

# Overview: Examining the Book of Romans Through a Hebraic Lens: A Call to Rediscover Context and Truth

## Introduction

The Apostle Paul (Sha'ul), often misunderstood and misrepresented, stands at the center of many theological debates. Nowhere is this more evident than in the book of Romans, a text hailed as the cornerstone of Christian theology. However, the very writings of Paul that emphasize grace, faith, and unity are frequently twisted, stripped from their Hebraic roots, and reshaped into doctrines that Paul himself would not recognize.

Why is this significant? Because Paul's teachings were grounded in the Torah and the prophetic writings of the Tanakh. When we approach his words through the lens of **Greek reasoning** or Western individualism, we lose the depth, richness, and continuity of his message. Many misinterpret Romans to justify doctrines of lawlessness, replacement theology, and antinomianism—concepts that Paul vehemently rejected.

To understand Romans correctly, we must examine it through its **Hebraic perspective**—the lens through which Paul lived, taught, and wrote. This approach illuminates the continuity between the Tanakh and the Apostolic Writings, clarifies Paul's role as a Pharisee and follower of Y'shu'ah, and helps us discern his intent amid the first-century cultural and religious tensions.

Let's take this journey together, exploring Romans not as a handbook for abolishing the Torah, but as a call to unity, righteousness, and salvation through faith—grounded firmly in the covenantal promises of Elohim.

## The Foundation of Romans: A Hebraic Perspective

### 1. Historical Context: Paul's Background and Mission

Paul, a Pharisee trained under Gamaliel (Acts 22:3), had a profound understanding of Torah. His writings reflect his dedication to the Scriptures and his mission to explain how Y'shu'ah HaMashiach fulfilled the promises given to Israel. Romans was written to a mixed assembly of Jewish and Gentile believers in Rome who were grappling with questions about Torah observance, faith, and inclusion.

- **Cultural Tensions:** The expulsion of Jews from Rome under Emperor Claudius (AD 49) and their eventual return under Nero (AD 54) created divisions between Jewish and Gentile believers. Paul addresses these tensions, urging unity in Messiah.
- **First-Century Torah Observance:** Jewish believers upheld Torah as central to their faith, while Gentile believers wrestled with how to integrate into this covenantal framework.

### Key Hebraic Concepts in Romans:

- **Righteousness ( צְדָקָה, tzedakah):** Paul emphasizes that righteousness is not achieved by works alone but through faith in Elohim, as exemplified by Abraham (Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3).
- **Covenant ( בְּרִית, brit):** The concept of covenant is central, as Paul connects the Abrahamic promises to the inclusion of Gentiles through faith in Messiah.

## 2. Key Themes in Romans Through Hebraic Understanding

### A. The Universality of Sin and the Need for Salvation (Romans 1:18–3:20)

Paul begins by establishing the universal guilt of humanity, both Jew and Gentile, under sin.

- **Greek Word Study:**
  - “Sin” (ἁμαρτία, hamartia) means "missing the mark." This aligns with the Hebrew understanding of sin as failing to meet Elohim’s righteous standard (Judges 20:16).
- **Hebraic Insight:**
  - Paul’s argument reflects the teachings of the Tanakh:
    - **Ecclesiastes 7:20:** “There is no one on earth who is righteous, who does what is right and never sins.”
    - **Isaiah 64:6:** “All our righteous acts are like filthy rags.”

Paul’s point is clear: all stand condemned without the atoning work of Messiah.

### B. Justification by Faith (Romans 3:21–5:21)

Paul explains that justification (δικαίωσις, dikaiōsis) comes through faith, not by works of the Torah alone.

- **Tanakh Cross-References:**
  - **Habakkuk 2:4:** “The righteous shall live by faith.”
  - **Genesis 15:6:** Abraham “believed Elohim, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

Paul does not dismiss Torah but demonstrates that Torah observance alone cannot justify; it must be accompanied by faith in Elohim’s promises.

### C. Sanctification and Life in the Spirit (Romans 6–8)

Paul emphasizes that those in Messiah are no longer slaves to sin but live by the Spirit.

- **Greek Word Study:**

- “Spirit” (πνεῦμα, pneuma) aligns with the Hebrew רוּחַ(**Ruach**), meaning “breath” or “wind,” signifying Elohim’s active presence.
- **Theological Insight:**
  - **Jeremiah 31:33:** “I will put My Torah in their minds and write it on their hearts.”
  - Paul’s teaching echoes the promise of the renewed covenant, where obedience flows from a transformed heart.

#### **D. The Role of Israel (Romans 9–11)**

Paul confronts the false notion that Elohim has rejected Israel, affirming that Israel’s covenantal role remains intact.

- **Key Scripture:**
  - **Romans 11:1:** “Has Elohim cast away His people? Certainly not!”
  - Paul illustrates the inclusion of Gentiles as wild branches grafted into Israel’s olive tree (Romans 11:17-24), emphasizing the unity of Jew and Gentile in Messiah.

### **3. Application for Believers Today**

#### **A. Living in Unity**

Paul’s call for unity between Jewish and Gentile believers is a timeless message. Believers today must reject replacement theology and recognize the Hebraic roots of their faith.

#### **B. Upholding Torah in Messiah**

While salvation is by faith, Torah remains relevant as a guide for righteous living.

- **1 John 5:3:** “For this is the love of Elohim, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.”

#### **C. Walking in the Spirit**

Paul’s teaching on life in the Spirit challenges believers to align their lives with the Ruach HaKodesh, demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

### **Reflective Questions**

1. How does viewing Romans through a Hebraic lens deepen your understanding of Paul’s message?

2. Why is it important to recognize the continuity between the Tanakh and the Apostolic Writings?
3. How can Paul's teachings on unity and Torah observance apply to divisions within the modern body of Messiah?

### **Conclusion: Rediscovering the Heart of Romans**

The book of Romans is not a license for lawlessness or a rejection of Torah—it is a profound exploration of Elohim's plan for redemption, uniting Jew and Gentile through faith in Messiah. By approaching Romans with a Hebraic perspective, we uncover its depth, continuity with the Tanakh, and timeless relevance.

Paul's writings challenge us to embrace the fullness of Elohim's truth, walk in obedience, and live as one body, reflecting His glory. Let us honor the Word by seeking its true meaning and aligning our lives with its eternal principles.