

Study One – “There are Two Ways”

Didache Chapter 1, verse 1:

“There are two ways: one of life and one of death: however there is a great difference between the two ways.”¹

While some scholars think that Chapters 1 – 6 of the Didache are borrowed from an already existing Jewish document or oral tradition, many agree with Alon, who writes that the introduction of the Didache proposes:

“... a paradigm for the principles of religion which are based, in the main, on Torat hamidot (“the ethics of the law”), which devolved from Scripture and which permeates the tannaitic² Mishnah, the Apocrypha³, and the books written by the scholars of Israel in Greek.”⁴

As you complete the following passages of Scripture and Talmud, you will see this paradigm, this pattern weaved throughout. The Children of Israel were told the following in D’varim (Deuteronomy) 11:26 – 28, before entering the Promised Land:

¹ *The Way of Life: The Rediscovered Teachings of the Twelve Jewish Apostles to the Gentiles*, The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles (p. 27), Toby Janicki, First Fruits of Zion, 1-800-775-4807, ffoz.org

² The redactors of the Mishnah are called Tannaim (the rabbinic sages whose views are recorded in the Mishnah, from approximately 10 – 220 CE). The period during which they redacted the Mishnah was called the Tannaitic period.

³ “Sefarim Hachizonim” in Hebrew, meaning “the external books”. This is a compilation of Biblical or related writings, in large part by Jews, especially during the Second Temple period, which did not form part of the accepted canon of Scripture.

⁴ Alon, “*The Halacha in the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*,” p. 166



Once Israel was given the Torah, the instruction for life (G-d's marriage covenant conditions), they needed to choose whether to obey or disobey, according to D'varim 30:15 – 20:

“Look! I am presenting you today with, on the one hand, life and good; and on the other, death and evil — in that I am ordering you today to love Adonai your G-d, to follow his ways, and to obey his mitzvot, regulations and rulings ; for if you do, you will live and increase your numbers; and Adonai your G-d will bless you in the land you are entering in order to take possession of it. But if your heart turns away, if you refuse to listen, if you are drawn away to prostrate yourselves before other gods and serve them; I am announcing to you today that you will certainly perish; you will not live long in the land you are crossing the Yarden to enter and possess. I call on heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have presented you with life and death, the blessing and the curse. Therefore, choose life, so that you will live, you and your descendants, loving Adonai your G-d, paying attention to what he says and clinging to him — for that is the purpose of your life! On this depends the length of time you will live in the land Adonai swore he would give to your ancestors Avraham, Yitz'chak and Ya`akov.” (D'varim 30:15 - 20⁵)

For contemplation:

From D'varim 30:15 – 20, what are the conditions or terms for living in the Promised Land (Eretz Yisrael), the place in which G-d chose to abide with His covenant people?

If heaven and earth were called upon to be witnesses of the terms of the covenant, what is Yeshua's take on this in Mattityahu (Matthew) 5:17 – 20?

What was the problem with the P'rushim (Pharisees) according to Yeshua, in Mattityahu 23:1 – 3? With what is Yeshua making a connection to righteousness?

Living according to the covenant that G-d gave to Israel requires us to not just talk the talk, but to walk the walk.

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The Tanak continues this theme started in D'varim. David HaMelech (King David) wrote in Mizmor Aleph⁶ (Psalm 1):1 – 2 & 6:

Shlomo HaMelech (King Solomon) wrote in Mishlei (Proverbs) 4:14 – 19:

“Don't follow the path of the wicked or walk on the way of evildoers. Avoid it, don't go on it, turn away from it, and pass on. For they can't sleep if they haven't done evil, they are robbed of sleep unless they make someone fall. For they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence. But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, shining ever brighter until full daylight. The way of the wicked is like darkness; they don't even know what makes them stumble.”
(Proverbs 4:14 - 19 - CJB⁷)

The Navi Yirmeyahu (the Prophet Jeremiah) calls Israel to repent before they are driven into exile (as promised in D'varim 30:17 – 18, above), in Yirmeyahu 21:8:

The Book of Enoch records the following words of Methuselah to the children of righteousness:

“... For I exhort you and say unto you, beloved:
Love uprightness and walk therein. And draw not nigh to uprightness with a double heart,

⁶ The Hebrew title for the book of Psalms is Tehillim, meaning "songs of praise." Individual psalms are referred to as Mizmorim. For example, Mizmor Aleph is Psalm 1.

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And associate not with those of a double heart,
But walk in righteousness, my sons. And it shall guide you on good
paths,
And righteousness shall be your companion.”⁸

In the Midrash, Sh’mot (Exodus) Rabba⁹ we read the following:

“This is analogous to a king who prepared two paths, one filled with thorns, briars, and thistles, and one filled with fragrant plants. The blind walk on the bad path, and the thorns add wound upon wound. Those who can see walk on the good path, with the result that they walk [comfortably] and their clothes are perfumed from [the path]. So too, God prepared two paths, one for the righteous and one for the wicked. One who has no eyes walks on the path of the wicked, stumbles and does not recover, However, the righteous, who walk in their innocence, are privileged, and their children after them, as it is stated: “One who walks innocently is a righteous man; happy are his children after him. (Proverbs 20:7).”¹⁰

The historian Philo¹¹ quotes the theme in his works, in the section titled “The Special Laws, IV”:

“But as it seems the firm conception of such ideas is of no advantage to him unless he is able to discriminate between and to distinguish which of contrary things it is right to choose and which to avoid, of which the parting of the hoof is the symbol; since the course of life is twofold, the one road leading to wickedness and the other to virtue, and since we ought to renounce the one and never to forsake the other.”(Special Laws IV.108)¹²

⁸ Enoch. Section 5 Chapters 91:3 – 4, *The Book of Enoch* (p. 85). iap. Kindle Edition

⁹ Midrash Rabba is the Largest Collection of Aggadah. Midrash is an interpretive act, seeking the answers to religious questions (both practical and theological) by plumbing the meaning of the words of the Torah. The body of literature known as midrash is generally divided into aggadic (narrative) and halakhic (legal) midrash. Collections that contain mostly stories, parables, and homilies are classified as midrash aggadah, while collections focused primarily on the derivation of law are called midrash halakhah. Midrash Rabba (Genesis and Leviticus) were compiled around 500 CE, with material dating back to 300 CE, as well as some later additions. Midrash Deuteronomy Rabba was compiled between 600 and 900 CE. While the Midrash Rabba was not redacted until after the Jerusalem Talmud (Talmud Yerushalmi), the Oral teachings go back as far as the sources of the Mishnah.

¹⁰ Midrash Rabba, Sh’mot Rabba 30:20

¹¹ Philo of Alexandria, aka Philo Judaeus was a Hellenistic Jewish philosopher, a descendant of the tribe of Levi, who lived in Alexandria, in the Roman province of Egypt. He is spoken of by Josephus as one of the most eminent of his contemporary countrymen. His treatise was apparently written in the reign of Claudius, who succeeded Caligula 41 CE.

¹² Yonge, “The Special Laws, IV.108,” in *The Works of Philo: New Updated Edition*, Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, LLC, USA, 2016, p. 626



A section of writings in the Dead Sea Scrolls, shows the continuation of this theme in the period between the Tanak and the Brit Chadashah. In the section called "The Community Rule", we read:

"Those born of truth spring from a foundation of light, but those born of injustice spring from a source of darkness. All the children of righteousness are ruled by the Prince of Light and walk in the ways of light, but all the children of injustice are ruled by the Angel of Darkness and walk in the ways of darkness." (The Community Rule 1QS iii, verses 19 to 21)¹³

For contemplation:

The Rabbis of the Mishnah continued the discussion in Pirkei Avot. Read Pirkei Avot 2:13 (which can be found in Appendix 1) and consider Rabban Yohanan's conclusion to his talmidim's (disciples') answers to the questions about "right way" and the "evil way", especially in the light of Yeshua's words in Lucas (Luke) 11:33 – 36.

Compare this to Mattityahu 5:14 – 16. What does Yeshua teach us about how people will see our light shine? Who is meant to get the praise?

Yeshua Himself, refers to the same concept in Mattityahu 7:13 – 14:

In verse 12 of Chapter 7, Yeshua connects the (narrow, or good) path we should take with how we should treat each other, as does the Didache in verse 2 (which we will explore in Study Two):

"Always treat others as you would like them to treat you; that sums up the teaching of the Torah and the Prophets." (Mattityahu 7:12 - CJB¹⁴)

And He says this sums up the teaching of Torah, which brings us back to Mizmor Aleph (Psalm 1): Those who reject the way of the wicked delight "... in Adonai's Torah; on his Torah they meditate day and night." (Mizmor

¹³ Geza Vermes, "The Community Rule", in *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, Printed in England by Clays Ltd., St Yves plc, Penguin Classics, 2011, p. 101

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Aleph:2 - CJB¹⁵). We see this paralleled in the Talmud Bavli (the Babylonian Talmud), in Tractate Chaggiga 3b:

"... the words of Torah direct those who study them from the paths of death to the paths of life." (Talmud Bavli, Chaggiga 3b)

The words of the Torah are central to keeping on, or moving onto the path or way of life.

For contemplation:

Before the Talmidim¹⁶ of Yeshua were called "Christians" (or "Messianics" in Hebrew – refer Acts of the Shlichim¹⁷ 11:26), what was the predominant reference to them in Acts 9:2? (Refer also to Acts 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, and 22).

The Talmidim of Yeshua were trained in (Note: please use the KJV or MKJV for the following):

- The way of _____ (Acts 16:17)
- The way of _____ (Acts 18:25)
- The way of _____ (Acts 18:26)

Shimon Kefa (Simon Peter) in his second Epistle, refers to those who have strayed from the truth as having left "the way of truth" (2:2), "the right way" (2:15), "the way of righteousness" (2:21), to follow "the way of Balaam" (2:15).

For contemplation:

The Book of Acts was written by Luke (between around 40 – 90 CE), and given that the Didache was written around the same time, possibly earlier (50 CE), is it possible that Luke may have known about the Two Ways (the Didache) document, or at least the oral teaching? He was after all part of the generation directly after Yeshua, and he mentions being part of Rav Sha'ul's¹⁸ (the Apostle Paul's) journey from Ephesus to Yerushalayim (Jerusalem) in Acts 21:1.

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¹⁶ Disciples.

¹⁷ Apostles or Emissaries.

¹⁸ Saul of Tarsus was a well-trained and respected Rabbi. He himself explains that he trained under Gamli'el (Acts 22:3), learning every detail of the Torah of his forefathers. Rav is a shortened version of Rabbi. Sha'ul is the Apostle Paul's Hebrew name



The Talmud Bavli is a bit more explicit about the destination of the two ways:

“... there are two ways before me, one leading to Paradise and the other to Gehinnom ...” (Talmud Bavli, Berakhot 28b)

In Jewish context, especially in this tractate, Paradise is often used interchangeably with the term Gan Eden (“the Garden of Eden”), referring to a heavenly realm where souls reside after physical death, until the time of bodily resurrection in the days of the Messiah, and the Messianic Kingdom here on earth. Gehinnom is a place of punishment and/or purification. The name is taken from a valley (Gei Hinnom) just south of Jerusalem. Some view Gehinnom as a place of torture and punishment, fire and brimstone, while others imagine it less harshly, as a place where one reviews the actions of his/her life and repents for past misdeeds.

In either case, the righteous will be resurrected at the first resurrection, at the beginning of the Messianic Kingdom (refer Hit’Galut [Revelation] 20:5 – 6) and those in Gehinnom will be resurrected at the end of the Messianic Kingdom to receive judgement for their works or deeds, the path they chose (refer Hit’Galut 20:11 – 15).

The Apostolic Constitutions has an interesting slant to The Two Ways, and adds an interesting discussion:

“The Way of Life and the Way of Death That There are Two Ways— The One Natural, of Life, and the Other Introduced Afterwards, of Death; And that the Former is from G-d, and the Latter of Error, from the Snares of the Adversary.

I. The lawgiver Moses said to the Israelites, “Behold, I have set before your face the way of life and the way of death;” and added, “Choose life, that you may live.” Elijah the prophet also said to the people: “How long will you halt with both your legs? If the Lord be G-d, follow Him.” 1 Kings 18:21. The Lord Jesus also said justly: “No one can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other.” Matthew 6:24. We also, following our teacher Christ, “who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe,” 1 Timothy 4:10 are obliged to say that there are two ways— the one of life, the other of death; which have no comparison one with another, for they are very different, or rather entirely separate; and the way of life is that of nature, but that of death was afterwards introduced—it not being according to the mind of G-d, but from the snares of the adversary.” (Section 1, Apostolic Constitutions (Book VII) Concerning the Christian Life, and the Eucharist, and the Initiation into Christ.¹⁹)

¹⁹ Anonymous. Book VII, Section 1.1, *The Apostolic Constitutions*. Unknown. Kindle Edition



The Apostolic Constitutions we can see the depth of the meaning of Yeshua's words in Yochanan 10:10.

The version in Barnabas (refer *Introduction* Appendix 1 – Chapter 18) takes a similar approach to the Apostolic Constitutions and goes a step further. Not just are the two ways from different sources, but they also have stationed over them, angels of light or angels of darkness. This presents a danger of almost making the path a concept that is out of our own control – the old joke, when the sinner sits on the side of the road and cries, "the devil made me do it."

Judaism on the other hand, empowers individuals to take control of their own actions and destiny. The Rabbis teach about the two human inclinations that influence our thoughts and behaviour: The Yetzer Hara (evil inclination) and the Yetzer Hatov (good inclination) – Refer Study Four for a deeper explanation of this concept.

For contemplation:

While there is validity in allegorising or even spiritualising the concept of the Two Ways, as Barnabas and modern Chassidim do, what positions do Yeshua, Kefa and G-d take in the following passages: Lucas 9:23; B'reishit (Genesis) 4:6 – 7?

How does contrasting the Two Ways (one leading to life, the other to death) give a fundamental orientation to those who have chosen to graft themselves into the Commonwealth of Israel through Yeshua? What is the weightiness of contrasting "life" and "death"?

Next Study: "The Way of Life"



Appendix 1: Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Fathers) 2:13²⁰

“Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai said to his disciples, Look and see: What is the key to right action? Rabbi Eliezer: A good eye.²¹ Rabbi Yehoshua: A good friend.²² Rabbi Yose: A good neighbour.²³ Rabbi Shimon: A good mind.²⁴ Rabbi Elazar: A good heart.²⁵ Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai said to them, I prefer the words of Elazar ben Arach, for his words include your words.”

²⁰ Shapiro, Rabbi Rami. Ethics of the Sages: Pirke Avot—Annotated & Explained (SkyLight Illuminations). Jewish Lights Publishing. Kindle Edition

²¹ A good eye sees through delusion to truth.

²² A good friend challenges you to be your best.

²³ A good neighbour honours you and what is yours.

²⁴ A good mind weighs the consequences of an act before doing that act, thus avoiding unnecessary suffering.

²⁵ A good heart desires only what is right and true for both self and other and thus includes the best traits of all the rest.

