer to the Law of Moses (תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה) since he referred to the law that “had been given” (i.e., *mattan Torah*) 430 years after the time of Abraham (Gal. 3:17). When Paul rhetorically asked if *this law* (“which had been given but was not able to impart life”) was contrary to the original promise given to Abraham, it is again clear he is again referred to the Sinai revelation. “Legalism” wasn’t given at Sinai, but the direct revelation of the will of God was. The Messiah came to redeem us from the curses contained in the Book of the Law (i.e., the *sefer ha-brit* of Moses detailing the various commandments), and this line of argument only makes sense if we understand nomos here to refer to the written law code of Moses.

Often it is helpful to study how a Hebrew word was translated into ancient Greek (i.e., the Septuagint or LXX) to get some idea of how the New Testament writers might have used the word. In the case of the word “Torah,” however, this methodology breaks down, since the ancient Greek translators used a general word that was not an adequate equivalent, and this lack of precision makes it difficult to determine the precise sense of the word as it is used in the New Testament. For example, when Paul writes that “we do not nullify the law (nomos), but rather affirm it” (Rom. 3:31), and later writes that we are “dead to the law (nomos) by our faith in Yeshua” (Gal. 2:19; Rom. 7:4), and furthermore identifies a “law (nomos) of sin that works in our bodies” (Rom. 7:23; 8:2), then it’s clear that we need to make some distinctions in our understanding of his use of the word “law” lest we become hopelessly befuddled. The only viable method here is to carefully consider the overall context of the passage for additional clues as to the author’s meaning, and then compare Scripture to Scripture to attempt to discover the usage for the word in this particular case. It’s a bit tedious trying to sort this all out, but God will give us wisdom if we sincerely ask Him!

