

Both Ends of the Book Freedom in Obedience

Living Well as God Designed Well

שמר

shâmar to keep, guard, observe, give heed, have charge of, keep watch

“Oh that they had such a heart as this always, to fear me and to keep all my commandments, that it might go well with them and with their descendants forever!”
Deut 5:29

The children of Israel had just heard the voice of God coming out of the midst of the fire. And they had told Moses that he should go near and listen and tell them what he had said to Moses and then they said “and we will hear and do it.” v. 27. Verse 29 is the LORD’S response to what the people said.

Listen to the reason: “that it might go well with them and with their descendants forever!” Go well is *yâtab* which means to be good, pleasing, well, glad. The goal of keeping his commandments is to have a good, pleasing, well, glad life! Who wouldn’t want that?

This part of Scripture is in what is known in Hebrew as the Torah.

Torah is the Hebrew word for teaching and instruction. Torah may contain law, however it is not equal with law. Psalm 119 gives all the categories including judgments, witnesses, laws, commandments and others. It does not divide into moral, civil and ceremonial.

In its most basic biblical sense, Torah refers to the first five books of the Hebrew Bible known in English as Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. In Hebrew they are known as *Bereshith* (In beginnings); *Shemot* (Names), *Vayikra* (And He called); *Bemidbar* (In wilderness) and *Devarim* (Words), the titles taken from early words in each of these books. They describe the contents of each of these books which contain God’s teaching and instruction about life and how to have a good, pleasing, well, glad life.

It is on this foundational revelation that the rest of the revelation of Scripture is based and an understanding of its contents will lead to a greater understanding of the rest of the Bible and its application to life.

The word Torah (תורה) in Hebrew) comes from the root *yarah* which means to throw or cast. God’s teaching and instruction about life throws or casts His followers in certain directions. When Yeshua (also known as Jesus) was on earth, he taught His *talmidim* (disciples) how to live according to Torah. He said about Torah in Matthew 5:17-19:

“Don’t think that I came to destroy the Torah or the Prophets. I didn’t come to destroy, but to fulfill. For most certainly, I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not even one smallest letter or one tiny pen stroke shall in any way pass away from the Torah, until all

things are accomplished. Whoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and teach others to do so, shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven; but whoever shall do and teach them shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.” (HNV)

From this text we can at the least conclude that Torah was important to our Messiah Yeshua (aka Jesus). Important down to the least commandment. When asked which is the most important commandment Yeshua said:

“The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” Mar 12:29-31

For many people, the word Torah equates with law and law describes the keeping of rules and the harshness of a taskmaster. Much of this attitude has come from thinking which coincides with American-western independence. If I am keeping the law (including a speed limit) I am not free. That view says that I am only free when I obey myself by violating law. But if I am keeping the speed limit, I am free from the consequence of breaking it. That is the freedom of obedience. There is no fine for obeying and keeping.

For those who know and understand this wonderful gift from the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the word Torah brings a sense of blessing and peace. That is because a Hebraic view of Torah finds freedom in obedience - the freedom to follow God’s ways from which we were excluded while ruled by sin and unable to follow its path. Being enabled by the Spirit of God, we are now equipped to follow God’s Torah, His teaching and instruction about life, where in the past this was not even possible. Paul in Romans 8:6-7 is direct in declaring this life principle;

“For the mind of the flesh is death, but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace; because the mind of the flesh is hostile towards God; for it is not subject to God’s law, neither indeed can it be.” (HNV)

If the mind of the flesh is hostile towards God by not subjecting itself to the law (Torah) of God, then the mind that is not hostile towards God will subject itself to the law of God. The mind of the Spirit must be able to subject itself to this law. That is the gift that was foretold by Ezekiel and in which we have the privilege of living.

‘And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.” Eze 36:26-27

Ask yourself this question. How much of God’s Torah, which we tend to call law, am I already keeping? Did you get one of those Ezekiel hearts where your Creator is causing you to walk in and obey? Then you are on the greatest journey of love there is!