According to the New International Webster’s Dictionary a “torch” is anything that illuminates or brightens. Each generation needs people to carry the torch to illuminate the next generation. If the chain of passing on the torch is broken, the light is lost. When the light is lost the people live in darkness until someone picks up the torch and again begins to run the race in order to pass it on. Parshat Devarim is about passing on the torch. And, that torch is the Torah.

How does one effectively pass on this great torch so that when it gets to its destination it is still burning? This process is called “discipleship” and it was the preferred method of the prophets, Yeshua The Messiah, and His disciples to pass on The Torch. The Hebrew word for “disciple” is “talmid” or the plural is “talmidim”. This word comes from the Hebrew root “limmud”, which means “instructed”. The Hebrew word “Torah” means “instruction”, referring to God’s instruction. Therefore, a Biblical disciple is someone who has been instructed in the Torah. A “talmid” is an instructed or taught one. And, the job of a Rabbi (a word that the Apostolic writings defines as a “teacher” - see Yochanan/John 1:38) was to make Biblical disciples (instructed ones) for the King Of Kings.

Although spreading God’s light was partly accomplished by evangelism, the primary and preferred method employed by Yeshua and his talmidim to spread God’s light and His Torah was through the process of discipleship. They weren’t so concerned about making converts as they were about making disciples. In Mattityahu (Matthew) 28:19 Yeshua said, “Therefore, go and make people from all nations into talmidim (disciples)”. Notice how he didn’t say, “Therefore, go and make from nations into converts”.

It wasn’t so much the quantity of believers that Yeshua was concerned about as much as it was the quality of believers that he was concerned with. Our Rabbi Yeshua spoke to this reality in Mattityahu (Matthew) 7:14 when he stated, “but it is a narrow gate and a hard road that leads to life, and only a few find it”. It is not an easy thing to be a talmid (disciple). It is very time consuming and often involves self-sacrifice... something that not too many people these days are really interested in. But, one thing is for sure, we cannot presume to disciple someone else if we are ourselves have refused the yoke of discipleship. So many people today want to become leaders and teachers before they have invested the necessary and proper time as a student. But, this is not God’s way.
Our Rabbi Yeshua had twelve talmidim (disciples), which grew into a greater multitude of talmidim. In a similar sense in parshat Devarim, Moshe was the Master, the head Rabbi (if you will), and the twelve tribes of Yisra'el were his talmidim. Moshe knew his time was about up and that he would be leaving his Earthly responsibilities soon (as he was about to be gathered to his fathers). He knew that it was time to insure that the Torch of Torah was properly passed on. Part of being a master or a teacher is to disciple people so that one day you can replace yourself.

In Devarim (Deuteronomy) 1:1-3 we see the following: “These are the words which Moshe spoke to all Yisra'el beyond the Yarden in the wilderness, in the 'Aravah over against Suf, between Paran, and Tofel, and Lavan, and Chatzerot, and Di-Zahav. It is eleven days' journey from Chorev by the way of Mount Se'ir to Kadesh-Barnea. It happened in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moshe spoke to the children of Yisra'el, according to all that HaShem had given him in mitzvah (commandment) to them”. And, in Devarim (Deut.) 1:5 it says, “There, beyond the Yarden, in the land of Mo'av, Moshe took it upon himself to expound this Torah...”.

Why was Moshe once again repeating the Torah to the children of Yisra'el? He was passing on the torch. There also is a Jewish tradition that says that Moshe had actually repeated Torah in seventy languages so that the nations would also know Torah. In a traditional Jewish work known as the Midrash Tanchuma it says, “Moshe has already taught the Torah in the sacred Hebrew language (Shemot, 34:32), but he now wished to include those who did not understand Hebrew. To cover every option, he explained it in all seventy languages.”. This should not only remind us of Mt. Sinai, but should also remind us of when the disciples of Yeshua gathered together at Shavuot (Pentecost) and the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit) was poured out and Torah was written on the hearts of men. Devout Jewish men from every nation under heaven heard the message given by Yeshua's disciples that day in their own tongue. This was the Biblical gift of speaking in tongues and its purpose was to transmit the Torah of Adonai to the nations. I do believe that Moshe, the deliverer of Torah had this ability as well. But, this also makes an important point that Torah was not only meant for native-born Yisraelites... it was also meant for the nations to hear and learn.

Was this not also the goal of The Master, Yeshua? In Mattityahu (Matthew) 28:18-20 it says, “Yeshua came to them and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Therefore go, and make talmidim (disciples) of all nations, immersing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I commanded you. Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amein.”.

Just like Moshe (Moses) in parshat Devarim, Yeshua at the end of His Earthly ministry passed on The Torch to his disciples. Part of thattorch passing involved the commands of the twelve talmidim to in-turn make disciples of all the nations, and not just of Jewish people. Just as Jewish tradition says Moshe was insuring all the nations would be discipled through the hearing and knowledge of Torah, so too Yeshua The Messiah was insuring that His disciples would take His teachings (the Torah – Matt. 5:16-19) to the Nations. Although Moshe was a Messianic model in the sense of passing the teachings of Torah to His disciples, this was not the only similarity here between Moshe and Yeshua. Not only were they both putting the finishing touches on their discipleship and their disciples (passing on
the torch), but the teachings that they were passing on were not their own... they were the same teachings from the same source... That source was the Torah of our Father in Heaven, from the One that doesn’t change.

In Yochanan (John) 12:48-50 Yeshua The Messiah says of Himself the following; “He who rejects me, and doesn't receive my sayings, has one who judges him. The word that I spoke, the same will judge him in the last day. For I spoke not from myself, but the Father who sent me, he gave me a mitzvah (command), what I should say, and what I should speak. I know that his mitzvah is eternal life. The things therefore which I speak, even as the Father has said to me, so I speak.”. So again, in Mattityahu (Matthew) 28:19-20a we see Yeshua saying, “Therefore go, and make talmidim (disciples) of all nations, immersing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I commanded you... “.

In the previous scripture passage we read Yeshua saying that what He says only comes from His Father and that the words he speaks are not His own. Therefore, what he taught His disciples to observe was The Father's instruction, the Father's Torah, and not a different torah, or law. In Yochanan (John) 5:46-47 our Master said, “For if you believed Moshe, you would believe me; for he wrote about me. But if you don't believe his writings, how will you believe my words?".

If Yeshua taught his disciples his Father's Torah and we are to teach the Nations all things which Yeshua commanded His disciples, than clearly part of the “Great Commission” of Yeshua our Master is to teach the Torah to the disciples that we make. But, just as Moshe and Yeshua did not pass on their own words and their own teachings, neither are we. We are to make disciples, but not to the end that they are to be solely followers of us. No, we are to make disciples so that they may become disciples of The Most High, El Elyon, and of Yeshua HaMashiach (The Messiah). The job of a good disciple in the days of Yeshua’s talmidim was to become just like the Master. A talmid (disciple) did everything that the Master did. He ate like the Master, he walked like the Master, and he talked like the Master.

Sometimes we hear or see the phrase, “What would Jesus (Yeshua) Do”? This truly is a great discipleship phrase... But, it is only great if the people making this statement actually follow through with what Yeshua actually did! He kept and taught Torah and expected his disciples to do the same. The real question is, as disciples of The Master will we follow in the footsteps of our Master and do what He did?

In the Judaism of Yeshua’s day a talmid (disciple) had four primary duties:

1. To memorize their teacher's words.
2. To learn their teacher's traditions and interpretations.
3. To imitate their teacher's actions
4. To raise up disciples.

Ever since the days of Ezra and Nechemyah (Nehemiah) the sages instructed their talmidim to “raise up many disciples” as we see in Pirkay Avot 1:1 where it says, “Moshe received the Torah at Sinai and transmitted it to Yehoshua, Yehoshua transmitted it to the elders, and the elders transmitted it to the prophets, and the prophets transmitted it to the men of the Great
Assembly. The men of the Great Assembly used to say three things, “Be diligent in justice, raise up many disciples and make a fence around Torah.”.

They were all passing on The Torch. In the period of time that Yeshua’s disciples lived with him a Rabbi was revered higher than one’s own father. If fact, these Rabbis were referred to as “father” and their talmidim were known as being part of their house. Two prominent examples of this would be “Beit Hallel” (The House of Hillel) and “Beit Shammai” (The House of Shammai). A certain talmid (student) of the famous Rabbi Gamli’el was no doubt well versed in the art of Jewish discipleship and had these words to share in 1Corinthians 4:14-17; “I don't write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For though you have ten thousand tutors in Messiah, yet not many fathers. For in Messiah Yeshua, I became your father through the Good News. I beg you therefore, be imitators of me. Because of this I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways which are in Messiah, even as I teach everywhere in every assembly.”. Sha’ul continued to speak in these terms towards the end of his days when he was a seasoned believer and follower of Messiah Yeshua. In Philemon 1:9-10 he says, “But since I Sha’ul, am the kind of person I am, an old man and now for the Messiah Yeshua's sake a prisoner besides, I prefer to appeal to you on the basis of love. My request to you concerns my son, of whom I became the father while here in prison, Onesimus”.

Outside the understanding of Jewish discipleship the above may not be fully comprehended. So, although we see Sha’ul (Paul) making disciples and encouraging his disciples to follow his lead, he also makes it clear whom the true Master is. In 1Corinthians 11:1-2 he says, “Be imitators of me, even as I also am of Messiah. Now I praise you, brothers, that you remember me in all things, and hold firm the traditions, even as I delivered them to you.”. He makes it clear that even though he is encouraging them to be imitators of him that in reality it is Messiah whom he is imitating. This is the discipleship process… This is passing on the Torch of Torah! So, what about the passage in Mattityahu (Matthew) 23:8-10 where it says, “But do not be called ‘Rabbi’; for One is Your Teacher, and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on Earth your father; for One is your Father, He Who is in Heaven. And do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, the Messiah.”?

During first century Judaism when Yeshua The Messiah walked the Earth this last passage would have been understood in the light of discipleship. The words “Rabbi”, “father”, and “leader” are all associated with someone whom made disciples. But, I don't believe Yeshua was saying that someone absolutely could not have the title of “rabbi” or “father”, or “leader”. If this was the case than Sha’ul (Paul) violated this command in 1Corinthians 4:14-17 by referring to himself as a “father” of the assembly of Corinth and to follow his lead. No, I believe Yeshua was teaching us not to consider ourselves, “The Rabbi or The Teacher”, “The Father”, or “The Leader” as we are to raise up disciples for “The Rabbi and The Teacher” whom is Yeshua, “The Father” whom is in Heaven and “The Leader” whom is The Messiah. It is not that we cannot teach, father up disciples, or be leaders, and be described by what we do. We simply must remember whom we are raising people to be disciples of. In other words, we are not to be making disciples for the house of Reuel or for the house of Sha’ul (Paul).
In 1Corinthians 1:10-13 Rav Sha'ul says, “Now I beg you, brothers, through the name of our Lord, Yeshua the Messiah, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been reported to me concerning you, my brothers, by those who are from Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I mean this, that each one of you says, "I am of Sha'ul," "I am of Apollos," "I am of Kefa," and, "I am of Messiah." Is Messiah divided? Was Sha'ul crucified for you? Or were you immersed into the name of Sha'ul?" Here Sha'ul was reminding the community in Corinth that as they undertake the great commission given to us by Yeshua The Master that we are to remember whom we are making disciples for. These disciples are to be taught to be like The Master, whom we are supposed to imitate. In Mattityahu (Matthew) 10:24-25 Yeshua says, "A talmid (disciple) is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his lord. It is enough for the talmid that he be like his teacher, and the servant like his lord... ".

These disciples when fully mature should be just like their Torah observant Master, Yeshua. Yochanan Alef (1John) 2:4-6 reinforces this fact as it states, “This is how we know that we know him: if we keep his mitzvot (commandments). One who says, "I know him," and doesn't keep his mitzvot, is a liar, and the truth isn't in him. But whoever keeps his word, God's love has most certainly been perfected in him. This is how we know that we are in him: he who says he remains in him ought himself also to walk just like he walked.”. Notice how keeping the commandments in this last passage is connected with walking "just like He walked". Even if we interpret this passage to be Yeshua's commandments, remember that in Yochanan (John) 12:48-50 Yeshua said that his commands are His Father's commands... They are one in the same! We know that for Yeshua to be Messiah He had to keep His Father's Torah (Law) perfectly, or he would be a sinner and would not be an acceptable sacrifice for the atonement of our sins. If we claim that He was the perfect sacrifice, than by default we claim that He kept all of Torah, without fail. This was how he walked, this is how we are to walk, and this is how we are teach those we disciple to walk.

Yeshua is the goal of the Torah. Romans 10:4a states, “For the goal at which the Torah aims is the Messiah... “. Some versions of Romans 10:4a state something like; “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness... “. Some take this to mean that Messiah ended the law for his disciples. But, this would be a gross twisting of the Emissary's words. The word that some versions translate as “end” comes from the Greek word “telos”. It can mean “a goal, a definite point, destination, or result”. This Greek word is the same word that we get the word “telescope” from. A telescope is used to view something on the other side of a particular distance and is often used to view a goal or destination. In our case, at our current position at point “A” we look through the telescope of Torah and view the intended destination or goal of the Torah, which is Yeshua The Messiah. Therefore, as apposed to avoiding the goal of the Torah, we are to press on through our Torah journey to that destination with all of our heart, soul, and strength. The proclamation of the Shema is all about discipleship.

In the Kingdom of Heaven there are the great disciple makers and there are those whom are the least. What does Yeshua have to say about these disciple makers and whom does he wish to be affiliated with? In Mattityahu (Matthew) 5:19 speaking of The Torah and The Prophets Yeshua says, “Whoever, therefore, shall break one of these least mitzvot (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."

How does one become a talmid (disciple) today? Adonai has risen up Messianic leaders all around the world to father disciples in the name of Yeshua The Messiah. If Adonai has allowed a Messianic synagogue or congregation to be established in your area there is a good chance that he has called the leaders therein to disciple the people in that community. Their job is to teach and live out the Torah before you. Your job is to patiently learn from them. Are you too busy to be a talmid (disciple)? Or, perhaps its that you don’t think you need any discipleship. Maybe you feel that you are already well learned in the ways of Yeshua and the Torah. If that is the case, perhaps you should approach the leadership of the Messianic congregation that you attend with your qualifications to see how you can help in the discipleship process of your community.

Whatever the case, each Messianic community should have a number of discipleship opportunities all throughout the week. For example, here at Synagogue Chavurat HaMashiach every day you can join us to receive discipleship in prayer, not only to learn how to pray, but to also learn the prayers of the commonwealth of Yisra’el. We can teach you how to pray in concert with Yisra’el. We can teach you about tefillin and how to don tefillin each morning in fulfillment of the Shema as a part of your regular prayer life, something that our Master Yeshua practiced. Each Sun. morning we invite both men and women to join our Zekanim (Elders) who lead a study in the Apostolic scriptures, where we study out the Good News of Yeshua and the writings of his Emissaries, and how to apply them to our lives. Each week we get together to study out the weekly Torah portion and to further learn the way of our Master Yeshua. We also regularly conduct the HaYesod discipleship program for both men and women, which explores the roots of a Messianic Torah pursuant life. In addition, we invite all to join us to learn Biblical Hebrew as we go verse by verse through the Biblical Hebrew of the Torah. And, each Shabbat we get together for our congregational holy convocation to fellowship, to hear the scriptures read, and to hear teachings such as the one you are hearing today.

In conclusion, if you have been a faithful long time follower of Yeshua The Messiah and are well learned in the Torah, you should be helping to disciple the community of Messiah. Otherwise, we should actively seek opportunities to learn from the Zekanim (Elders) that Adonai has established in our community. Discipleship requires self-sacrifice and a long-term investment of your time. It requires you to go out of your way to rearrange your life to make room for it. And, according to the scriptures, it is not optional. It is essential. Have you decided to make it a priority in your life?

God-forbid that we will be responsible for the darkness of the next generation. Brothers and sisters, our Master has charged us with a great commission. We have our work cut out for us. Let us keep the light of Messiah and the torch of Torah burning bright for the next generation to take hold of.

Shabbat shalom!

To read more messages like this visit: www.synagoguechm.com