

Plain and Simple, Really by Jennifer Ross

My son, do not forget my Torah; but let your heart keep my commands; for they shall add length of days and long life and peace to you. Mercy and truth will not forsake you; tie them on your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart; and you shall find grace and good understanding in the sight of G-d and man. Trust in Adonai with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths. Proverbs 3

Before I start a new article I quiet and still myself before G-d, considering all that He has presented to me in the past weeks. Then I will pray for His Spirit to grant me peace and discernment and ask Him to stay close so that I don't wander. One opportunity, one challenge, which He placed in my path, was David, a fellow Believer, with some questions about grace.

I call it an *opportunity* because *if* I am faithful, **I will uphold Adonai's Character!**

I call it a *challenge* because, simply put... I don't ever want to come across as "knowing it all". #1) I *don't* know it all; and #2) I don't want to disgrace my Father's character *by* deceiving my neighbor with something that is not truth.

This has come around full circle, interestingly enough (nothing is by chance). To address David's questions, I needed to re-read my last article (Peeling the onion). As I read over it, I was very alarmed. In discussing firmness as it is revealed in Scripture through the Hebrew words *aman* and *emunah* (*belief and faithful*), I had also stated as a side note that it is revealed in the word *emet*. Which indeed it is. But I stated (twice in my article!) that this was the Hebrew word for *trust*.

It is *not* the word translated as trust. And this is what is so unsettling for me, because *emet* is the Hebrew word translated as **truth**; the very thing that I am so sensitive about portraying! How was it that I missed this? What was I thinking?

Along with this predicament, I was also trying to untangle David's questions about grace. His questions were completely sincere. His yearning for completeness was so genuine! But his very questions bore witness to the enemy's attempt to erase all truth through false teachings and doctrines that have been passed down through the ages.

In the Proverb above, Solomon makes it sound so easy and yet how is it that we make the mistakes that we make when it comes to interpreting Scripture?

And then it hit me. Hebrew words are strong. They are revealing. And yet in our Biblical translations these words are randomly and indiscriminately used and traded out for one another! And from this, we get messages from the pulpits that miss the mark even further based on false assumptions!

When this happens, the words lose power. When their meanings lose power, they get lost! And once *they* are lost, we are in the dark.

I hear preachers throwing faith and trust and truth and hope and glory around with such booming confidence. But I can't help wonder... how can people find *clarity* when there is so much ambiguity in what these words really mean? It's like hearing a car salesman describe how shiny the car is... never bothering to tell me how it handles on the road or what kind of gas mileage it gets!

It brought to mind a dear friend of mine, who, after a lifetime of devotion to Christian doctrine, looked at me with his hands up in surrender asking, "Why did they deceive me?"

And just as I literally lost track of the word truth in my

mistake...we risk losing track of G-d's Truth when we internalize His functional system of actions as **ethereal, intangible, abstract ideas.**

When something is functional, the Hebrew language calls it 'tov'. *Tov* translates into 'good', a weak translation but the point is that if something is functional...it must be good and if something is good, it is because it reflects that which is functional.

On the first day of creation, Elohim called the light into being and separated it from the darkness. The light wasn't the sun. The sun didn't come around until the fourth day. This light was from G-d, and this light laid the groundwork for functional vs. dysfunctional.

His light: Functional. The darkness: Dysfunctional.

You can't understand one without the other to compare it to! All that He does in the story of creation, when He has completed it, He sees that it is *tov*. It is good, it is functional. And we can look outside to nature or inside to the complex, sophisticated workings of a human cell...and see that it is definitely functional!

But if we look into our own human heart at all the sin and evil we are capable of...we see the dysfunctional. And you will notice, on that first day when He told light 'to be' ...and then separated it from the darkness... **He only calls the Light tov.**

Name one relationship on earth that doesn't require certain behaviors for it to be **functional**, for it to **work properly**. Husband and wife, parent and child, pet owner and pet, boss and employee, moon and tide, plants and CO2...the list goes on and on and on.

Every relationship between **every** thing has a functional path... and a dysfunctional path. Is our relationship with G-d, the architect of this design, any different? NO!

Our Creator, Avinu, our Father wants to have a relationship

with us! And this relationship follows the same rules and patterns as all others! There is a functional path that leads TO Him... and a dysfunctional path leading AWAY from Him.

We can follow the light (like the Israelites in the wilderness where the same Hebrew word for light in Genesis 1:3 is the word for light in Exodus 13, 14 and 25)... or we can choose to follow the darkness.

His desire, His expectation, is for all of us to be functional. More importantly, for all of us to CHOOSE to walk the functional, right, straight path that leads to Him. This expectation has been the same throughout time!

To be functional, then, we know that certain behaviors must take place. And out of His great love for us He teaches IN TORAH exactly what these behaviors should be!

And yet we don't embrace the blessings of these instructions. **We avoid His teachings... by sweeping them under a rug... and calling that rug Grace!**

There is tremendous depth in the Hebrew word for grace, which is *chen* (not pronounced *chen* like *china* but with the back of your tongue at the top of your throat). In a nutshell, however, grace simply means finding favor! And if we are speaking about G-d's grace...we are speaking about finding favor in His eyes!

He will not only turn us from the dysfunctional path if we sincerely desire it...He will look favorably upon us when we turn and walk towards Him!

So why do our spiritual leaders continue to sweep the floor like busy housewives who can't find the dustpan?

The language that defines the path is an action based language! Hebrew!

In the Hebrew, you can't hide how emet is related to emun is related to aman. You can see the relationship in the root

of the words! So **based on the action and the function of being firm (aman)**, we know that truth is related to faith is related to belief. We've covered *aman* and *emunah* in the past...now let's cover *emet*!

There is an English acronym, **WWJD**, that stands for 'what would Jesus do?' You see it on bracelets, T-shirts, bumper stickers...everywhere. I haven't seen any that ask **WWYD** (what would Yeshua do) but give it time. The point of the acronym is to keep Christians on track, thinking before they act, ironically similar to the Jewish custom of wearing *tefillim*.

Well, let's look at what Yeshua did.

- He came in the flesh. As believers who share the Spirit with other believers, how many times have we experienced G-d's Spirit wanting to leap out of our skin? Especially when we are facing our own sin or witnessing evil? Imagine how HE must have felt! While on earth G-d's Spirit dwelt entirely in Yeshua and it was trapped in the flesh. **Under this incredible confinement, He remained pure in His flesh, according to G-d's Expectation, giving G-d the glory.**
- He came to fulfill Torah and the Prophets. In every action and every word He upheld Torah. And as the Suffering Servant, He fulfilled the prophecies pertaining to Him. **He remained faithful in following every command and every statute and confirmed what had been written, according to G-d's Expectation, always giving G-d the glory.**
- He came to teach. He walked hundreds of miles teaching and healing and discipling men. (I don't believe that 'discipling' is a word, but it should be. My computer keeps insisting that the word should be 'disciplining'! But to discipline **is** to make disciples!) Yeshua did all of this to ensure that they were equipped to carry the right message to the world. And **under this incredible pressure, He remained firm in His purpose, according to G-d's Expectation, always giving G-d the glory.**

- He came to be the Sacrificial Lamb. His prayer in the Garden shows us His human side. But He was resolved to see it through if it was His Father's Will. **Under this incredible anguish, He remained firm in G-d's Redemptive Plan, according to G-d's Expectation, always giving G-d the glory.**
- He endured the slaying. He took upon Himself all of our failure, all of our evil, all of our ugliness and filth so that we could be co-inheritors and future servants in His Kingdom! **Under this indescribable suffering He remained firm in G-d's Sacrifice, according to G-d's Expectation, GIVING G-D the GLORY!**

All that Yeshua remained firm in, which is everything, is **HIS EMET! HIS TRUTH!**

His reveals His Truth in His walk, just as we should!

And He remained firm, allowing G-d to direct Him on the functional path laid out for Him. Where we may falter, Yeshua stood firm, and it is this reliable steadiness that we are to learn from, be exceedingly thankful for and emulate.

It is our firmness in His firmness that grants us favor in our Father's eyes.

It is our firmness in His firmness that equips us with the discipline needed to walk a straight path.

It is our firmness in His firmness that sustains us in our walk.

It is our firmness in His firmness that will give us the strength and authority to overcome.

It is our faith in Yeshua's Truth that will give us passage into the Kingdom.

Paul wrote to the Galatians these words:

So that the Law has become a trainer of us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.

There are actually some Bibles that translate this verse (Galatians 3:24) as 'until Christ'. What kind of a mixed message does that send? The Greek word used here, *eis*, means to, for, unto... never does it mean until! But if someone reads it that way they will assume that Yeshua put an end to His Very Own Word, Torah! That's ludicrous!

To the Ephesians, Paul said this:

By grace you are saved through faith; not of yourselves; for it is the gift of G-d.

In the simplest of terms, as always, look to a child.

We have a very common rule in our house: Keep your rooms clean!

If I came home from work and my son had cleaned his room with his only motivation being to see me smile and give him a hug...he found favor in my eyes.

If I came home from work and my son had cleaned his room and then complained to me about the rule...or even worse...expected some kind of reward...well...you see the difference. So does G-d... in us.

The difference is in our hearts and that's why Paul clarified what Solomon clarified what G-d had already made clear...that Torah should be on our hearts!

If we are walking the functional path towards G-d, we should be like a child yearning to please his Father. We should be committing ourselves to the actions behind what has been written, out of love, so that He can have a relationship with us.

It's time to pick up that rug and deal with the dirt!

Shalom!

Author: Jennifer Ross