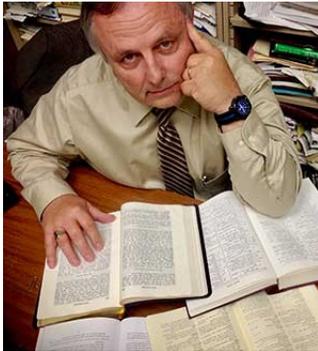


Book Review

B.H. Young, Paul, The Jewish Theologian. A Pharisee among Christians, Jews, and Gentiles. 1997. Pp. 164 consists of; a bibliography & study aids, an index of ancient sources, & an index of names and subjects. Published by Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group. Price \$24. ISBN 978-0-8010-4821-0



Dr. Brad H. Young is the founder and President of the Gospel Research Foundation, Inc., and a professor of the faculty of the Graduate School of Theology at Oral Roberts University (ORU) where he served as a Tenured Professor of Judaic-Christian Studies teaching Bible and theology for thirty-one (31) years. He attended the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where he pursued graduate studies in early Christianity and ancient Judaism. During this time, he lectured at the Jerusalem University College, served as Research Assistant to Dr. David Flusser, and earned an M.A. and Ph.D., from Hebrew University. Dr. Brad H. Young's love for, research, studies, and writings on Jesus and Judaism and Christianity cultures, have placed him on platforms all around the world teaching and speaking publicly with conviction. Challenging us of the Christian (and the Jewish) faith to dig a little deeper for what makes us more similar than different through the life of Jesus Christ.

Chapter One, *Introduction*, author Brad Young, gives the reader an intense and intimate look into the life of Paul, the Jewish Theologian. Paul the Pharisee, who was Jewish, loved and studied the Hebrew Bible, and Torah, and remained true to his Judaic heritage. Paul, who was first called Saul, persecuted the believers of the early church. During his foolery, he has a vision, more like a visit from the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Paul is transformed and comes to faith in Jesus Christ. Then came the birth of the Apostle Paul.

It is from his transformation from Saul of Tarsus to Paul, that he begins his journey around the world to teach “the Way, the Truth, and the Life” of Jesus Christ. Paul encountered many unbelievers, not because of Paul's teaching of Jesus Christ, but because many found his story of seeing Christ and suddenly changed preposterous. Paul was remembered as a Christian murderer and could not be trusted.

Chapter Two, *Paul the Jewish Theologian*, takes the reader into Paul's complex but rich origins. Paul is revealed through his religious and educational background. Paul is Jewish. Paul is a theologian. Paul is Gentile. With a rich history in Hebrew heritage. Paul stepped out of his comfort zone and his Jewish environment. His passion was to teach the Jews, those who would listen, and the Gentiles, to stop worshipping pagan gods, and to turn to the “Way” of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Paul's loyalty to the Law and Torah was questioned. Paul was trained in Jerusalem, under strict guidance and heavy hitters and Paul inevitably knew he would not have the support of and had to step out in faith. He understood the Jewish faith had nothing to do with mankind earning salvation. It was Paul's conceptual approach (p. 40), that boldly places Jesus and Torah, in the midst and middle of humanity. Young explains Paul's approach as God's interaction with humanity, the connection, and continuous motion.

Chapter Three, *Pentecost, the Nations of the World, and the Apostle Paul*, Brad H. Young, travel in time to show us when people, nations, and religious leaders gather and celebrate an important date for humankind on earth. It is the celebration of the Pentecostal Festival. Young informs us the Pentecost Festival for Christians means divine empowerment for service, referring to the Book of Acts 1:8. For the Jewish people, Pentecost is the time when God gave Torah to Israel.

The time when God gave revelation to His people. Pentecost brings together, in celebration, and by the belief in the spiritual force of God's blessing, both the Christians and the Jewish people. It signifies the divine revelation on Mount Sinai and the gift of the Holy Spirit as Jesus Christ promised to the disciples. Paul's ministry was based around the celebration of Pentecost to the world's many nations. Paul believed the Words of Jesus were not only meant for the Jewish people. And that he must bring the gospel of the Messiah to the world of the Gentiles.

Chapter Four, *Judaism and Christianity: Diverse Perspectives on Torah*, takes an in-depth look into how Jesus, Paul, and Marcion, a follower of Paul, referred to the Torah to teach the Good News. John 1:1, says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God". And in Matthew 5:17, Jesus confirmed and taught and let us know to not even think that HE came to abolish the Law but to understand and know that HE came to fulfill the Law. Paul believed in the Torah, followed Jesus' lead, and taught from its foundation, but he believed the covenant was not earned by performing good deeds. Performing good deeds does not place you under God's covenant. One's heart could be hardened and wicked and will perform good works. Paul believed it is our obedience to God's Law that keeps our covenant. The Torah is God's Law made righteous so that we, His children will not continue in our sin. It is a guide to how we should live our lives pleasing to God and be in the right relationship with Him. Now Marcion ideology behind the Torah was obsolete and abolished because the way to God was only in the belief of Jesus Christ. Marcion's wrong interpretation of the Torah caused him to seek to change Jesus' teachings and convert Paul's message to the "anti-Jewish" gospel.

In Chapter Five, *The Torah: Roots of Grace and Faith in Paul's Message*, Young expands on the true message of the Torah, and Who God is through Paul's ministry. It is so, that most Christians around the world believe the new covenant through Jesus Christ means the Old Testament Law is no longer relevant for salvation. In a way, this way of thinking contradicts the very Word of God. God is described in the Old Testament as merciful, good, and full of grace. The happenings in the lives of His children throughout the Old Testament should be enough to recognize His grace. The misrepresentation of the Torah being legalistic, it's a "whip" to get us aligned with God or experience His wrath, is made up from the minds of those who just want to find fault.

There is grace in Judaism, throughout the Torah. To save us from ourselves. A message of divine compassion, God's grace for sinners, as we repent and seek and obey His will. The Law and grace in the Old Testament can and do co-exist. The Law frees us from the evil work of

our flesh. The Ten (10) Commandments were & are the Law spoken by God, written by Moses, and given freely to HIS children to live in peace with Him and control the flesh.

Chapter Six, *Torah: The Dead Letter or the Living Word?* Dr. Young refers to the question of the Torah to determine its significance today in how we as Christians should live. Torah, the *Dead Letter*? Nah, no way! As Paul reiterates in Romans 3:31, “Do we then by this faith make the Law of no effect, overthrow it or make it a dead letter? Certainly not! On the contrary, we confirm and establish and uphold the Law”. This chapter offers an in-depth perspective on the spoken, written, and given Word of God through the Torah. Young explains Torah is not evil, not sinful, does not antagonize, but is good for humanity. Paul did not abandon or abolish the Torah because of his found faith in Jesus. Instead, Paul saw how Jesus connected to, followed, and fulfilled the Law. And I love how Dr. Young puts the exclamation point on the chapter’s title, “Torah is not a dead letter, but the living word strengthened through Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit living inside the believer” (p 95).

Chapter Seven, *The Transcendence of Torah in Paul’s Teachings*, expresses the *light* of the Torah, that Torah is *light*. In Paul’s teachings, Torah is mysterious and transcendent; moves beyond physical needs and reality reaches beyond our human finite understanding, touches, and transforms our lives. Paul believed what Jesus knew, the Torah is the first spoken Word of God, who instructed on how to mend the relationship with Him. Our human nature was born a sinful one. The Torah shed light on the sins of our natural-born selves to save us from ourselves. Paul’s ministry was based on the foundation of God’s instruction. He loved the Torah and was in awe of and transformed by his encounter with Jesus. Paul knew he was an eyewitness to the Way, the Truth, and the Life, of the Torah manifested to Jesus Christ, the living Messiah. And his passion was to share and spread the Good News and not keep it to himself. He knew the answer to give hope.

Chapter Eight, *Love as the Foundation of Christian Ministry: The Model of 1 Corinthians 13*, is Paul’s ministry love letter to the people of Corinth. He got word of the lifestyles the Corinthians were leading and the use and abuse of spiritual manifestations. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul makes references to tongues, prophecy, faith, and knowledge to address the matters of the hearts of the people. Paul founded the church and addressed the people over their indiscretions.

Paul was annoyed with their actions and the abuse of the spiritual gifts the Corinthians used to take advantage of those within the communities in need. They exploited their spiritual gifts. Their jealousy, manipulation, lies, and deceit played out in the worst way. Paul was clear they had to change their ways and lead in love. Paul’s love chapter is an example of how Christians today should lead, empower, and uplift, with Love. Not to boast, brag, or bully another.

Chapter Nine, *The Essence of Paul’s Jewish Faith*, almost forces Christians to sit back and think about the origins of the faith. Jesus was spoken of in the Old Testament, was born Jewish, raised by Jewish parents, and lived within its communities. He was educated, spoke the language, observed, and practiced the religious faith. So how can the Christian faith undermine the rich heritage of the Hebrew Scriptures? Dr. Brad H. Young says it best, “Faith in Jesus should not contradict the faith of Jesus” (p. 115). And with this Paul might have summarized the essence of his faith in Deut. 6:4, “Hear, O Israel, the LORD our god, the LORD is one”.

Chapter Ten, *Seven Pillars of Paul's Jewish Theology*, concludes with the foundation of the Apostle Paul's ministry, who he was, where he came from, what he was made of, how he did it, and when. 1. Paul was a Pharisee who never converted from one religion to another. He was a Jewish apostle to the Gentiles who continued to devote his life to Pharisaic ways. 2. Paul's embraced the Torah, claimed Torah was good, and viewed the Torah as positive. 3. Paul's mission was separate from Jesus' but shared a common bond in their views when teaching the Torah. Paul's work was among the Gentiles. Jesus' work among the Jewish people. 4. Paul believed healing love must be the life Christians lead. We experience God's presence through the Holy Spirit to empower and heal the people. Not for manipulation, and selfish needs. 5. God's grace is revealed through Jesus the Messiah. 6. The resurrection of Jesus is the first fruit. 7. Jesus is coming again to complete the work of redemption. (See pgs. 136-138).

After reading and re-reading, Dr. Brad H. Young's, *Paul, The Jewish Theologian, A Pharisee among Christians, Jews, and Gentiles*, my antennas went up, the Holy Spirit stirred up on the inside of me and I found myself reading intently and meditating over the words. I too am a Christian who thought the Old Testament Law was obsolete, to some extent, and Jesus was "the Way" to salvation and mending the relationship with God. What piqued my interest during the reading was Paul's message to stay true to the Law, because the Law is truth, is light, and it is the way. I believe what Dr. Brad H. Young has emphasized throughout this text, is the written Law is first the spoken Law by God, Himself, and is full of life, light, and love. And the Law is the prophetic Word of the coming of our Lord and Savior, the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

This has me questioning, how then can I live a life of obedience to God through both the written Law and the One, Jesus Christ, who fulfilled the Law? I was introduced to the World Mission Society Church of God, a nondenominational, Christian church that honors the sabbath, keeps the Passover, and the feasts of the Old Testament. I believe this text has touched on some of its teachings and will visit and keep an open mind to explore and learn a little bit more. I would most definitely recommend this reading to my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. Because Apostle Paul is truly an influential, unapologetic disciple of Jesus Christ whom we have studied and believe his ministry works spread Christianity throughout the world.

Alicia C. Santos
Alliance University

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