

## The Christian Torah in A Nutshell ~ A Wrap-up

Since December 9, 2015, other than during the Jewish feasts and festivals, most of my teachings have concentrated on sitting at the feet of Yeshua and listening to Him as He taught His talmidim. Our source document has been the Gospel of Matthew (Mattityahu). The "Word in Life Study Bible" calls the Gospel of Matthew the "**Christian Torah.**"

It's time for us to move on from here and dive deeper into God's Word. However, since we have several new followers who haven't been here from the beginning of this study and for those of us who may have forgotten what we learned, I want to take this opportunity to summarize where we've been.

Needless to say, this post will be rather lengthy given that I will be summarizing almost 80 posts. So, here is the link to the PDF version.

I started my defining what a Biblical talmid is:

1. One who is **following** the Messiah – has made Yeshua the Lord of their life. (Luke 9:3; John 8:31)
2. One who is **being changed** by the Messiah – is becoming like the Messiah in attitude and action. (John 15:8; Romans 8:29; Galatians 4:19; 5:22-23; John 13:35)
3. One who is **committed** to the Mission of the Messiah. (Messiah's mission is to save a lost world by installing a ministry of reconciliation and service to others.) (John 15:8; Matthew 4:19; 2 Corinthians 5:19-20)

We started our study with the Sermon on the Mount. It represents Yeshua's expectations for those who have followed Him as talmidim, both ancient and modern. The theme of the sermon is found in Matthew 5:20, ***"For I tell you that unless your righteousness is far greater than that of the Torah-teachers and P'rushim (Pharisees), you will certainly not enter the Kingdom of Heaven!"*** The Sermon on the Mount is thus a call for Yeshua's talmidim to observe a greater righteousness.

In studying the Beatitudes, we learned that "***How blessed,***" is translated from the Greek 'makarios' which corresponds to the Hebrew 'asher' and means 'blessed, happy, and fortunate' all at once, so that no one English word is adequate. It involves "*happiness*" but it is a much deeper concept.

Our happiness does not depend upon circumstances for its existence. Circumstances can make you happy, but there is only One who can make you ***blessed***, and that is God through our Lord Yeshua. Happiness fluctuates with circumstances but blessedness remains unaffected by them, for circumstances did not produce it in the first place. It requires us to rise above our circumstances – to soar as eagles.

Blessedness involves an inward condition of the heart no matter what is taking place around us. It requires a ***radical change*** in how we think. We need to learn that it's not what happens to us that matters most; it's how we react to what happens to us. The sooner we can learn that life is not always fair, the sooner we can achieve emotional maturity.

In summing up the first two beatitudes, we learned "***How Blessed Are Those Who Wait Upon the Lord!***"

The third and fourth beatitudes can be summarized as: "***Blessed are the meek, hungry and thirsty. Blessed indeed are those who passionately pursue the things of God!***"

The fifth and sixth beatitudes can be summarized as: "***O how blessed are those who truly live out the Golden Rule.***"

The final two beatitudes can be summarized as: "**How Blessed Are Those Who Make Peace Even When Persecuted For Their Efforts.**"

After going through the Beatitudes we then learned that following Yeshua goes far beyond private spirituality. It involves a Believer's public life; in practice through work and participation in the community. Yeshua's talmidim must be salt and light, arresting decay and providing illumination for a lost and dying world. They must **influence** their environment by their faith.

Being a true talmid means having a willingness to trust Him completely in all aspects of life from the highest highs to the lowest lows. It means we are not only willing to trust Him to provide for our salvation, but also for the future. Remember, we are to trust Him even when we do not know, like, or understand, and also when He is leading through unpopular territory. Being a true talmid allows us to put our hand to the plow and not look back (Luke 9:62). As we grow in the Messiah, we become increasingly unsatisfied with anything less than His call and character.

Discipleship is costly because Yeshua must have number one priority over our will, our ideas, our plans, and our presumptions. Discipleship is dynamic, not static. Yeshua desires us to understand that being a Believer is not just about sitting in a pew or saying a prayer. It is about a life committed, a life changed, a heart and will surrendered, and a new direction and worldview with His precepts and character for living as our example. Discipleship is not a one-time act. It is a change of heart, a change of direction for a lifetime. A talmid is willing to grow in the Messiah; are we ready? Are we willing to **GO All The Way**? Remember, what we give up is of no comparison to what we gain. We are at the winning, beneficial end of this relationship with God.

We learned that Yeshua came to complete the original Torah and we questioned how can **we** complete the Torah? We complete the Torah by yielding to the Ruach HaKodesh and allowing Him to work in our lives (Romans 8:1-3). The Ruach HaKodesh enables us to experience the **righteousness of the Torah** in daily life. This does not mean we live sinlessly perfect lives, but it does mean that Yeshua lives out His life through us by the power of His Spirit (Galatians 2:20).

We then looked at what I call the Eternal Torah – the Torah of Yeshua. Matthew 5:21–48 is considered by many as the Morality Code of Yeshua. It describes for us how righteousness should be worked out in our daily lives. Consequently, this section of the teaching is one of the most important in the whole Brit Hadashah.

- v. 21 - refers to the 6th commandment - **Do not murder** (Sh'mot 20:13)
- v. 27 - refers to the 7th commandment - **Do not commit adultery** (Sh'mot 20:14)
- v. 31 - refers to the divorce privilege mentioned in **D'varim 24:1-4**
- v. 33 - refers to the 3rd commandment – **You are not to use lightly the name of Adonai your God, because Adonai will not leave unpunished someone who uses His name lightly.** (Sh'mot 20:7)
- v. 38 - refers to the law of retribution – **Sh'mot 21:24; Vayikra 24:19-20; and, D'varim 19:21**
- v. 43 - refers to the command to love your neighbor - **Vayikra 19:18** and the remarks of King David about hating our enemy - **Psalm 139:19-22.**

Yeshua's teaching was entirely new, something that many people still have not yet fully grasped. Yeshua taught that it was not enough **not to commit murder**; He taught that we couldn't even ponder committing murder. It was not enough **not to commit adultery**; He taught that we couldn't even ponder committing adultery.

It was Yeshua's teaching that thoughts are just as important as deeds. It is not enough **not to commit a sin**; we can't even wish to commit it.

This means that every one of us is guilty. We are all sinners and fall short of the Glory of God. Even if we have lived a life of outward moral perfection, there is none who can say that he never experienced the forbidden desire to sin. This new standard kills all pride, and forces us on Yeshua who alone can enable us to rise to that standard which He himself has set before us.

**Here is a great eternal truth:** Life cannot be divided into neat little compartments wherein God is involved in some and not in others. There cannot be one kind of language in the congregation and another kind of language in the factory or the office.

The fact is that God does not need to be invited into certain compartments of our life and kept out of others. He is everywhere, all through life and every activity. He not only hears our words; He knows our thoughts behind those words. We should regard all promises as sacred, if we remember that all promises are made in the presence of God.

We then tackled one of the most difficult passages in the Bible: Matthew 5:48. Yeshua said: "**Therefore, be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.**" On the surface, this is an impossible commandment; one, which we cannot possibly fulfill! I don't think that there is one person reading this blog post who would even faintly suggest they were perfect.

The Greek word used here for perfect is **teleios**. It has nothing to do with what we might call abstract, philosophical, or metaphysical perfection. An animal offering that is fit for a sacrifice to God, that is a sacrifice without a blemish, is **teleios**. A person who has reached his or her full-grown stature, as compared to a growing child, is **teleios**. A student who has reached a mature knowledge of the subject matter is **teleios**, as compared to a learner who is just beginning.

To put it in another way, the Greek idea of perfection is functional – **it's maturity**. A thing is perfect if it fully realizes the purpose for which it was planned, designed, and made. We are **teleios** – perfect, mature - when we realize the purpose for which we were created and sent into the world.

For what purpose were we created? The Bible leaves no doubt as to our purpose. In the beginning, God said, "**Let us make humankind in our image**" (B'resheet 1:26). We were created to be **like** God. We are to take on His characteristic of unconquerable benevolence and invincible goodwill - constantly seeking the highest good for every person. The greatest characteristic of God is love to saint and to sinner alike. No matter what men do to Him, God seeks nothing but their highest good.

It is when we reproduce in our life the unwearied, forgiving, sacrificial benevolence of God that we become **like** God and become perfect or mature. To put it as simple as I can, the person who cares most for others is the most perfect, the most mature of all persons.

We realize our purpose and enter upon Messianic perfection when we learn to forgive as God forgives, and to love as God loves.

In Matthew 6, we moved on to concentrate on Yeshua's teaching regarding acts of righteousness and examined His teaching on prayer. We sat at His feet for some time to learn directly from Him what it means to be a true talmid – a true talmid.

Yeshua taught us how to pray by giving us an example in the Talmidim' Prayer. Yeshua did not say, "**Pray in these words.**" He said, "**Pray like this**"; that is, "**Use this prayer as a pattern for how you should pray, not as a substitute.**"

The Talmid's Prayer is a prayer that only a true talmid can pray; it is a prayer that only one who is committed to Yeshua can take upon his lips with any meaning. To put it in another way, the Talmid's Prayer can only

really be prayed when the person who prays it knows what he or she is saying, and they can't know that until they have entered into Discipleship.

**Prayer must never be an attempt to bend the will of God to our desires; prayer should always be an attempt to submit our wills to the will of God.**

Not only is this a prayer which brings the whole of life to the presence of God; it is also a prayer which brings the whole of God to our lives. When we ask for bread to sustain our earthly lives, that request immediately directs our thoughts to God the Father, the Creator and the Sustainer of all life. When we ask for forgiveness, that request immediately directs our thoughts to God the Son, Yeshua our Savior and Redeemer. When we ask for help for future times of testing, that request immediately directs our thoughts to God the Ruach HaKodesh, the Comforter, the Strengthener, the Illuminator, the Guide and the Guardian of our way.

Yeshua went on to give His talmidim instructions on fasting and dealing with material possessions in the later part of Matthew 6. Yeshua warned against the sin of living for the things of this life. He pointed out the sad consequences of covetousness and idolatry. Materialism will enslave the heart (Matthew 6:19-21), the mind (Matthew 6:22-23), and the will (Matthew 6:24). The material things of life can shackle us, but we ought to be liberated and controlled by the Spirit of God.

Yeshua continued to teach on material possessions, but His emphasis was no longer on where our wealth is; now He tells us not to worry about where our material possessions will come from. **"Therefore, I tell you, don't worry about your life"** ~ Mathew 6:25.

What, me worry? I don't worry; I just think a lot! I don't worry; I plan. I don't worry; I just lay awake at night trying to outsmart my competition. Sound familiar?

Yeshua said that worry is sinful. We may dignify worry by calling it by some other name – a concern, a burden, a cross to bear - but the results are still the same. According to Matthew 6:27, instead of helping us live longer, anxiety only makes life shorter. Worry pulls us apart. Yeshua isn't suggesting that we do nothing to meet our physical needs, but that we keep our needs in the proper perspective and trust God rather than worrying about them.

Yeshua closes the Sermon on the Mount with a discussion on judgment. In it, He discusses three different judgments: our judgment of ourselves; our judgment of others; and, finally God's judgment of us. **"Always treat others as you would like them to treat you; that sums up the teaching of the Torah and the Prophets."** (Matthew 7:12)

This is the **"Golden Rule," one of the most misunderstood statements in the Bible.** This statement is not the sum total of all truth, nor is it God's plan of redemption. We should no more build our theology on the Golden Rule than we should build our astronomy on "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star."

This great truth is a principle that ought to govern our attitudes toward others. **The person who practices the Golden Rule refuses to say or do anything that would harm himself or others.** If our judging of others is not governed by this principle, we will become proud and critical, and our own spiritual character will degenerate.

Practicing the Golden Rule releases the love of God in our lives and enables us to help others; even those who want to hurt us.

In closing out our learning from the Sermon on the Mount, we focused on going through the narrow gate in Matthew 7:13. Yeshua is the narrow gate we must go through to enter the Kingdom (John 10:1, 14:6). We start on the path to the Kingdom by denying ourselves (Matthew 16:24; Ephesians 2:2-3). Our flesh doesn't

die easily. It's a painful, continuous struggle to keep the flesh under the control of the spirit (Luke 13:24). Many people do not like the concept of a narrow path to God. They choose to believe that there are many roads which lead to God, but Yeshua says that the broad path leads to destruction (Proverbs 14:12; Romans 8:6). It isn't natural to live the life of self-denial. Crucifying our flesh is a slow, agonizing death (Romans 6:6). But, the Holy Spirit enables us to endure the struggles with the flesh so we can walk in righteousness (John 8:29; Galatians 2:20).

Which road have you taken? Here is the first test: ***Did your profession of faith in Messiah cost you anything? The second test is this: Did your decision for Messiah change your life?***

We learned that only a life whose foundations are sure can stand those tests. Yeshua demanded two things:

- A. He demanded that we should listen. The first step to the Believer's life is simply to give Yeshua a chance to be heard.
- B. He demanded what we should do. Knowledge only becomes relevant when it is translated into action. Knowledge must become action; theory must become practice; theology must become life. If we are to be in any sense followers of Yeshua we must hear and do.

Yeshua demands our implicit obedience. To learn to obey is the most important thing in life. It is Yeshua's claim that obedience to Him is the only sure foundation for life; and it is His promise that the life which is founded on obedience to Him is safe, no matter what storms may come.

After sitting at Yeshua's feet as did his talmidim, we looked at what it is to **be like** Yeshua. In chapters 8 - 9, Mattityahu structures his Gospel in a very definite pattern, alternating between miracle stories (grouped in threes) and Discipleship training.

We learned that to be like Yeshua we have to:

- Serve others. It is not enough to have heard Yeshua once; we have to follow Him. We need Him each and every day in our lives.
- Come to Him for He is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever."
- Be humble and develop a servant's heart?
- Have faith in God and God alone. Ask yourself: Do I really believe God will do what He says He will do?
- Follow after charity. Does your faith cause you to respond to the needs of others like Yeshua did?

I've said many times that we need to **'count the cost'** of being a talmid of Yeshua. Following Yeshua is not always easy or comfortable. Often it involves great cost and sacrifice, with no earthly rewards or security. Yeshua did not have a place to call home. You may find that following Yeshua costs you popularity, friendships, leisure time, or treasured habits. While the cost of following Yeshua is high, the value of being Yeshua's talmid is even higher. If you desire to follow Yeshua, you must be willing to face hardship. Have you really counted the cost? Would you be willing to give up your home to follow Yeshua? Like Father Avraham, are you willing to forgo all and leave your native home to go to a place that you had never heard of or actually going without knowing where you are going?

We also learned some key lessons from the story of Yeshua calming the sea:

- Sometimes, no one but Yeshua can do anything.
- No matter how bad the circumstances, God is in control.
- When we reach the end of our resources, Yeshua has not even started.
- Hopeless situations make the clearest occasions to trust in God's preserving power.

We learned from the healing of the demoniacs in chapter 8 that:

- The devil is a cruel master: make sure you put on the full armor of God every day and pray for protection from his power.
- The demoniacs came to Yeshua; the keepers of the swine fled from him. Oh that we would learn to come and never leave him!
- How awful to drive Yeshua away for the sake of worldly gain! Rather let us, like Sha'ul, count all things else as loss, that we may win Yeshua (Philippians 3:8).

When Yeshua healed the paralyzed man, we learned that:

- It was sin that brought suffering into the world. Suffering should show us the guilt of sin, and should lead us to Yeshua.
- Yeshua is our Hope, our only Hope. We must come to Him ourselves and we must help others to come.
- Messiah is full of compassion. He pities our sorrows; He forgives the sins of the penitent.
- Praise Him for his mercies; glorify God.

Next, we learned that to be like Yeshua we have to affirm others – in short, we have to raise up talmidim to take our place. Yeshua invested Himself in the development of other people, particularly the Twelve. He gave them responsibility and authority, resisting the temptation to get the job done “right” by doing it Himself. Yeshua calls us to help others grow. If we want to be like Him, we will share the joy and risks of working together with our brothers and sisters.

To be like Yeshua - we learned that:

- The Lord sends forth his servants; we must remember that our mission is from Him, and look to Him for wisdom and for power.
- We must not seek great things for ourselves, but be lowly and humble like our Lord.
- Do not neglect home duties; care first for the souls which God has put within your own sphere of influence.
- Messiah's ministers must seek souls, not riches; but His people must give freely to supply their needs.
- Believers must be courteous in their relationships with one another. Greet one another with a heartfelt - Shalom Aleichem!
- The message comes from God; those who *reject* it incur a most awful danger.
- Let the servants of Messiah in all their trials remember our mission. It is He who sends us and He will give us strength.
- We should be prudent; we must be sincere and truthful in our testimony of Yeshua.
- Let us expect opposition; Messiah has warned us.
- We must not be over-anxious how to speak; we must trust and look for the promised help of the Ruach.
- We must work where God's providence sends us. We must bear the execution-stake now, looking onward to the crown.
- If we want to be like Him, we have to share the joy and risks of working together.
- We must be content to be despised as the Master was despised; the talmid is not above his Master.
- Fear God; fear nothing else; be bold in bearing witness for the truth.
- God cares for us all in our little trials; we should bring them all before Him in trustful prayer.
- We must take up our own execution-stake, looking unto Yeshua as our example.

We then turned to Yeshua's parables of the Kingdom in Chapter 13. He gave a series of seven interrelated parables, then added an eighth. Recall that the word **parable** means “to cast alongside.” It is a story, or

comparison, that is put alongside something else to help make the lesson clear. But these are not ordinary parables; Yeshua called them "**secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven**" (Matthew 13:11).

From the Parable of the Sower, we learned that the sower was Yeshua and the seed was the Word of God.

From Matthew 13:28 we were confronted with a very tough question. **If God is good and all-powerful, where does evil come from, and why is evil permitted?** The answer provided is a simple one. It does not address all the logical difficulties of good and evil coexisting, but it tells us what we need to know: "**An enemy did this.**"

God does not generate evil. Spiritual "warfare" is normal, not odd or surprising. Enemies actively oppose one another. When sin and unbelief seem so strong, don't try to figure out where they originated. We know HaSatan is our enemy. Instead, trust God and determine to follow him through the mine field of life.

From the Parables of the Wheat and the Weeds, the Mustard Seed and the Leaven, we learned that the mustard seed will grow and the leaven will diffuse its influence. He who has begun a good work in you will fulfill it. Be of good cheer; only believe and plant as many seeds as you can and pray to the Lord of the Harvest to fertilize, water and reap a bountiful harvest.

We then went on to explore who is the greatest in the Kingdom. Yeshua rebuked His talmidim for their pride and desire for worldly greatness, and He taught them the three essentials for unity and harmony among God's people, i.e. humility, honesty and forgiveness.

In dealing with humility, we learned that:

- Even the apostles had their own internal conflicts & rivalries: how earnestly we ought to strive against envy and jealousy!
- There is no true conversion without a humble, childlike spirit.
- Honor all men, especially believers; each one is precious in the sight of God.

In dealing with honesty, we learned that:

- It is a difficult task to reprove a sinful brother or sister; but it's sometimes our duty; it must be done with gentleness and wisdom with an attitude of humility.
- To gain a believer's soul or restore him or her to a right relationship with you and the Lord is an exceedingly great reward; it is worth much prayer, much thought, much time.
- The Lord bids us to hear the wisdom of the Congregation; we must respect the authority and the decision of the Congregation.

With respect to forgiveness, we learned that:

- When we start living in an atmosphere of humility and honesty, we must take some risks and expect some dangers. Unless humility and honesty result in forgiveness, relationships cannot be mended and strengthened.
- The forgiveness Yeshua requires is on the basis of the instructions He gave in Matthew 18:15-20. If a believer is guilty of a repeated sin, no doubt he would find strength and power to conquer that sin through the encouragement of his loving and forgiving brethren.
- Our forgiveness of others should be in proportion to what God has done for us. If you need a favor, extend the same favor to someone who needs it from you. If you need help, offer to help someone else. First, we discover that problems can be solved, and second, we find that serving others is God's

way of helping us overcome difficulties in our own lives. Because God gives so generously to us, we ought to give generously to others. Life goes better when we follow God's lead.

Finally, we concluded our study of Matthew by hearing what Yeshua has to say about the **End Times** from the Olivet Discourse as contained in Matthew 24 & 25. The key take-away from that study can be boiled down into two simple statements:

- We may see signs and wonders that are predicted to proceed the end times, but we do not know the day or the hour it will begin; even so, come Lord quickly.
- God is on the throne and He is still in control. All we need to do is trust and obey and it will all pan out for our good. All we have to do is **Be Prepared**.

In my next post, we will begin a new series requiring us to dig deeper into God's Word.