



If You Love Me, Obey My Commands: What Does a Torah Pursuant Lifestyle Look Like?

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For those who have lived a lifestyle based in traditional Christianity coming into a Hebraic worldview and understanding of how our Father has directed us to live in His Word is a major challenge. Though there is great joy as we grow in intimacy with Him, there is also a great deal of confusion. Often, people experience some anxiety about learning quickly enough and getting it right in their desire to please our Creator. Also, there may not be a fellowship in their area so many rely on international media for teachings, yet they are unable to interact personally on a day to day basis with these teachers. We emphasize that we do not understand observing Torah to be a salvation issue, but rather having come to belief, one of obedience out of love.

This is such a straightforward yet deep question that the answers to it are extensive and challenging. **Hopefully early in the process, it becomes clear to all that this is more of a process and journey rather than one completed step from here to there!**

Initially, a question we hear quickly refers to our use of the term “Torah pursuant” rather than “Torah observant.” Our community is made up of mostly those who are of non-Jewish heritage so most of us have not grown up with any awareness of what the Biblical holidays or directives in what we called the Old Testament would look like as practiced today. Thus, in recognition that we have much to learn and that we are quite certain that we do not yet have perfect understanding, we prefer to use the word “pursuant” to acknowledge that process. We’d prefer not to appear to claim that we have complete understanding of everything it involves. Revelation and understanding often come in small portions, like manna for the day, nurturing us along more and more fully as the days pass.

My word picture for it is this: I was on a path walking toward the goal of becoming like Messiah and being with Him in eternity. I discovered that it wasn’t the completely correct path! The correct path was over there, across the field somewhere.

Options:

1. **Give up and forget everything to do with faith since I was taught incorrectly?** Not available option for those who know Messiah and still recognize the need to follow Him!
2. **Go back to the beginning and start the right path?** Not available. We are who we are and our past is what it is.
3. **Start moving “cross country” to find the right path?** This has really seemed like the only viable option to me.

So in our desire to become Torah pursuant, we have seen that the path we are on isn't fully correct though headed partially in the right direction. As we go cross country and begin to learn, we find that the path of the Jewish people or Judaism has a lot of good aspects to study and apply, but then we learn that errors exist there, too!

Our goal remains the same; we just understand the path to get there in a little different, deeper way as we study and go along. Like consulting a compass to keep us headed in the right direction, we make course corrections as we go.

The Torah pursuant lifestyle involves:

1. *moving away from the traditional Christian and secular holidays that are involved with various forms of paganism/not found in Scripture. YHWH's calendar is different than what we have grown up with so confusion about just how to calculate His calendar is the norm!*
2. *moving toward observance of the moedim/appointed times also often called Feasts, including Shabbat and through beginning to walk in them, developing “ownership” of them in your lives as you build your new family and faith experiences into memory.*
3. *moving toward the dietary changes that includes an awareness of what is clean and unclean in food.*

These points are essentially what they were trying to do in the Acts 15 meeting about what to do to bring in the Gentiles. Stop the pagan festivities, and sexual practices and blood/unclean foods. Then, you will be able to learn every week when Moses is taught.

After that, it is in these “finer points” such as calculating His calendar that make up the actual daily practices of how we walk out His commands that the difficulty lies.

The difficulty that has been more and more apparent to us is that there is often **confusion over who is seen as an expert or reputable resource** to guide others through the process. The confusion I have more clearly identified in past weeks through the conversations in the online forum have made it clear

that this new path is definitely not totally clear to many people! No matter how much they assert that they DO know!

The need for some kind of authority as one is tentatively beginning a new process tends to take people in one of three directions:

- 1) Those of Christian background and training who are now teaching from a Hebraic worldview.
- 2) Those of Jewish background and training who are now teaching that Yeshua is Messiah.
- 3) Individuals from either faith background who are not formally trained in ministry but have some kind of personal calling and gifts to bring to the study of the Word and toward the restoration of the ancient paths.

In each case, their accessibility through international media is often high.

Along with the wide scope of teachers and how they are influenced by their personal backgrounds, the 'new to Torah' person usually feels somewhat overwhelmed by all they've 'missed' in scripture by being reliant on the church's teachings. In their eagerness to learn and grow they are vulnerable to teachings even if they are somewhat uncomfortable with what they're hearing, because they're at a stage when everything seems 'different' or 'new'.

The Hebrew word for "how we walk" is "**halachah**." This refers to the actual practice of doing what is described in Scripture, as there are often areas of uncertainty. I have done some study on the matter and have learned that there is not now and never has been one supremely correct halachah in Judaism. I encourage all to look into the matter themselves in order to familiarize themselves with the degree of conformity and lack of it in the various teachings. Certainly, anyone from a traditional Christian background is quite familiar with the existence of widely different understandings of the meaning of the same words in Scripture.

So as we make the move from "Christian" authority toward a Hebraic lifestyle and worldview, we need to be cautious not to jump from one side of the road all the way over to the other side.

Many with newly opened eyes to the errors in Christianity make a decided leap in the direction of assuming that the leaders of Judaism know best. This has proven to be spiritually dangerous for many, as their new "love affair" with all things Jewish has led many believers eventually to renounce Yeshua and go all the way into Judaism! May it never be for us!!!

Of course, depending on how they are introduced to the errors of Christianity or the beauty of Judaism, the teachers/authorities they look to will vary. The vision of what the Torah pursuant lifestyle is to look like will likewise vary.

As far as we have been able to ascertain, both Christianity and Judaism have added practices to their teaching and halachah that are not in the Scriptures.

Those trained in Christian seminaries and those in Judaism Yeshiva's will each have parts of truth. Generally, they will have had some sort of screening process for anyone who has some reason that would make it unwise for them to be in ministry, though this process is not infallible. Their training may also include other skills that are important for those in teaching or pastoral positions. It may surprise you as it did me to learn that most seminary graduates in America graduate having done little more than a thorough study of perhaps only one or two books in the entire Bible. Those trained through Yeshiva's will generally have much more of a focus on the Talmud, a collection rather like a commentary of the sages on the Torah, rather than on the Torah itself.

But in the Messianic movement, there are many, like me, who do not have formal seminary or yeshiva training, but instead have been called and pressed into service through His Word and Spirit. (also, many like me, do have certification of some kind or another in Bible study credentials or other related fields that are helpful.)

So now there are not the familiar credentials and process that was in the formal church organizations to help govern who is doing what; just when new people are feeling vulnerable and in need of guidance, the ways to determine the integrity and validity of teachers/pastors becomes more difficult and less standardized.

I have asked people and studied this question over several years now and have written a summary of what I understand is happening in the ***Calling, Anointing, Ordination*** paper that is on our home page website, under What's New if you want more on this.

Having been walking out our faith in a home fellowship now for twelve years, and observing what is happening in various organizations and places that also pursue a Hebraic worldview of their faith walk, we have seen some confusing and challenging things. Perhaps our observations and the understanding we have gained in that time will help others who are newly in the process. There have been various teachers of what is called the Messianic Movement now for many years. Some are affiliated with one or the other of the two major Messianic Judaism affiliations, or perhaps with some of the smaller ones. Some remain completely independent but cooperative with others of like viewpoints.

In the past year or two I have seen several new groups form, sometimes of teachers who have not been previously well known and sometimes including those who have been visible in the movement for many years.

The one in the process of change will fairly quickly learn that these various teachers have much in common yet may also have individual emphasis that differs. It is not such a far different process from the institutions of Christianity in which one can have a pretty clear idea of what teaching will be found in a Methodist, Baptist, Lutheran or Catholic church while also appreciating unique features in each. In Judaism, there are also several broad categories known as Orthodox, Ultra-Orthodox, Conservative and Reform as well as smaller groups sometimes considered "fringe." While any person of Jewish lineage will find family and friends up in arms as they come to know Yeshua Messiah, the intensity of the

response differs with each group. People from each of those groups will have a different viewpoint on how they are to walk out Torah in light of knowing Messiah Yeshua and their guidance to gentiles coming along will naturally reflect their heritage.

One area of lack of clarity is in the very “name” or label that is most appropriate. We discuss this in some detail in our teleconference recording entitled [“What To Say When They Say: Oh, so you are Jewish?”](#) There are various ways to describe oneself as one who is attempting to honor the whole Word of God as valid for today. Among them are Hebrew Christian, Messianic or Messianic Believer, Nazarenes, and Messianic Judaism. Each designation carries a set of assumptions when heard by those who are familiar with the whole spectrum, though most Christians are not knowledgeable about these details.

Though these observations are not true of every individual, in twelve years of observation at various conferences and recently on an online Christian forum, it has become apparent that some of those who consider themselves adherents to Messianic Judaism, as Jewish Believers, tend to perceive that everyone needs to become like them; yet in what may seem strange, they also at times seem to resent others becoming like them. They want to perpetuate their unique identity and protect it while also accepting Yeshua, so although they maintain usage of Hebraica such as menorah’s and tallits, their underlying belief system is very similar to Christian theological views. For some, this has included a strange incoherent blend of keeping tradition selectively while also saying it isn’t necessary to keep Torah commands because they are saved in Yeshua now. Some also are adamant that non Jewish people who want to observe Torah are offensive to HaShem. Many do not see the **inconsistency** of this. I had thought for years that when I saw this it was a sort of personal laxity of the individuals or what is often called “secular Jews;” until learning more recently that it is instead more of the underlying fabric of some branches of Messianic belief. I have written a brief summary of this history in another recent article, **The Roots of the Messianic Movement**, currently found in our What’s New listing.

Christian believers have been saying that to Jews for years already! “Come, and be a Christian with me and give up your Jewish “Christ-killing” past. “In the desire to be “free from the law” the continuity of the entire Word of God has been lost or ignored. Christians have rejected the foundations of our faith without realizing how **inconsistent** this is! We wouldn’t even know that Yeshua IS our Messiah if it wasn’t for the foundation provided in Torah! (In this case, the more inclusive meaning: Torah, Prophets and Writings—Old Testament)

But I think the truth is that: The One New Man will be different than either that went before!

If you have studied Ezekiel and the two sticks I think you will see that the unity comes by being in His Hand; as the sticks are made one there. Gentiles/House of Joseph is NOT described as having to

become Judah first. (See article: **Messiah Yeshua's Followers Becoming as Judah?** For additional thoughts.)

Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which [is] in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, [even] with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand. Ezekiel 37: 19

The Prodigal Son story also seems to indicate that the unity comes through the intervention of the father/Father, rather than the sons.

Understanding that major American Messianic organizations today have their roots in Christian churches makes it more clear why there is conflicting direction. I have written a summary article with some of the historical resources to better understand how this has all come about and it is on the site, too. ***Roots of Messianic Movement***

Though we desire to be respectful of our Jewish brothers and sisters, whether they believe in Yeshua as Messiah or not, we also acknowledge that they are not without error in the teachings of Judaism, and thus are not to be held in higher esteem than the Word itself as best we understand it.

The main points we hope to emphasize here for those who are adopting a Hebraic worldview and Torah pursuant lifestyle:

- 1) Affirmation that indeed, our Abba and His Spirit speaking in our hearts and through His Word are our primary authority.**
- 2) He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast covenant love for us so He knows that we need time to learn line upon line and precept upon precept.**
- 3) We need to proceed with caution and not make changes based on what someone else does or says, but when we understand and know in our hearts that this change is confirmed by Him.**
- 4) There are many opinions as to who is an authority; especially making the adjustments that have to do with moving from a traditional Christian lifestyle toward a Hebraic lifestyle.**
- 5) While we must study and discern for ourselves, we do need guidance along the way. Many things need to be “held lightly” until we have time to learn, digest and apply our study. Each individual’s maturity and personality style differs and all cannot be assured at all times of their ability to correct hear, interpret and apply what the Holy Spirit is directing them.**
- 6) That study and discernment includes continuing to check whatever one hears from others against the Word, looking for His correction and understanding FIRST! If what is**

heard from other people or sensed in one's own spirit is not consistent with the written Word, caution is strongly advised!

Elohim through His Word and Spirit is our final authority, not the traditions of men, whether of Christianity or Judaism! Yet we are all in a learning process and not only welcome but also often need direction and guidance from others who are walking a similar path. Remaining teachable is so important no matter where we are in the process!

As in the days of the Judges, when YHWH raised up individuals with unique callings in the midst of such chaos and every man doing that which is right in his own eyes, so do I think He is doing again. Isaiah wrote that He would raise up judges again as at the first. We understand that this is what He is doing through us here at SAM as well as in many other places, all in preparation for what is to come.

And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city. Isaiah 1:26

But this, too, is difficult. How is anyone to know which people are genuinely called by our YHWH and not just in some personal grandiosity? We think it has to do with looking at humility, integrity and honesty in their background, evidence of spiritual maturity and accountability and the fruit of their efforts. To say the least...so much more!

Some have been introduced to a worldview that is comprehensive of the entire Word of God as valid for today by the Spirit Himself, rather than through any man's teaching. Some have been influenced by solid, Biblically based teachers along this line. Others have been influenced through less than stable individuals who may yet be very charismatic and good at marketing both themselves and their message. In such cases, people were hearing some very good teaching at points but also a highly individualized perception at others. Sadly, the teachings may be not only individualized but apparently also egocentric, meaning focused on a personal agenda. I am preparing some teaching on the points to consider as one evaluates the integrity and strength and Truth of various teachings and teachers.

Our uncertain times lend themselves to self-styled prophets being raised up, right alongside the righteous ones that YHWH raises up. So our own personal study and discernment is imperative! We must be careful that we are not seeking just emotional gratification whether it be 'a feel-good message' or a 'fear-driven message' or some other kind of emotional pull that would make us (in the flesh) want to follow someone's teaching. We must hunger for the unvarnished truth in all its purity; Truth that causes us to set our face as a flint and our hearts on fire with the knowledge of His Holy words and ways.

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