

HUE AND CRY: Torah: Roadmap to Restoration

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This past weekend we ministered to two gatherings of saints: one in Southern Kentucky, and the other in Southern Indiana. It was a blessing for me to again witness some of the things that our Heavenly Father is doing among His people scattered abroad. Amazingly, these Believers dismissed the elements and ventured out on frozen roads in darkness to learn more about the One they love and serve. Words cannot adequately describe how many of their testimonies were proof that they love the Lord and their neighbors. James' admonition was clearly followed among many of the people with whom I interacted:

"If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF,' you are doing well" (James 2:8).

Those I encountered inherently knew there was more, and their appetite for additional spiritual nourishment was voracious. Our assignment was to let the Holy Spirit minister to them. But, as I have learned in several of ministry, it is important that one prepare for the general subject areas that are requested for teaching topics. I am reminded that time after time, my best efforts at preparation are simply **plans for my way**. Before I speak, I like to interact with those to whom I am ministering, to get a feel for what they need to hear. Inevitably, I find that it is the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit) who lets me know what I need to impart to others. As the proverb so aptly says,

"The mind of man plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps" (Proverbs 16:9).

The Lord knew *exactly* what the gathered saints in Southern Kentucky and Southern Indiana needed spiritually. In fact, I believe it was the Lord who prompted various people to order their lives so that they could come to the meetings. It was our responsibility to simply let Him speak through us, so that He could accomplish just what He wanted with those gathered.

Of course, as anyone who has ever taught from the Bible knows, real benefits accrue to the teacher of God's Word. By digging into the Scriptures and diligently studying them in order to bring them to light, the teacher often receives a tremendous blessing for his or her efforts. This time, my preparations were rewarded with further evidence that the Holy One of Israel is indeed going to the highways and byways of rural America to expand the influence of the Messianic community. I do wonder if we are beginning to see some being released from the captivity that Moses prophesied would come upon God's people:

"So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call *them* to mind in all nations where the LORD your God has banished you, and you return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back" (Deuteronomy 30:1-4).

These prophetic words directed by Moses to Ancient Israel at the end of their forty-year desert journey, seemed to epitomize much of what I witnessed. Here in 2004, as the blessings and curses described in Deuteronomy chs. 28-29 have had their effects, I witnessed some of God's people diligently seeking to obey Him with all of their hearts and souls. As a result, I believe He is faithfully extending merciful compassion to His people in this hour of restoration. Moses says that the outcasts or banished ones will be gathered back to Him, and eventually to the Promised Land itself. Consequently, to witness some evidence of this occurring in these two unique settings was extremely encouraging to me. We were blessed with new friends, and I pray that God would continue to lead these people in the direction that they should go.

Interestingly, the sojourners in both locations wanted to know more about the Torah and the traditions of Ancient Judaism. Both groups innately knew that there was much more to learn about how to transition from their current spiritual walk to a more Hebraic perspective. Somehow, the Spirit of the Most High had communicated to them that the "Messianic" approach

to their walk of faith, in spite of some of the flaws that have hurt and disheartened some people, was the significant component critical to their personal walks with Yeshua that had been missing. Prepared with messages that dealt with topics such as “the Restoration of All Things,” “The Blessings of Keeping Torah,” and “Messianic Apologetics,” we were uniquely equipped to share perspectives on the issues that the saints needed to see addressed.

As the weekend proceeded, it became very apparent to me that we were all on the same road, but simply at different places. Our family got on the Messianic road in 1995. Many of those we encountered were just beginning their sojourn, some with a degree of caution, while some were already many years along the same path. Some had experienced many of the same potholes we had contended with, and their spiritual scars were evident. But remarkably, these persistent followers of the Living God had picked themselves up and were continuing their pursuit of Him. Inevitably, our exhortative message was essentially the same in both settings. In order to make the transition from the backwoods of Kentucky or Indiana to Zion, I believe that the roadmap is *always the Torah*, coupled with its daily, weekly, and annual application for our lives. In other words: **Torah is the roadmap to restoration.**

Throughout the Scriptures many different terms are used to describe what is required of God’s people. Certainly, hearing Him and obeying His voice are important places to start:

“Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, **then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples**, for all the earth is Mine; **and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.**” These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.’ So Moses came and called the elders of the people, and set before them all these words which the LORD had commanded him. All the people answered together and said, **‘All that the LORD has spoken we will do!’** And Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD” (Exodus 19:5-8).

At that point in time, all of Israel responded to the invitation by declaring that they would do all that the Lord had spoken. Their desire to be obedient to the ways of God was evident by their response. But just before his death, Moses prophesied that Israel was going to depart from the way that they had committed to:

“Assemble to me all the elders of your tribes and your officers, that I may speak these words in their hearing and call the heavens and the earth to witness against them. **For I know that after my death you will act corruptly and turn from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days**, for you will do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him to anger with the work of your hands” (Deuteronomy 31:28-29).

In short order, we see that as Israel attempts to possess and subdue the Promised Land, the people fall into rebellion against God, serving other deities. The Book of Judges records how this apostasy against Him began:

“Yet they did not listen to their judges, for they played the harlot after other gods and bowed themselves down to them. **They turned aside quickly from the way in which their fathers had walked in obeying the commandments of the LORD; they did not do as their fathers.** When the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge and delivered them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed and afflicted them. But it came about when the judge died, that they would turn back and act more corruptly than their fathers, **in following other gods to serve them and bow down to them; they did not abandon their practices or their stubborn ways.** So the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He said, ‘Because this nation has transgressed My covenant which I commanded their fathers and has not listened to My voice, I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died, **in order to test Israel by them, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk in it as their fathers did, or not.**’ So the LORD allowed those nations to remain, not driving them out quickly; and He did not give them into the hand of Joshua” (Judges 2:17-23).

There have been various attempts by God’s people over the centuries to get back “**on the way**” that they originally committed to in their relationship with Him. It has not been an easy trail

to traverse. The way is strewn with the remains of people who too frequently have deviated from His clear instruction. And yet, even when the Messiah came and initiated what Jeremiah refers to as a “New Covenant” (Jeremiah 31:31-34), the challenges of walking by this roadmap were still impeded.

When Yeshua came, He described and clarified many critical elements of what obedience to God truly meant. During His ministry, He stated some elementary principles that many today overlook:

“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others *to do* the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:17-19).

Without question, Yeshua stated that He came not to abolish the instruction of the Torah, but instead demonstrate its fulfillment *via His own action*. As a direct result of His entrance into our hearts, the Spirit can now write God’s laws onto a heart of flesh—actually making it *more than possible* for His people to obey Him. Yeshua does conclude, though, stating that if one keeps or obeys the Torah, he will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven. If you think about it for a moment, this is a very good incentive to consider implementing study and adherence to the Torah as your personal roadmap to following the “way.”

A little later in His message to those gathered on the hills of Galilee, He refers to a **narrow gate or a narrow way** that leads to eternal life:

“In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets. Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. **For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it”** (Matthew 7:12-14).

This statement by Yeshua shows how one’s meditation on the Torah and the Prophets—and implementing their instructions into one’s life—will inevitably point to the narrow gate and the narrow way that leads to eternal life.

Today, we as Messianic Believers really do not have any excuse for avoiding using the Torah as our roadmap back to Zion. According to the Scriptures, we know that God’s people will eventually be restored from their captivity. When this will happen, we do not know. But certainly, we do know that it is our propensity to often wander away from **the narrow way**. I pray that your heart has been circumcised and the Torah’s instructions are written on it. By the indwelling power of the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit), we can actually listen to the voice of God and be guided properly in how we conduct ourselves.

Even in the uttermost parts of the world where children of God are seeking Him, we are seeing an incredible move of the Spirit in bringing the message of Torah obedience and the blessings that come from obedience. For us as exhorters and teachers, the experience of the past weekend will seriously influence how we look at the future. We have been able to witness how people seeking God can truly be changed for the better. My prayer is that you too will be able to experience such positive change, as He calls each and every one of us to be not only witnesses to His work, but also fellow brothers and sisters who can encourage one another along the journey!

Until the restoration of all things...

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