

Approximately 2000 years ago, the Apostle Paul was standing before Felix, the governor of the Roman province of Judea, challenging the charges that were laid against him by the Ananias, the High priest. The charges against him included sedition and an attempt to profane the Temple, but in his defense, Paul showed that all he was doing was what the Jews had professed all along.

Acts 24:14-15 ¹⁴ "But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets. ¹⁵ "I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of *the* dead, both of *the* just and *the* unjust.

Paul had been accused of being a leader of the 'sect of the Nazarenes', a reference to the prophet from Nazareth – Messiah Yeshua, and because what He had been teaching was in some ways different from what the Jewish leadership had taught, this 'Way' was considered a sect. But Paul stated otherwise. He stated that 'the Way' was what Moses and the prophets had taught, and that 'the Way' was connected to the resurrection of the dead, and we can assume – eternal life.

What is the way, and why is it important that we understand it? The answer can be found by going to the beginning of scripture, then jumping to the end.

You'll recall that in the beginning of the Bible, God planted a garden in Eden and put Adam and his wife in it to guard it and tend to it. But Adam failed to protect the garden, and he failed to protect his wife and thus they were both affected by a serpent who had made his way into the garden, and as a result, Adam and Eve were both cast out of the Garden and forbidden to return.

^{NKJ} **Genesis 3:24** So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the Tree of Life.

You'll notice that the purpose of the cherubim was to guard 'the way' to the Tree of Life. This "way" was kept from mankind in general until Abraham the Hebrew came on the scene, and now those YHVH has called can now know and understand that way, and eventually re-enter the garden as is pointed out at the end of the Bible.

^{NKJ} **Revelation 2:7** "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."

Thus, the 'Way' to the Tree of Life is to live a life of overcoming, overcoming the pulls of the serpent who had infiltrated the garden. It is a 'walk' that follows a path, a path that YHVH has defined for us. In the Genesis passage above, the word "way" as in "to guard the way" is the Hebrew word "derek" (דֶּרֶךְ – Strong's 1870). It means "way, road, distance, journey, manner". It comes from the root word "darak" (דָּרַךְ- Strong's 1869) which means "to tread, bend, lead, march". This word implies a walk with determination, and in an army marching to war. A good example is that of a person treading grapes as in this Messianic prophecy –

^{NKJ} **Amos 9:13** " Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "When the plowman shall overtake the reaper, And the treader of grapes him who sows seed; The mountains shall drip with sweet wine, And all the hills shall flow *with it*.

A person who treads grapes has a deliberate walk. He's not on a casual walk, but very deliberately chooses his steps to make sure all the grapes have been crushed. Such is the way of God. It's a deliberate walk, one where you choose your steps carefully so as to stay on the path.

Abraham understood 'the way' and walked in it. He started the walk by turning his back on the pagan culture of Babylon, and making his way toward Canaan, the 'promised land', and as he grew in understanding and faith, YHVH was able to say of him . . .

^{LXE} **Genesis 18:19** . . . I know that he will order his sons, and his house after him, and they will keep the ways (*literally* 'way'¹) of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abram all things whatsoever he has spoken to him.

We find that the 'way' that Abram kept included God's law – the Torah. When Abraham's son Isaac was tempted to journey to Egypt to escape a famine, YHVH spoke to him saying –

Genesis 26:3-5 ³ "Dwell in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father. ⁴ "And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; ⁵ "because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws."

From this example, we can see that God's way includes walking in God's law. Numerous scriptures make an association between the Torah and walking in the way of God.

^{NKJ} **Exodus 18:20** "And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the **way** in which they must walk and the work they must do.

^{NKJ} **Deuteronomy 5:33** "You shall walk in all the **ways** which the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live and *that it may be* well with you, and *that* you may prolong *your* days in the land which you shall possess.

^{NKJ} **Deuteronomy 8:6** "Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, to walk in His **ways** and to fear Him.

^{NKJ} **Deuteronomy 19:9** "and if you keep all these commandments and do them, which I command you today, to love the LORD your God and to walk always in His **ways**, then you shall add three more cities for yourself besides these three,

In all these cases, the word for 'way' or 'ways' is "derek", and in many cases the word "derek" is in the singular form. This is important because God does not have a number of different 'ways' that we can walk, He has just one "way", and that "way" is defined by the Torah. Thus, Paul was right – the Torah does teach the way by which we are to live, the one way to eternal life. The proverbs support that thought.

^{NKJ} **Proverbs 6:23** For the commandment *is* a lamp, And the law (Heb. –"torah") a light; Reproofs of instruction *are* the **way** (Heb. – "derek") of life,

^{NKJ} **Proverbs 12:28** In the way of righteousness *is* life, And in *its* **pathway** (Heb. – "derek") *there is* no death.

Not only are we to walk in His way, we are also to guard the way.

^{NKJ} **Psalms 37:34** Wait on the LORD, And keep His way, And He shall exalt you to inherit the land; When the wicked are cut off, you shall see *it*.

¹ The word is in the singular form in the Hebrew text

In this passage “keep” is from the Hebrew word “shamar” (שָׁמַר - Strong’s 8104) which often implies “keeping guard”. It’s the same word that describes the purpose of the cherubim at the Garden of Eden . . . they were to “guard” the way to the tree of life.

It’s clear that God’s way is bound to the Torah walk. It’s the way given to Israel from the very beginning of their existence as a nation. But the way had been corrupted to some degree by the time Yeshua came along. In first century Judea, the way had no longer included the element of faith as it had with Abraham. Yeshua restored faith to the walk and taught it to His disciples. Thus Paul’s understanding of the ‘way’ was different from that of the 1st century Jewish leaders and was thus called a “sect” or what we call today – a “heresy”.

Now, 2000 years later, God is beginning to restore His ‘way’ again. Whereas Paul was considered a heretic² because he followed Yeshua’s example of restoring faith to the law, we are considered heretics because we strive to follow Yeshua’s example and restore the law to faith. Never-the-less, that’s our mission and the path on which YHVH has placed us. In effect, our mission and desire is to follow God’s admonition as stated by the prophet Jeremiah -

^{ESV} **Jeremiah 6:16** . . . "Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.

Shalom Aleichem

² The Greek word for “sect” is “haireisis” (Strong’s 139), the word from which we get “heretic”.