

ENTERING INTO MESSIANIC COMMUNITY AND COMMITMENT

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We recognize the desire and need to live in close relationship in order to walk out Torah. Our community is not unlike those of a number of groups of people who choose a more personally interconnected lifestyle than attendance weekly at a church or synagogue could provide. This preference seems to us to be a part of the identity that each fellowship must determine for themselves; not something that can be legislated or enforced against anyone's wishes. We know of only one other Torah pursuant community that lives in such an integrated lifestyle—our “sister” community in CARE, Inc. of Baldwin, Michigan. (Please let us know if *you* know of others in our Messianic circles who have already walked down this path!)

SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS

Independence-----**Dependence**

American culture especially values **independence**. I have felt the importance of being able to do for myself or knowing that our family can hire something done that we can't do, rather than having to exchange services on an after-hours basis with friends. I became aware that some people view this as a weakness as I once did; preferring the self-sufficiency that a steady and sizeable income brings. While it is often more timely to accomplish necessary tasks this way, it is also more impersonal, and based on the economic system of exchange of services or goods for money. This not necessarily a bad thing! The observation here has to do with relational living and what we expect or will tolerate from one another.

All too often the opposite extreme—**dependence**—is viewed as weakness. It is considered undesirable to be dependent upon others for care and provision. It is necessary for children to be dependent upon their parents for their care and support. The goal of this training time is for them to grow into mature adults. As they grow into their teens, they become less and less dependent upon their parents and become more responsible for their own care and decisions. It is also true that people may be ill or incapacitated and really do need to be dependent. This can be difficult to understand when there is a long-term disability. There is such a thing as unhealthy dependency in which adults do not become independent. This is often due to gaps in their maturity during childhood. They desire people to make decisions for them and in a way, parent them.

Independence -----**INTERDEPENDENCE**-----Dependence

As I have learned more about community and Torah pursuance, it has become more apparent to me that neither of these extremes are Scriptural. **Interdependence** is much closer to the model of walking out Torah; the ability to care for oneself without excessive, “clingy”, “needy” demands of others yet the

ability to receive support and nurturance when it is genuinely needed. A balance between giving and receiving, recognizing one another's strengths and drawing on them to give life, even if that strength might be found in someone who is considered "disabled" in some way.

Moving toward living in close proximity as a community is a lot like swimming upstream: the American ideal of the nuclear family living independently is deeply etched into our culture. So much so, that even the idea of intentional community living has seemed strange and outlandish. Still, when we add in the model of cooperatives for management of machinery, fuel and various other mutual needs in farming communities, we can see a thread of intentional community living that is woven into our culture.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL ARRANGEMENTS

Having given a bit of background and some terms that will be used, it is time to move on in our description as to what is involved in the establishment of intentional communities. For our SAM community, we have already concluded that we would want to retain individual autonomy for each person or family's finances, while cooperatively working together to cover all costs. Thus our preference is for a housing cooperative, which would be called a *moshave* in Israel, rather than a *kibbutz* where people pool all of their income and assets.

We have begun the research into the establishment of an LLC (Limited Liability Corporation) non-profit status as the legal entity over the property; whether it would be by lease or purchase. We know that the residents would own a share in the LLC, but not specifically the physical units as it would be in a condominium arrangement. We have much to learn yet in this process. It is not yet clear how to balance the costs between family units headed by a wage earner or one who is disabled and not gainfully employed. The disparity of income needs to be recognized yet if we are to accomplish our purposes; we cannot lose sight of the costs for the entire complex. We do suspect that our Abba is in the process of knitting something together here which we cannot yet fully see. Our intent is to make use of the strengths and skills of our community in a way to develop adequate income to sustain the whole body of believers. We know we cannot do this alone and are exploring possible opportunities for other individuals, families or ministries to stand along with us.

PERSONAL PRACTICAL AND EMOTIONAL ADJUSTMENTS

While we are doing this legal and financial research, the personal aspects of coming together in such an arrangement have taken a front row seat! As I write, our little community is giving consideration to what would happen if we are able to acquire a facility that would accommodate about 12 families in small apartment areas with joint use of two common large kitchen, dining and living room areas. At the moment we don't know if we will be able to move into this place but both excitement and apprehension are evident.

APPREHENSIONS

Although we have spent time in development of relationships, how to resolve conflicts well, and have paid attention to maturity levels and needs for our members, only three of our families have lived across the hall from one another. Moving to a facility in which perhaps 10 other family units would be just down the hall would involve finding out how well our relationships are developed under this close proximity. Will we be able to sustain our joy-giving base at least most of the time? We already know that we must expect regular challenges and do have confidence that the base of covenant relationships will hold.

The thought of “downsizing” of belongings from an entire house, or even from an apartment is bringing up all manner of concerns. We can’t help but compare this process to the future time in which all of Ephraim and Yehudah will be called into the Land. How much in the way of material possessions does one *really* need? Are we being weaned in preparation for that time?

Our preference, expressed many times over the past few years, is that we do not want to live in one another’s “back pocket” yet this opportunity for a housing cooperative in one facility would mean more togetherness than we had originally envisioned. Rather than completely contained apartments down the hall from one another, it looks as though we would have bedrooms, half baths, and sitting room and a kitchenette in each unit. If all of one family’s belongings do not fit in each unit, we would provide storage rooms or cubicles elsewhere or may even use furniture in the common areas of the facility. We would have the two large living room and dining room areas as well as a library and several offices, an exercise room and a prayer closet room so there would be opportunities for quiet places throughout.

EXCITEMENT

The possibilities that blossom in our mind’s eye about this Messianic community and our opportunity to model a Torah pursuant lifestyle on a daily basis are our motivation.

Currently, we hold Hebrew and shofar classes, *Life Model* and youth group two evenings a month each. We sponsor HaYesod classes for interested people once or twice a year as well as making our weekly Shabbat praise, prayer and study gatherings open once a month for interested people. We offer a monthly teleconference for women new to Torah lifestyle and are launching a second one for Messianic Community Leaders as well as offering two monthly newsletters. Counseling and personal life coaching services are also available. As resources permit, we have also been able to provide emergency food and household supplies as well as car maintenance for example.

The vision of being able to hold our Pesach and Sukkot gatherings in our own facility and yard is one of the joyful aspects we would appreciate. To be able to

find a prayer partner just down the hall or someone to stay with the kids in an emergency, to be in a “neighborhood” in which no one has Halloween decorations, Easter eggs or Christmas trees without apology or explanation would be a joy for us, not to worry about having enough gas or weather conditions to be able to gather, to both give and receive support on a daily basis, to have the opportunity to learn even more about what it is like to walk out Torah and become more like our Messiah: these things are the excitement, anticipation and hope we bring to the process.

We are about “living out” restoration and joy for people who have not had that experience of being able to feel whatever they feel and still find those who are glad to be with them. It is God getting our attention and teaching us how to be more like Him in our relationships with others in a very up-close and personal way.

We enjoyed the concluding remarks in a teaching about joy, fear and love bonds, made by Jim Wilder, pastor/psychologist and leader within Shepherd’s House, the group that developed the *Life Model*. I couldn’t think of any more fitting words than these to conclude this portion of our work on the development of community. (BLK)

*None of us are happy till we’re all back in joy camp.
Where we’re glad to be together
And when we can tell other people,
Yes, it was as bad as that
But I’m glad to be with God in the middle of that
And I’m glad to be with you
And I ‘m glad if nothing else you can tell me if you’re upset with me
Or I’m glad that if nothing else you can tell brother so-and-so that you are upset
with me even if you won’t tell me directly.*

*And at least you’re glad to be with somebody even if it isn’t me,
And I want to bless that.*

*And I want us to become a fellowship where ultimately all of us are glad to be
together.
And you know what that’ll be like? That’ll be impossible.*

That would be a call for hopeless despair because we could never do that.

It would be so unthinkable that I just can’t even imagine getting there.

But I want a front row seat...Because I serve a God Who can. Come with me.
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