

Where Do I Start?

Many articles and teachings that I have written are from the perspective of trying to show that all of the Word is for all people all the time. I have put out a great deal of effort to help my *mishpochah* (meesh-poh-kaw - family – as in “all God’s chilluns” in my immediate circle) understand what we are missing, help get them to the point where they are ready to commit to obedience to their King and Master, and embrace all of what He has for us.

Okay, what if you’re ready to say “uncle,” so your big brother won’t give you any more noogies? You’ve seen the Light, accepted the truth of the Word, and you’ve figured out that “all you know is not all there is.” You think you might want to submit to the Torah, so what happens next? By Torah we will assume you mean all of the Word, even though some limit the meaning to the first five books only and others include extra-biblical writings such as the Oral Law. We will also assume you understand that the word Torah means “instruction,” and this is why all of God’s Word is Torah.

The first thing to remember if you are embarking on a walk along the new path of Torah submissiveness is that salvation does not come from observing any rule. Although, technically speaking, coming to God in the first place requires a response to a command (God commands men everywhere to repent). God supplies a righteousness based on trusting obedience (faith) first, then we try to respond by following His Ways. This “give and give” relationship is the pattern for the change in our walk.

So where are we going? Remember that the goal of the Law (God’s Word) is the Messiah, and our walk in the Torah should lead us to Him. If it leads us anywhere else, we need to re-examine it and adjust our practice to aim for Him. Some of the other benefits of submitting to Torah include: that it results in a witness to others of the character, love and wisdom of God; it teaches our children and new believers about Him; it helps to discipline our flesh by physical training; it teaches us discernment; it is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (II Tim. 3:16,17); and it perfects our faith – “You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected” (James 2:22).

Energy. Probably the most important factor in implementing God’s Word in our lives is how we are motivated. We can follow the rules without the Spirit or faith and it just becomes legalism or empty observance (without faith it is impossible to please God). We can use the rules as a lash to drive our fellow man into slavery to the flesh. Or we can look at the Law through eyes that Love the Father and want to do anything we can to please Him. We can understand that the Laws were not meant for salvation but for sanctification, to teach us how to walk and to teach us how to instruct others about Him.

People who think that Jesus eliminated all Laws except two forget that He actually boiled all the Instructions down to one (sort of) new commandment – “Love others as I have Loved You.” (John 13:34) Of course, God loved us from the beginning, and everything He did was motivated by this love. He had been our example all along, and we just ignored it for the most part (many people still do). This is the way He has always treated us, but we didn’t treat Him or others as He was trying to show us.

Eat regularly. The Bible says that we are to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Mat. 4:4; Luke 4:4; Deut. 8:3). Every command that He utters is important, and we are not given the power to add to or take away from God’s Word (Deut. 4:2, 12:32; Prov. 30:6; Eccl. 3:14; Rev. 22:18,19).

Pace Yourself. There is no hurry, your salvation doesn’t hinge on implementing all of the Word all at once. Try to understand as best you can before you implement, otherwise you could end up in legalism. Most of us are always learning new things about the Word of God and how it applies. Just about the time we think we have seen the entire picture, God shows us a new color or a different texture, and away we go with more learning. Far too often in our walk we “pass judgment” on somebody else because they are not in the same place we are. But while we need to adhere to His standard, our Father also requires that we exercise love.

Start with one thing you understand, like the Sabbath. Resting from sundown Friday to Sundown Saturday sounds easy, until you try it. I would not be surprised if you had to “practice” resting, because our culture is so busy most of us seem to have forgotten how to rest. The command is simple, to sanctify the day (set it apart), do no work, and do not buy or sell (because of causing others to work). My family uses 6:00 pm as a general start and stop time, because there is no specific command on timing (although the Word says in Genesis 1 that “evening and morning” were one day). We have a special meal to mark the occasion, and everyone has to be present. This is not a “Law,” it’s just what we like to do.

Use the Map. The Word is the basic roadmap. Be careful of other’s opinions, especially those that tend to detract from the Word. An opinion is not bad, unless someone tries to make it a Law when it isn’t. For instance, let’s say someone says you should wear a kippah (the little hat that usually is worn by Jews). You would ask, “Where is that in the Scripture?” An honest person will tell you that it is not in there. It is a tradition only, therefore not required. However, it is not a great problem for the other person to continue wearing it. Or, you may realize that some tradition you hold to is not in there either. That’s okay, just keep comparing what you do to the Word, and you’ll get there.

Don’t take shortcuts. Only bad traditions are bad. Just realize the difference between a “Law” and a “tradition,” or opinion, and avoid making an opinion a Law. Part of the wonder and delight of Torah submissiveness is discovering exactly what the Word

requires, and what is open to interpretation. A tradition is bad when it contradicts the Word, or leads others away from the Word, or causes us to depart from the Word. The word “stumble” means to fall off of the path of God, away from His Word.

Balance. Make sure you don't get knocked out of your walking rhythm by being out of balance. Sometimes one command will have to be subordinated to another. This is the essence of Yeshua's teaching when He said, “you should have practiced the former (tithing produce), while not neglecting the latter (mercy, justice, compassion)” (Mat. 23:23). Brad also likes to say, “Who puts the ‘Keep Off the Grass’ sign on the grass?” This is the fun part of Torah submissiveness – balancing commands with reality.

Balance is very critical in Torah submissiveness. The Word is Whole (one or unity, Hebrew *echad*, as God is One), and all of the Word must be balanced together, in the right proportions, in order to apply it correctly. Since none of us knows all the Word perfectly, we depend on each other to come up with that balance. If we are willing, then through this process God can knit us together into an even tighter family relationship.

Stay loose. If there's a choice between a strict interpretation and a loose interpretation, then stay loose. There is a large difference between permissiveness (disobedience) and making allowances for learning. Yahveh (God) gives us grace to maintain a standard while trying to relate with those who don't. Romans 14 is not permission to do what we want, rather, Paul is trying to explain that weak people should be helped with the load, not crushed with it. If this chapter meant, “the weak obey the Law,” then I guess Jesus and Paul and the other apostles were pretty weak. The strong obey (become strong through obedience), and help the weak whenever they can.

Breathe. The Holy Spirit will show you what is right according to the Word. Get opinions from others, compare with the Word, and keep walking. It's not so bad to fall down, but staying down would make the Enemy very happy. In through the nose, out through the mouth, in and out keep breathing the Spirit.

Are we there yet? None of us has “arrived,” so the journey in this body continues. Learning and application are a continuous process. In one sense salvation is an open question until death. Keep on doing right, and if you do wrong correct it and keep going. Remember, all the penalties have been paid. So what's to hold us back?

The next article will be titled “Count the Cost.” I will try to share some of what submitting to God's Word has cost me, and what you might want to factor in to your own walk before you start.

Now may the peace of our Master and Messiah, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, be with you all,
Bruce Bertram.