

The Third of the Four Alls of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:16-20:
All what Yeshua has Taught!

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In Mishna Pirke Avot we read “Moses received the Torah from Sinai and transmitted it to Joshua; Joshua to the elders; the elders to the prophets; and the prophets handed it down to the men of the Great Assembly. They said three things: Be deliberate in judgment, raise up many disciples, and make a fence around the Torah.” As men and women committed to communicating Yeshua’s Messiahship to the Jewish people, we know that effectively making disciples requires for us to be effectively inculcating G-d’s truth to our talmidim, our own disciples. Yet today, at least from my experience in the developed world, effective disciple making seems more difficult than ever. Gathering a group, attaining temporary responses and even seeing limited life change does happen, but from what I can see, we struggle with the long term and tangible results that we so passionately desire in the lives of those whom we see make decisions for our Messiah.

I believe one reason for our poor results is that we have lost some direction for ourselves and our understanding of Messiah Yeshua’s expectation for each one of us as his talmidim. I believe we have allowed our understanding of what it means to “observe all that he has commanded us” to be less than he expects. We have lost sight of the “All”! Messiah Yeshua’s command to take up our execution stakes and follow him, is a call for us as spiritual leaders to live out a far more radically life altering commitment to Yeshua than we often dare. Yet it is out of this type of radical, uncomfortable, counter cultural faith that effective inculcating of Yeshua’s commands for our own talmidim brings the greatest and most lasting results.

The basis for my above statement is Matthew 28:16-20 and in this message I will be bringing a special focus on the first half of verse 20. Below is the Greek along with several popular translations of this text:

Greek - διδασκοντες αυτους τηρειν παντα οσα ενετειλαμην υμιν

ESV - Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you

NAS - teaching them to observe all that I commanded you

NIV - and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you

KJV - Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you

NKJV - teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you

Young’s Literal - teaching them to observe all, whatever I did command you

Wycliffe NT- teaching them to keep all things, whatever things I have commanded to you

As you can see, this is a very straight forward Greek text and so the translations are almost identical. The emphasis is constant among them: Teaching – to Observe All – I Commanded. Breaking Matthew 28:20 down into these three basic pieces allows us to analyze the text just a bit more and to look for obvious but profoundly important principles to stretch the “radicalness” of our personal commitment to Messiah Yeshua.

The first piece is Messiah Yeshua’s challenge specifically to us as spiritual leaders: we have a responsibility before G-d to actively, clearly and continually communicate and instruct our disciples with Yeshua’s commands to his followers. The Greek verb used in this text is

διδάσκοντες, a present active participle, so we can safely infer that Yeshua was telling his talmidim that imparting his instructions to their talmidim would require their active, regular, consistent, effort; just the same as he had done with them. Too often we forget that disciple making demands our time. Some might call working with people the “time drain of ministry”. Yet what is ministry but working with people! The old saying that effective learning is more often “caught then taught” should give us pause. Do we focus all of our discipleship efforts on a single midweek Bible Study? How much time do we spend with our talmidim outside of our ministry facilities and away from our programs? How do we practice hospitality within our own homes? It is when we are in these non-religious environments we can most often make our greatest impact with those we are seeking to spiritually develop. To put it simply, effective teaching as Yeshua directs demands that we be in proximity with those we seek to spiritual impact over extended periods of time so they can see, feel, smell and touch the reality of our relationship with G-d.

The second piece is Messiah Yeshua’s challenge to his followers: all those who have personally confessed to believe in his person and atoning work on their behalf must work at carefully following, guarding and living out **all** of Yeshua’s commands to his followers. The Greek word in the text, **τηρειν**, literally means “to maintain a state of vigilance” when it comes to living out and applying Yeshua’s instructions. Of course no one can keep every thing Yeshua said, but this is not the point. The point is: “Are we trying?!” Is it our passionate desire to diligently seek to understand the Scriptures and then to actively bend our ways to G-d’s ways. This is critical, for our talmidim need to see us in action, exemplifying in the details of our lives what it means to follow Messiah, especially in ways that can bring us into conflict with our world. In Luke 11 Yeshua has a serious discussion with the Pharisees in regards to their observance of the Torah after they challenged Yeshua on what they considered to be his lack of proper ritual washing before a meal.. As Yeshua states as part of his challenge to them, they were doing well with the miniscule details of religious life, but they had completely blown the bigger picture of walking with passionate desire following G-d’s actual instructions. Yeshua states: "*But woe to you Pharisees! For you pay tithe of mint and rue and every kind of garden herb, and yet disregard justice and the love of God; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.*" (Luke 11:42 NASV) We often have the same problem. We have the look of our religious affiliation or association down cold, the right words to say, the right doctrines to profess. But too often within our Yeshua believing leadership world we hold deep envy toward others for their abilities and accomplishments, bitterness for past hurts and offenses, and personal and organizational pride that blinds us to the real purpose for our communal efforts: to glorify our Messiah Yeshua! Our talmidim see our petty pride and closely held hurt feelings. We must vigilantly apply both the large and small details of all of Yeshua’s teachings, remembering that the first two commandments that frame Scriptural instruction are to Love G-d above all and to love those around us like we love ourselves.

The third and final piece is Messiah Yeshua’s challenge to his followers: he expects them to know his commands, which are his orders to his talmidim. The Greek word **εντειλαμην** used in this text clearly means orders and not suggestions. Living in our Western Society where religion is whatever you want it to be, it has become pretty easy to look at G-d’s Scriptural instruction as valuable options for life instead of clear cut imperatives to live by. But who likes to be told what to do today, even by G-d? Many of those I know who profess faith in Yeshua do not actually live

to live out Biblical instruction. As a Rabbi I notice that the majority of my own congregants decline to accept that Messiah Yeshua's teaching actually should cost them much; I am sure this is the case in most of the Yeshua gatherings many of us would be familiar with. We have been far more infected by the society we live in than we have been effective in impacting our society by our faith. Most believers today have the world's sense of autonomy; every person is an island of authority unto themselves, at least religiously speaking. So, counter to the clear teaching of the text where even Yeshua our Messiah submitted himself: to the Father, to his earthly parents, to the Temple tax and ultimately to death, too many who profess to follow this humble Messiah are not humbly submitted themselves to any, let alone to Messiah's orders.

In Jewish tradition the Torah is divided into weekly portions for the purpose of reading and study. Each Torah portion is matched with a relevant reading from the Neviim, the Prophetic literature. In our synagogue we also add a reading from the New Testament text to help us understand and apply the entire counsel of G-d that he has given us. Parashah Achare Mot provides an appropriate application as we conclude this message.

The Torah portion in Leviticus 16:1-18:30 instructs us about acceptable sexual behavior. G-d warns Israel not to imitate either the sexual practices of the country from which they have been delivered or those of the region which they are about to conquer. What follows is a graphic description of acceptable sexual behavior in which the Hebraic euphemism "discover" is used fourteen times to describe unacceptable sexual partners. This is followed by the use of the term which translates into English as "abomination" and which occurs at least six times in the same chapter. It would appear that the Holy One of Israel would have His people understand that human sexuality also needs to be an expression of the covenant of holiness which our people have always been called to adhere to. Any violation of that which the Torah stipulates as acceptable sexual behavior is also a violation of the intrinsic holiness that should always be the single most distinguishing feature of the people of G-d.

Malachi 3:4-24, the Haftarah portion, instructs us regarding acceptable financial behavior. The prophet Malachi records G-d's displeasure with the Israelis' after their return from the Babylonian captivity because they had become cheap in regards to financially supporting the worship of G-d. The people followed G-d but not with a whole heart, and certainly not with their wallets. If we say that we believe in G-d and that we want to serve him, we must remember that this involves our finances as well. Moral thought and our spiritual commitment to G-d must dictate the ways we earn, spend and give money. G-d promises to bless us as we believe in him and his ability to provide for us; this comes as we recognize that its morally wrong to steal from G-d by not giving back to him even a small portion of what all belongs to him anyway.

In 1 Corinthians 6:1-12 in the Brit Chadashah we learn about acceptable community behavior. There was a moral dispute among the believers in Corinth which spun out of control and led them shamefully into a secular court. Shaul's rebuke was for them to live differently than the rest of their society who had not yet accepted Messiah Yeshua; their approach to relating with one another needed to reflect G-d's spiritual work in their lives! We need to practice patience, love and humility toward one another. We need to completely and carefully avoid all activities and actions that might marginalize our testimony before others and limit our ability to live together in peace.

God's way is always the Right Way and we prove our faith commitment when we live out Messiah Yeshua's commands. Yeshua himself stated, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments!" (John 14:15 NASV). Let us be teaching this to our talmidim and let us be living out this before our talmidim, so that they might learn from us all Messiah's orders and grow strong for the sake of our Messiah Yeshua until he returns.

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