

Torah Crash Course P3

Exploring My Strange Bible

(47:27)

Speaker in the audio file:

Tim Mackie

Tim: Hey everybody! I'm Tim Mackie, and this is my podcast, Exploring My Strange Bible. I am a card-carrying, Bible, history, and language nerd who thinks that Jesus of Nazareth is utterly amazing and worth following with everything that you have.

On this Podcast, I'm putting together the last ten years' worth of lectures, and sermons where I've been exploring this strange, and wonderful story of the Bible and how it invites us into the mission of Jesus and the journey of faith. And I hope this can be helpful for you too.

I also helped start this thing called, The Bible Project. We make animated videos, and podcasts about all kinds of topics on Bible, and Theology. You can find those resources at thebibleproject.com.

With all that said, let's dive into the episode for this week.

Alright. This is part 3 of a three-part series called the Torah Crash Course. If you haven't listened to parts 1 and 2, I highly recommend you go do that. It will give you context for this last lecture. This was a Friday night event that I did at Door of Hope where I served as a teaching pastor many years ago and this brings to its conclusion the overall survey of the Torah, the first five books of the Bible.

What we focus on in this lecture is the purpose of the laws in the storyline of the Torah and in the storyline of the whole Bible. The covenant that God made with the people of Israel at Mount Sinai after He saved them from Egypt, it's a long section of the Torah. It starts in Exodus, goes through all of Leviticus, a lot of Numbers, and then the last book of the Torah, Deuteronomy is its self-recollection and a revisiting of hundreds of laws that were made back at Mount Sinai.

There are the classic number is 613 laws that God gives to Israel through Moses at Mount Sinai. Why? What's the importance of these laws? Many people often mistake the Old Testament as a book of law telling you to earn your way to be saved by obeying and earning God's favor, and that is so not what this story is about.

In this lecture, we'll talk about where the laws come in the story and how if you track with the storyline of the Torah, you'll see the whole point of this story is to tell you that Israel is unable to truly love and obey God and to follow the laws of the Torah which leaves room for some future work that God is going to have to do to transform people from the inside out so they can truly love God and love their neighbor as themselves. And this is the story that Jesus saw Himself as

bringing to His fulfillment. Again, this is the last of our three-part series on the Torah crash course. Hope it's helpful for you.

Here's where we're at essentially. Yahweh has called Israel to be in a covenant relationship with Him. He wants him to be obedient because obedience and allowing themselves to be shaped by God's teaching, His Torah, His instruction will make him stand out in a big way. I want to hit on a couple of passages that talk about why there are all of these laws in the Torah, and then we'll move in specifically to the issue of sacrifice. But, when most of us think of all of the laws, basically this whole year that they spent, all of this in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers is the giving of the all—the law, all these Torahs, and 613 of them. And they cover every aspect of life. They're not just about sacrifices, like I said. A lot of it is how you build your roof, how you deal with your neighbor's dogs or something like that. And there's a number of reasons why the laws are about those kinds of topics. So Leviticus 19, this is actually a kind of famous verse, 19 verse 1.

The Lord said to Moses, "Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: 'Be holy because I, Yahweh your God, am holy.'"

So one of the big themes in these laws is that if the people can obey them and allow these laws to shape them, they will become like Yahweh which is holy. Now holiness is one of those concepts, in English I think it mostly means like being a moral person, a moral religious person. Like, she's so holy. It's like negative almost to be called holy. She's so holier now than ever. That's the idea.

[05:00]

In Hebrew this concept to be holy is the Hebrew word, *kadosh*. And you may be familiar with this, it just means, to be set apart or distinct. And so Yahweh is the ultimate source of holiness because He's the completely—He is the being in the universe to which nothing else can be compared, you know what I'm saying? He's like the ultimate distinct being. You know, the idea that every all being and creatureliness and everything generates out of Him. And so He's the ultimate thing that nothing else is like. But Yahweh wants to be in a relationship and create a people around Him that also reflect this holiness. And so it's like there's this ring of people around Him that are called to share in that uniqueness. Now the idea was that there is to be a kingdom with priests, kingdom of priests. So

here was the idea. What actually happened though is because the people are so screwed up that if you became a kingdom with priests, and so you get a special select group of people who live like, you know, not like catholic priests because Israelite priests could be married, you know. They had to observe very strict diets, holiness was symbolically enacted by the kind of clothes they wear, by the kind of food they ate, how they dealt with their bodily fluids, and so on. There's a lot about bodily fluids in the Book of Leviticus, sorry about that. So we can do a whole thing on what's going on with that, and so on. And actually it makes sense but cultural symbolic system. A lot of these are symbolic behaviors that seems strange to us, like why can't they eat pig? Why if you touch a dead body, you have to take a bath, you know? You can't go in the tent for seven days. That seems weird to us. And it is weird to us because it's a different culture. So these are symbolic ways of enacting that when I enter into Yahweh's presence, I need to be in a mode and in a state of being that's different than normal everyday life or something. So priests had to live this crazy regimen and so on and you get the people and so on. And so a lot of the laws about food and bodily fluids and clothes you're supposed to wear and not wear, and so on, these are all related to this holiness. But then holiness was also supposed to be... affect their moral, their moral status too.

So this, look at the chapter before it, chapter 18, you have a heading describing the content. What's chapter 18 all about? Sex. The whole chapter's about sex. And particularly it begins by saying, Here's the practices of the Canaanites and of the Egyptians. And I don't want you to live like them. And so the whole chapter is a list of people that the Israelites weren't supposed to have sex with. And basically, all it leaves you with is in the marriage covenant is the place for sex. And the Canaanites didn't live that way, Egyptians didn't live that way. And so holiness was not only symbolically enacted with clothes and food, but it was a moral enactment as a way of reflecting Yahweh's character. That's one piece of holiness that the laws call Israel to a very high standard of holiness. Why? This is key here. Why? Let's come back to this one.

So the idea is, obedience to these laws was not just because Yahweh's uptight and he wants people to do what he says or something. It's not the idea. The idea is holiness, this distinct lifestyle is the way that they will mirror Yahweh's character and His intentions for the world to the nations, the priests. They represent Yahweh which is precisely what Yahweh says.

Turn to the book of Deuteronomy. So it's another really, really cool passage. Deuteronomy chapter 4. This is a good passage to highlight along this top of why are there 613 of them? That's so many. And it is, that's a lot. That's a lot. Why?

Deuteronomy chapter 4, and this is Moses talking to the Israelites. He says, "See I have taught you decrees and laws just as Yahweh my God commanded me, so that you will follow them in the land that you're entering to take possession of. Observe them carefully, this is how you'll show your wisdom and understanding," to whom?

Do you see this here? Moses is working with this whole scheme in mind here. That the nation is a priestly representative to Yahweh. And so if Israel follows Yahweh's instructions and teaching, what do they show to the nations?

[10:00]

Wisdom, understanding. And people will hear about all these decrees and says, "Man, surely, surely this is a great nation. So wise and understanding people. I mean what other nation is so great as to have their Gods near them the way Yahweh, our God is near us whenever we pray to them?" So this is very important in a sense, we're going to see the laws keep coming as the results of Israel's sin. Are the laws bad? Is it bad for Yahweh to say, "Be holy." That's good because it's Yahweh inviting people into His life and His character. And it's a part of Yahweh wanting to be in relationship with His people. Because we're screwed up and we have a little snakes wrapped around our hearts, right? And so He wants to release us from that and bring us into another way of living that shares in His character. He wants to be with us. What other nation has a God so near to them?

He says in verse 8, what other nation is so great as to have righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?

This is another good Bible word that gets thrown around but none of us actually know what it means. So righteous. What is righteous? So something's righteous, it's cool, if you grew up in the 70s or something, right? So righteous, right? So you can see the root word in there, yeah? Right. But it's not just morally right.

Righteousness is about—it's at its core, it's about relationships. I think the best phrase is its state of right relationships. Righteous. So in other words, all of the laws are meant to create a community, and a society of people where the common theme is right relationships, equity, fairness, generosity, compassion, kindness. There's so many laws in the 613 commands about how Israel was to treat the poor, and the widow, and the orphan, and immigrant, with generosity, take them into their homes and so on. And so this was to be a nation permeated by Yahweh's holiness, and His righteousness, His generosity. And so, we shouldn't think of the laws. They're not bad. They're good. What's bad is us. Right? And so don't covet any of your neighbor's stuff. That's a good idea. It's sort of like, the laws are good.

What's broken is us, and so, what I'm doing right here is, I'm acting out a whole section of the Book of Romans. This is what Paul's wrestling with his problem. Paul is reading stories and saying, "God's laws and instructions are so good. It offers us, it shows us the way of life." And when he says ultimately is the fact that it's not the laws that are bad, it's me. I'm so broken I can't even obey when God tells me exactly what to do. And so how are we going to solve that problem? Keep waiting. So Deuteronomy will tell us.

So this is the idea, God wants to shape the people who are holy and who are righteous but they can't do it. And so, we saw that because they can't do it, and they can't live up to it, how is this holy, righteous God going to dwell among people who are not holy and who are not righteous? And that's what the Book of Leviticus is all about. And so the center actually, let's just go back to Leviticus chapter 1.

Chapters 1 through 7 are the straight up, a priestly tech manual. Like if you ever buy, I don't know, a computer and it's that thing you never read or that book you never read or whatever. So that's Leviticus 1 through 7. It's a straight up tech manual for priests about how to slaughter animals.

So Chapter 1 is all about what kind of offering. The heading's kind of clue you in here. What do you have there? And it's about headings, all these different types of offerings and you offer them for different purposes. The burnt offering is like you're catchall, it covers lots of different purposes. You can just offer a burnt offering to say, thanks God, you're awesome today. Thank you. You're great. Whatever. You didn't do anything wrong. So it's like a thank you card.

Chapter 2. A Grain Offering. This is like thank you, you brought the wheat harvest this year. Thank you. Here's some wheat back.

Chapter 3. Fellowship Offering. So this is an offering that celebrates, again, it's almost kind of like a thank you, it's a praise offering and so on. So it's very nice. Once chapter for each kind of offering.

Chapter 4. The Sin Offering.

Chapter 5, still The Sin Offering. Because apparently they we're going to need a lot of this. So they need to give away a lot of space.

Chapter 6. Yeah, chapter 6, we're still in the middle of a new kind of offering for this thing called The Guilt Offering. And that gets a lot of attention. And then we're kind of back to Sin Offering, and then The Guilt Offering again in 7th.

[15:00]

So again, even in the same amount of space, given to what kind of offering you view a clue here of like, what are the offerings that are going to be most needed. Sin offerings and the guilt offerings. So, just go to chapter 4 and we'll just get a flavor here. We'll spare you the details. Go to the butcher shop and you'll learn what they did to the animals. Go to verse 20 with me.

So the priest will do with this bull the same he did with the bull for the sin offering which is cut it up in all these different ways and burn it on the altar.

In this way, the priest will do what? Make atonement for them. And what will result? They'll be forgiven. So this is somebody who if they cheated their neighbor, they feel guilty about it, they go confess it to their neighbor, take this lamb to the temple or the tent, the priest does this, and the priest makes atonement by killing this animal and then they're forgiven. Like magic. Verse 22.

Let's say this happens. Let's say a leader sins unintentionally and does something forbidden of any of the commands of the Lord and he's guilty. When he's made aware of his sin he committed, should bring an offering and here's where he's going to go, bring a male goat without defect, lay his hand on the goat's head and slaughter it at the place. So this is a theme we're going to see. I do something wrong, cheat my neighbor, so here's this goat that I take to the tent, and I lay my hands on it. But then, look at verse 26.

The priest is going to do all this, cut it up and burn it up. Burn the fat on the altars, just burn the fat of the fellowship offering. In this way, the priest will do

what? Make atonement. And what results from atonement? You're forgiven. If you read through this chapter, this little phrase is repeated about a dozen times, all these different ways to make a sacrifice, put your hand on the animal's head and then you're forgiven. Atonement. Now atonement is another Bible word. Actually no one uses that word. So atonement. In English, there's three little parts to this word in English. At, one, ment. So the English word atonement is essentially—it's actually a word talking about reconciliation. There's two parties at odds with each other. One has wronged the other. Atonement is the process to which these two are made out one. At one-ment. So that's a fine image but that doesn't get us to the heart of this concept here why an animal has to die or something like that because it seems weird to us. So the Hebrew word here, you want to say kipper, don't you? But don't say kipper. Say, kipper, with a little Italian role of the tongue there. Kipper. So, literally it means to cover over or like wipe out. Say it like this, you go out to dinner and the check comes and you conveniently have forgotten your debit card. And so, my response to you is, "It's totally cool, I got you covered," or, "I'll cover you." Say that in English, don't we? There you go, that's it, right there, that's atonement. That's kipper. I got you covered. So I put down my debit card, and I pay in your place by which I cover over your debt or your failure to pay. I cover over it and it takes it away. That's kipper. And so it raises the question then, how does an animal, dying after I put my hand on it, cover over my wrongdoing so that I can be forgiven? Does it anything in the chapter here? We haven't come on anywhere; it doesn't say why. It says it works which is great news. Why does it work?

Go to chapter 17 with me. It's interesting for all their sacrifices in the Bible in the Old Testament, this is the one paragraph that talks about how sacrifices work. Why does killing an animal work? Is it just magic? So let's read.

Leviticus 17:8. Say to the people, "Any Israelite or aliens," not aliens, for me it's 21st century American alien means one thing. Alien. That's what the word means, right? It's referring to immigrant. "Any Israelite or immigrant living among them who offered the burnt sacrifice or a sacrifice and doesn't bring it to the tent of meeting to sacrifice it to Yahweh that person must be cut off from his people." In other words, the tent was to be the place where people offered sacrifices to Yahweh. These people were offering sacrifices to Yahweh just elsewhere out there. We know how screwed up the people are. Who knows what god they might be offering to? So let's keep it in the tent, keep it in the family.

Any Israelite immigrant living among them who eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood and cut them off from His people.

[20:00]

So, you know, I don't need meat eaters in the room. Bummer if you lived in Israel and you love a juicy steak, not in ancient Israel, right? This is a part of modern day closure laws is draining the meat as much blood as possible. Why? Why? What's with the blood?

Verse 11. For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to kipper for you on the altar. It is the blood that covers over for somebody's life.

Did you see that here? Did you see the logic? So blood is a visible, it's not just a symbol for life, it is actually the stuff of life, right. So you have blood equals life and essentially what you have here is that the animal's life covers for your life. Did you see that there in verse 10 and 11? So that's the idea. So, we could use the word that has come to be at use here in Jewish and Christian is that the animal acts like a substitute is tricky. Because I think for Westerners, this is such a strange practice to us. I've never slit an animal's throat, you know. Maybe some of you in the room have if you're urban chicken farmers or whatever. So you maybe do this regularly, I don't know. I've seen it done before in person and it's a very disturbing experience because it's noisy and gurgly. It's really gnarly. It's super gnarly. And so, I cheat my neighbor, I get caught or I own up to it and I take a goat, which is, you know, that costs money, right? And it's causing me something and I go take it. And I personally accompany the priest up to the altar and the blood, gurgling, screaming animal. And I'm like, that's because I did. I can't. Obviously will have a deep impact on you. And whether or not it's a real deterrence, my guess is that six months later, it probably wears off and you're back at it again. But that's the idea here. And so it seems barbaric to us, but then in another sense, the idea is it's saying the gravity of the sin and the mess of the ra that we have unleashed into the world, that's so serious. The remedy for it, the way it's resolved for screwed up people to dwell in God's presence. It's serious. It's a matter of life and death.

But in His grace, Yahweh provides the substitute of this animal and all of a sudden, we're back to Passover, aren't we? The idea that this blood of the animal somehow covers for me and that if I do this, I'm covered. And so there you go. That becomes the means by which Israel is allowed to enter and dwell into the presence of the Holy God. Now the chapter right before this, chapter 16 is the

chapter called, The Day of Atonement where the one day a year, the priest would do some stuff with a couple of animals to represent dealing with the sin of all of the people together. And so you think, "Alright, okay. This could work. It's bloody, it's gurgly, but this maybe could work, you know? With fixing the problem of the people and so on." And what happens essentially from here is the Book of Leviticus, you have the sacrifices. And then remember what chapter they leave Mount Sinai? Numbers 11, so here they finally... Exodus 19 to Numbers 10. They are at Mt. Sinai for one year, here they leave. And you remember the first story after they left Numbers 11, and happy face, sad face? This is total sad face, right? It gets crazy then because what happens is the rest of the Book of Numbers, you get a sad face story followed by a whole bunch more loss. Let's go back to Numbers Chapter 11. This will be a quick part of the story. It's an overview. So we have Numbers 11, they grumbled, they complained twice. The people are grumbling and they're like, "We don't have any food and so on." Moses went out and told the people what the Lord said. He brought 70 of the elders and had them stand around the tent. Then Yahweh came down in cloud and smoke and spoke with him. Then He took of the spirit the ruach that was on Moses and put the ruach on the 70 elders. And when ruach rested on them, they prophesied and then they didn't do it again.

[25:00]

However, there are these two guys whose names were Eldad and Medad, it's great boy names. They remain in the camp. They were listed among the elders but they didn't go to the tent. But the ruach rested on them. And they were still prophesying in the camp.

So basically you have the people grumbling and so Moses said, "Let's get all the elders together." And then Moses, they have this crazy, holy spirit experience that happens, and then it stops. But then there's these two guys out in the camp, Eldad and Modad, Medad, whatever, and they have the Holy Spirit power too. And they keep prophesying. And so a young man ran and told Moses, "Hey, you know Elided and Medad they're still prophesying the camp. Joshua the son of Nun would have been his age, he spoke up and he said, "Moses, stop those guys. Stop that. They shouldn't be doing that." But Moses replied, "Are you jealous for my sake? I wish all of Yahweh's people were prophesying. I was Yahweh with His

spirit on all of the people." Moses and the elders returned to the camp. What? What a strange little story. This is like a little random story like, "What?" So the people screwed up, they're grumbling, they can't obey, we have the animal sacrifices, but clearly the animal sacrifices, they may cover the people's sins, they are not reshaping the people's hearts. And so in the first story of a sad face story, Moses cries out, "I just wish Yahweh would come and personally breathe His presence in all of God's people. That would fix the problem."

Chapter 12. Then Miriam and Aaron, like Moses' brother and sister, they start to rebel against Moses. They start to talk against Moses because he married a wife who wasn't an Israelite. So now you have among the rank leadership themselves. Like people are rebelling and grumbling against Moses.

Chapter 13, Yahweh said to Moses, "Why don't you send some men to explore the land of Canaan that I'm giving to the Israelites?" What was one of the promises given to Abraham? So the land, yeah, because they're on their way here to the promise land. And so now they're going to send out spies to go begin investigate the land. And so you look right here, there's a whole long list of names of the twelve spies that they sent out. One from every tribe, and the spies come back, I'm summarizing here, this might be familiar towards you, and what do the spies say? "This is a land with all these powerful people, there's no way Yahweh can rescue us and bring us into the land." We're thinking, "Duh. Just go reread the Book of Exodus, you know. Remember that?" So they're like, "No." So they turn all ten of the spies turn all of the people into this huge frenzy, look at chapter 14.

After the spies get back and they stir everyone up, chapter 14. That night, all the people of the community raised their voices, they wept allowed and all the Israelites what they did. They grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said, "Oh, if only we died in Egypt or in this desert. I mean why is Yahweh bringing us in this land just to let us fall by the sore or why is children going to be taken as plunder. Let's just go back to Egypt. Let's go back to Egypt." They said to each other, "Lets choose a new leader, let's go back to Egypt." Right back here again.

And then chapter 15 is a bunch of laws about more offerings that are going to be needed.

Chapter 16, then Korah, the son of Izhar and the son of Cocha son of Levi and a bunch of Rubenites, Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On son of Peleth. I mean they became insolent and they rose up against Moses. Another sad face

story of dissension in the ranks, and they lead the people to grumble. I mean we could go on, but you get the point, don't you? The rest of the Book of Numbers is just story after story of rebellion, dissension, the fracturing of the people of Israel, and then they get more laws and then they keep doing the same thing and you're just like, "What on earth is happening? This family's imploding. It's like the Joseph story all over again." Except it's the whole people of Israel. And so it's with a very kind of dark, somber tone that we turn to the last book of the Torah. And this is story number 4.

So let's turn to Deuteronomy chapter 1 here. Let's just do a few things and we'll turn to the end of the book and wrap all of this up. So Deuteronomy is a collection of speeches of Moses right before the people go into the land. So Deuteronomy fits right here as the people have wandered right away from the mountain, they're about to go into the land.

[30:00]

They're literally standing right above the Jordan river looking into the promise land. And so the Book of Deuteronomy is a collection of speeches of Moses. So first words of the book here.

These are the words Moses spoke to all Israel in the desert east of the Jordan—that is, in the Arabah—opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Di-zahab, you know, those places. It takes a 11 days to go from Horeb. Horeb is another name for Mount Sinai. It's called by two names based on kind of region and dialect and so on. It takes 11 days to go from Horeb to Kadesh Barnea by the Mount Seir road, where they are right now about to go into the land. It's an 11-day journey. How long did it take them? 40 years because of all these rebellion, Yahweh doesn't allow them to go into the land. He lets this generation of rebellion die off in the desert, and He lets their kids be the generation that goes into the promise land. So it's a little jab right here in the beginning of the book, you know. They should have just taken 11 days, you guys. Instead it took 40 years.

So in verse 3, in the 40th year, on the day of the 11th month, Moses proclaimed to the Israelites all Yahweh commanded him concerning them. This was after he had defeated Sihon king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon, and at Edrei had defeated Og king of Bashan, who reigned in Ashtaroth.

East of the Jordan in the territory of Moab, Moses began to expound torah.

And these speeches, they are very, very powerful. In chapters 1 through 12, these read like sermons, these impassioned pleas of Moses to say, "You guys, Yahweh has set you up, He's given you His torah, the promise land is in front of you, this story doesn't have to end badly. This is going to go great. Choose life. You have a choice. You can choose good or evil, life or death."

Chapter 30 verse 11. He says, "Now, what I'm commanding you today is not too difficult for you," which we're thinking, really? "It's not beyond your reach. It's like you have to go up to heaven and ask, "Who will be sent to heaven and get the Torah and proclaim it to us so we can obey it." It's not like it's beyond the seas, so you have to go ask, "Who's going to go cross the sea and get the Torah so we can learn it and obey it." No, no. Listen. The word is right near you. Yahweh has spoken to you. He's with you. He's in your midst. It's in your mouth and in your heart so you can obey it. He says, "Listen, I'm setting before you life and..." NIV has, "Prosperity." Any other translations? He says, "I set before you life and good." What's the Hebrew word for good? Tov. I set before you life and tov, and what? Death and, literally he says evil, ra. And we're back in the garden right away. But now a lot's gone down because we have a means to cover sin so that Yahweh doesn't roast them. So we have a means to cover sin and we have 613 commands on how they are to live. Here we are again. The choice, the Israelites are forced to make the same choice every human being is forced to make. We have right before us, here's, I know what I should do, I know what I shouldn't do, what are you going to choose? It's very powerful. We're right back in the garden. So he said, "Listen, I set before you life and tov and death and ra. I'm commanding you today, love Yahweh your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His commands and decrees and laws. Then you'll live and increase and Yahweh your God will bless you in the land that you're entering to possess. If your heart turns away, if you're not obedient, if you're drawn away to bow down to other gods, worship them, I declare it to you, this day you're going to be destroyed. You won't live long in the land that you're crossing to Jordan today to enter and possess. I call heaven and earth today as witnesses against you. I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your children can live and you may love Yahweh your God. Listen to His voice, hold fast to Him for Yahweh is your life. He will give you many years in the land He swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It's very powerful, isn't it? It's like this impassioned plea.

But Moses have been with this people through all of this, what do you think he thinks the odds are of how the story's going to go? Chapter 30.

He says, "When all of these blessings and curses I've set before you come upon you and when you take them to heart, wherever Yahweh your God has dispersed you among the nations." So there you go. What does Moses, how does he think the story is going to go? He knows. He knows. They're going to disobey. They're going to face the consequences of their actions and be scattered among the nations. He's assuming that. But is that the end of the story with Yahweh? Just think about all of the story up to this point. What's at stake here? Not just Israel. What's at stake here in the fate of these people? So think Genesis 12. This is... on this people somehow rides the fate of all of the nations and the blessing of the nation. And who walked through the pieces in this covenant with Abraham? Yahweh did. Alone. Alone. So somehow, so we're back to this, humans choose ra not tov, but Yahweh is somehow going to redeem that ra and turn it into tov. How? Yahweh's determined to use human beings to rule and make His will in the world but we're screwed up. How? How's that tension going to be worked out and this is where we begin to see.

He says, verse 2, "When you and your children, when you return to Yahweh your God and obey Him," so this is a Hebrew word, shuv. This is the biblical word for repent. Just means to turn around. When you and your children repent and turn back to Yahweh your God, and when you obey Him with all of your heart and all of your soul, according to everything I command you then Yahweh your God will restore your fortunes. He'll have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you. Even if you've been banished to the most distant land under the heavens. From there, Yahweh your God will bring you back. Will bring you back to the land you belong to your fathers, and you will take possession of it. You'll become more prosperous and numerous than you father.

Okay. Let's stop real quick here. So, is there always a second chance according to these verses? Absolutely. Absolutely. You can always turn back.

Verse 6. Yahweh is one of the most important persons in the Torah. Yahweh your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all of your heart and with all of your soul and live.

Huh? How is it that Israel is going to be able to repent and turn back to Yahweh, and obey and follow Him? What does verse 6 say? So "circumcise your hearts." Okay, now obviously that's a metaphor. Obviously that's a metaphor, okay? And you might even think of the gross metaphor. So, circumcision was one of the signs of the covenant for the people of Israel, obviously for the males. And so Moses takes this covenant practice for Israel and he turns it into this metaphor. That's a physical symbol of their membership in the covenant, but what he realizes is that these people are so screwed up, all the sad face, that they don't actually just need more rituals and laws. What they need is a fundamental transformation of their hearts. Somehow Yahweh is going to bring about that fundamental transformation of the heart so that they can love Him and finally obey Him and live. Do you see that right there? This is leaping forward. Story doesn't end. Right over here, drops, this theme drops, and you don't hear about this theme ever again. And the story of Israel plays itself, they go into the land, they abandon Yahweh, it's what you would expect and they run the nation into the ground and they get conquered by the nation of Babylon. And as Babylon is knocking at the door, the prophet Jeremiah says these words, he says: "The days are coming," declares Yahweh. "When I'm going to make a new covenant with the people of Israel and the people of Judah, it won't be like the covenant I made with your ancestors when I took them by the hand and led them out of Egypt because they broke that covenant even though I was like a husband to them."

[40:00]

So he says, "This is the covenant I am going to make with the people of Israel at that time. I'm going to put my Torah in their minds. I'm going to personally write the Torah on their hearts. And I will be their God and they'll be my people. They won't have to teach their neighbors or say to each other, hey, obey Yahweh. Know Yahweh. No, no. They're all going to personally know me. From the least to the greatest Yahweh. Forgive their wickedness and remember their sins no more."

Where would Jeremiah get the idea that Yahweh's going to do something like this? He's been reading the Torah. He's looking at His promise right here of circumcising the heart. So he drops that metaphor and uses this new metaphor. It's like the time's coming when Yahweh's going to personally write His loving

truth on the human heart in a way that will heal that broken relationship. And He calls this a new covenant.

There's another prophet who was contemporary of Jeremiah. He lived in Babylon because he was taken into captivity there. He saw this for Israel's future after the exile. This is Yahweh speaking to Israel. He says, "I will take you out of the nations and I'll gather you from all the countries and bring you back to your own land. I'll sprinkle clean water on you and you'll be clean." Ezekiel was a priest. So envisions Israel's healing and restoration of life like a priestly activity. "I'll cleanse you from all your impurities and all your idols, I will give you a new heart. I'll put a new spirit in you. I'll remove your heart of stone, I'll give you a heart of flesh and I will put my spirit in you." What did Moses dream for in Numbers 11? "What if Yahweh would personally come and inhabit every one of these people."

"I will put my spirit in you and so move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws." This is right what Moses said. Yahweh will circumcise your heart so that you can finally, finally love Him. And so what Jeremiah and Ezekiel and Moses, right, this is where the Torah basically ends with them about to go into the land. I think of the Book of Deuteronomy as like the locker room speech of a coach with his players before the game, and he's revving them up. Choose life, choose life. Even though I know you're not going to. So actually, he's a really bad coach because He's like, "Go you guys, go you guys. You're going to lose horribly, but go, go." He does anyway. Right? That's what He's doing. He says, "Actually, the only thing that's going to make you win is something that's completely beyond your power because we already know how the story is going to go. And so these words and these words of the prophets, they just create a back to our little flower pot analogy. They create this theme that the human heart is so broken, we choose ra instead of tov. And so Ezekiel and Jeremiah, they add descriptions of it and it needs to be Yahweh's spirit. And so all of this is left totally hanging. No blossom in the storyline of the Old Testament. And then this is precisely all of these themes. Have you been seeing New Testament Jesus everywhere as we pop up here? Right? So sacrifice, the Passover lamb, the need for a new covenant, the spirit inhabiting God's people so that they can finally be changed in their hearts to obey and to love. So this is all—there you go. There you go. The script was already written. The story was just creating the need for Jesus and what happens and that's precisely what the New Testament is claiming is that every need and problem and plot tension and conflict that's created in this story comes to its blossom and fruition.

And the depth of Jesus which is the sacrifice for all sin in his resurrection, His power over death to reverse the power of death and human estrangement from God from back in Genesis 3, and then also the ability to give His life and His spirit to those who turn to him so that He can begin to change and transform their hearts. And that's where all of this is going. And then all of a sudden you see all of those themes in the New Testament like you can maybe understand them without reading the Torah. But now it's sort of like the first time of hearing a Mozart or Bach or something like that. Anybody could listen to Mozart or Bach, and some people might be bored, you know, but some people might think it's cool.

[45:00]

But then like, ten years studying music theory and school or whatever and then listen to the piece by Mozart and Bach. Then all of a sudden you're hearing things you've never heard before and all coheres and its flaw. And so that's what it's like to read the Torah. Immerse yourself in the Torah and then go back and read the New Testament again. And you see it's all right there. It has always been there. And all of a sudden Jesus, His words from Luke, we'll end with His words here, that's where we begin with. He said, I mean you guys, this was all left hanging. Everything written in the Torah of Moses. I mean all we've done is the Torah even. The Torah of Moses. We haven't even touched the Prophets or the Psalms. They're all just set the stage for everything that's just taken place. And so repentance, forgiveness of sins, the Messiah suffering and rising from the dead, we didn't hit that theme, but isn't the Bible rad? Yeah. So great, man. So there you go, the Torah.

There's a famous saying of the Jewish Rabbis about the Torah. They say, "Torah is like a diamond. Turn it, turn it again, turn it again because everything is in it." So it's like you look in each facet and you just see, holy cow. The whole story is right there just waiting, you know. Every category is right there and you turn it again and you always see something new. Your appreciation for Jesus grows deeper more as you immerse yourself to Torah.

Alright. That was our Torah Crash Course Series. I hope that you are stimulated. I hope that you're asking so many questions right now and that your appetite has been at least wetted to go read the first five books of the Bible for yourself now

in this brave new world. So, there you go. We'll be exploring many more of these themes and ideas of podcasts to come. For now, thanks for listening to My Strange Bible Podcast.

[End of transcription 47:27]