



How Shepherds Can Help People Navigate through the Individual and Assembly Transition Steps from Traditional Christian Practice to Messiah Centered Torah Pursuance

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January, 2020

Purpose of This Article

When we begin to honor Messiah, we rejoice in our salvation! We may struggle in our sanctification even when we recognize the need. Whether we are alone in this walk or in an assembly will have an impact on our progress.

Beginning to honor Messiah by keeping Shabbat and Feasts is a big milestone, but it IS a milestone, not the end of the journey. The level or maturity of any fellowship group you attend will have a bearing on your personal growth process just as a group's members personal growth has a bearing on the corporate growth. We believe that our Abba has intended us to grow together in community toward His goals for us.

In the past twenty years of our assembly, we have watched many other assemblies come and go, mixing and matching many of the same people or choosing different leadership. I have consulted with assemblies in many states and internationally. Every time a group forms and breaks and reforms and breaks, there is a struggle for all involved which does not encourage either individual or corporate righteousness and often leads to much hurt and disillusionment!

As I have done some research on these topics, I have learned that nearly half of such developing groups seem to endure together about 5-7 years. This is not acceptable to me! Surely our Abba Father would have us learning how to come together in ways that are pleasing to Him and not ways that too often lead to strife and division.

All of the material that has been developed and presented on our website, as well as in the recent presentation for **Raising Up the Remnant** is with an eye toward helping equip Believers, whether in leadership or not, to mature in Messiah and to grow according to the fullness of His plan toward making us ready as His Bride. May it be so!

*for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of
God.*

Acts 20:27 ESV

As we have grown in our Torah walk over the past twenty years, both individually and corporately, we have come to understand the Word in ways that were not at all clear to us earlier.

As we welcome guests and those newly interested in Torah, we are seeing some of the same familiar markers in their journey. We continue to work on articulating what we understand in a way that new people among us can assimilate.

As the question arose of how and why we observe Shabbat and Shabbatan the way we do, it

became apparent that these background processes need to be identified and brought to the attention of people new to the walk to alert both them and the assembly to where they are in the process and to help address emotional reactions more effectively.

These are predictable markers in doctrine or theological or faith development issues that occur as one moves along their faith journey. Here is a brief list, with brief descriptions following.

- 1) Realization that all of the Word is True and valid for today. Beginning to walk feasts/ food guidelines, etc.
- 2) Realization that salvation alone/basic Christian belief/individual/focus on self and “what God can do for me” is not the “end goal.” Spiritual sanctification process ongoing.
- 3) Realization that not only is it not all about me...it's all about Messiah and learning to submit to Him, maturing... Both Papa's and Mama's Torah needed. Spiritual process AND personal work in the soul.
- 4) Realization of need for corporate identity/Torah community and corporate righteousness as part of preparation for the Bride/corporate Body.

1-We already know that Traditional Christian teaching does not prepare Believers to understand the importance of the Whole Word so that will be the first marker of transition, usually with observance of the moedim and dietary guidelines prominent here. We observe that this marker involves fear and anger toward their previous leaders in faith who didn't prepare them. This transition period can be joyful with a sense of bonding with those who see it the same way. It can also be inappropriately prolonged if the individual cannot move past the anger or sense of betrayal or fear.

2-A second marker we see is the realization that there will come a sanctification process which is spiritual in nature. Since most of the focus in Traditional Christianity has been and continues to be individual salvation only, this can be surprising. This process involves learning and applying individual righteousness. We observe that this marker generates fear as the realization dawns that there is more to come after salvation that will involve personal growth. This fear seems to be a personal fear which isn't easily expressed but may come out in indirect ways and may be directed both at past and present leadership.

3-A third marker we observe is the understanding that this sanctification process also involves the need for personal maturity and character development; the application of both Papa's Torah and Mama's Torah (Proverbs 1:8 and Power Point Teaching on SAM website) along with restoration from life's traumas, both small and great. This is commonly called discipleship. From our observations, as is true in much of traditional Christian assemblies, most Messianic assemblies do not address discipleship. We observe that this process is often shocking and resisted because so many people have thought that “being saved” was the end goal and have not realized that there is both God's part AND our part. Initially, the individual's fear and anger seem to be focused on those who bring this message they may not want to hear or address. Coming after such a major shift in understanding, it may now cause the individual to question the validity of what they are now being taught in a Hebraic worldview.

Along with the development of personal maturity and character, we see a shift from the individualized focus of traditional Christianity, where a primary focus has been on “what God has and can do for me” and “my personal relationship with Christ above all else” to an understanding that it is not “all about me” but all about Messiah. Greater comprehension of what it means to be in submission to Him develops.

4-The fourth marker we observe is the recognition of the need for corporate righteousness and identity as we prepare as the corporate Bride of Messiah. YHWH is building us up as a spiritual house, living stones built into walls, not living stones standing alone or in a pile. We see that this aspect of development is frightening to those who have only understood personal faith relationship with Messiah for salvation as they fear their personal autonomy will be lost in the corporate identity. We do not see this issue arising in many Messianic assemblies with which we are familiar and suspect that it is not well understood or taught. We have observed

assemblies that remain focused on individual righteousness for long periods of time, never developing a corporate identity, and see the lack of unity that results. This leaves too much vulnerability to the strife and division that is a primary focus for the evil one in this age.

Many of these personal transition issues are addressed in my book, **New to Torah: A Practical Guide to Pursing Messiah, the Living Word.** When I revised and updated it in 2019, I also included some information on how those new to this transition might evaluate study groups/assemblies they consider whether or not to join. The book can be obtained at Amazon, or by contacting us at Set Apart Ministries.

Community observance preparations will be affected by where the community members are in this four step process of growth. Decisions that are normal for someone having come through the third and fourth markers of transition to primary focus on Messiah and realization of the corporate aspect of His prayer for us will appear quite rigid and uncompromising to those who are in the "salvation only" personal relationship focus marker. They will likely misinterpret the motivation.

We find that it also is likely that a smooth transition is affected by what level of assembly the new people consider as they begin their journey.

Our idea of levels of local community model, based on functional and relational aspects:

1	2	3	4
Occasional gatherings to study Torah, pray/worship and enjoy one another's company. No commitment, group identity or specific leadership.	Casual commitment to regular study Torah/prayer/worship together. No group identity or specific leadership but may be influential people who work together to coordinate meetings.	Committed to study Torah/worship/prayer together with intended long term relationships; group identity, specific leadership, in developing covenant relationships.	All of 3 plus being in close daily living arrangements, in Torah pursuant covenant community.

(more info here: <https://www.set-apart-ministries.org/shepherdsneedtoknow.html>)

Those who begin with a Level One community will find a group of people meeting irregularly and concentrating most likely on topical studies, perhaps beginning Torah studies. This is likely less challenging as the topics may align with their growing interest! A Level Two community may be more regular in meeting, but still does not represent the differences that become apparent for Level three and four assemblies, where there is study and application of corporate faith development, group identity, mission, and boundaries as well as the individual aspect more familiar to most Believers.

It appears to us that along with helping new people to be aware of what kind/level of group they are considering joining themselves with, it also seems appropriate to be able to help them see an outline of the markers of focus and changes we have seen that they will also likely face.

In this way, we hope to be able to help protect their hearts from unpleasant emotional reactions when they see things they do not yet understand by helping them to normalize the process. It seems it is quite a shock to realize that one has not been being taught the Whole Counsel of God. And thus, the first tendency is to shoot the messenger!

While our concern is that we do not want to backslide from the obedience we have come to understand is part of Yah's calling to us as we encourage newcomers, it seems the newcomers concern is that we will expect too much too soon from them!

Having understood more about what is involved in the personal transition and the group/corporate transition process, I suggest that it is now important for those in leadership roles to be aware of the steps and stages various people have come to.

In my understanding, it is a part of the beginning levels of understanding to observe and honor the *moedim*/holy days established by our Elohim. It appears to me that many people do not move beyond this, but are thankful that they ARE gathering, just so that they are in obedience. It is my understanding that there is a larger goal and need for all to become aware of what our Elohim is asking of us, indicated in one metaphor used when He has outlined the process of becoming a living stone, and then being built into a wall of His spiritual House.

In my [Prepare Messiah's Bride](#) series, the reader will find more descriptions about the faith development that is occurring as one is being made into a 'wall.' This series and other relevant materials have been printed as a booklet and can be obtained by contacting us at Set Apart Ministries. Ask for: ***Prepare Messiah's Bride: I Am a Wall in Need of Rebuilding.***

For purposes of this article I will move quickly past that and address the important points I see that will help an assembly successfully move ahead through these stages, without so much opportunity for strife and division to hamper or destroy the fellowship.

The following section consists of the main headings I used in recent presentations at **the Raising Up the Remnant** conference. Presentations are available on Youtube at our Set Apart Ministries channel. If you'd like me to bring this presentation for your assembly, please contact us!

I have noted some of the links below when they may be difficult to locate but most of this material is addressed throughout our website.

[From Shema to Shamar!](#) (click for a brief article on this topic.)

- ▶ *Therefore you shall love the LORD your God, and keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, and His commandments always. Deuteronomy 11:1 NKJV*
- ▶ *"If you love Me, keep My commandments. John 14:15 NKJV*
- ▶ *..not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another;*

and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Hebrews 10:25 NASB

There are often people who believe that it is not necessary to deal with personal maturity or character issues once one has been born again. This portion of our materials and the presentation explained why we view that differently.

Spirit, "Born Anew" Heart & Intent are in *Echad*.

Body & Soul (Mind, Will, Emotions) Often are Not.

Differences in Maturity

- ▶ Individual/Corporate maturity/righteousness affect each other. “iron sharpening Iron”
- ▶ Ability to “take in” and apply teaching differs

Differences in “Language”

- ▶ Cultural Backgrounds Differ.
- ▶ Terminology Differs
- ▶ Expectations differ.
- ▶ Degree of Stability/Trauma

For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

Romans 7:19 NKJV

One of the common issues as people begin to come together is that they use terminology differently, based on their own faith experiences or church affiliation in the past. Too often, conversations may progress with everyone thinking they are talking about the same thing, only to discover as differences arise that there were different definitions in play.

Overview: Suggesting a Common Language

- ▶ **Individual**
 - ▶ Sheep and Stones
 - ▶ Basic Tools to address personal needs
- ▶ **Assembly**
 - ▶ Relationships and Walls
 - ▶ Basic Tools to Address Needs of the Assembly

Our goal is to build strong assemblies that can withstand the schemes of the adversary.

Some primary matters to tend to toward that goal are as follows:

Identify and diffuse:

- predictable individual transition struggles.
 - Shepherding and teaching of maturity and relational skills in discipleship.
 - Identifying and responding to dysfunction/disruptive behavior.
- predictable assembly transition struggles.
 - Shepherding and teaching functional group dynamics/ conflict management.

Differentiate:

- between simple normal and severe damaging situations/behaviors.
- Especially important with jail/prison ministry.

We have often spoken of the challenges of considering whether troublesome people are sheep or goats, just immature wheat, tares, or outright wolves.

Intervention is different depending on which category we see, and we must always be aware that only YHWH can see the heart...though we ARE to consider the fruit in our discernment. Awareness of patterns of behavior can help us in this process.

Though it is often difficult, it is imperative that “wolves in sheep’s clothing” are identified and removed

in order to protect the integrity of the flock...whether two or four legged sheep! David had to use his sling and stones against wolves and other dangers to his flock, and so must we.

Elusive Agreement on Basic Definitions

- ▶ What constitutes appropriate behavior/maturity?
- ▶ What constitutes an elder?
- ▶ Define assembly, congregation, home fellowship, church.
- ▶ Some things need to be “held loosely.”
- ▶ Multiple understandings can co-exist with greater degrees of maturity. Otherwise, will lead to apparently unresolvable issues.

We believe, practice and teach that a balance is necessary to develop a solid foundation and stability in an assembly. This balance involves not only learning the study skills to study Torah and doing so, but also deals with character development and maturity.

**My son, hear the instruction of your father,
And do not forsake the law of your mother;
For they *will be* a graceful ornament on your head,
And chains about your neck. Proverbs 1:8-9 NKJV**

- Balance of knowledge and interpersonal/character development
- We have disregarded Mama’s Torah, despite Solomon’s warnings.
- We need to apply Papa’s and Mama’s Torah in both family and assembly groups.

The same concerns can be expressed in various “languages.” Here are some examples of how they can be expressed in the language of the soul; and in psychological or maturity terms.

In Soul Language: Mind, will, emotions

- ▶ Dealing with Maturity in many areas: physical, mental, emotional, relational, spiritual
- ▶ Recognition of character traits/personality issues

Fear based Behaviors vs. Love based

Rebelliousness Stubbornness

Passive Aggressive

Narcissism/Pride Self-Justifying behavior

Severe trauma/ mind control

Criminal behavior

The following is a brief reference to one way to help individuals deal with the fear that is so often at the base of inappropriate behaviors. More on this can be found at this page of our site in the PowerPoint Presentation entitled: [To Whom Do You Cling?](#)

**Faith is to Yah as Fear is to the adversary,
The Lie that Trips us Up**

- FEAR: Threat of harm to self or loved one
- UNBELIEF: Yeshua COULD help, but will He?
- PRIDE: : If He won't (can't), I will have to do something. Self Sufficiency;
May be arrogance or desperation
- REBELLION: If I have to do it, then I will do it my way.

The following topic is also available as a powerpoint at our site. It deals with a simple way to demonstrate the differences between the salvation and the sanctification processes, and some of the challenges we face in both.

- [Barb's Hand Teaching-](#) **Salvation/Sanctification**

A very important tool that we have used from the beginning in our local Set Apart Ministries community comes from the work done by E. James Wilder, PhD and company from Shepherd's House in Pasadena CA. It is entitled: **Living from the Heart Jesus Gave You: The Life Model**. Although they do not share our Torah pursuant perspective and we find some differences in theology in later materials, the basic research that identifies the various age appropriate aspects of maturity is invaluable. Unfortunately, growing older is not the same thing as growing wiser or more mature. Many people have not realized this and find themselves at a loss to deal with people behaving in unexpected immature ways. We use this part of the materials for individual evaluation and training and suggest that assemblies do need to begin this kind of work as soon as possible in order to develop greater stability within their assemblies. I especially like the aspect of this material that identifies the kinds of things that families and assemblies can do when it becomes evident that someone has NOT been able to mature in various ways. I have begun to write more specifically about where we do agree and where do not which will be found on our website as it is completed.

Life Model Maturity Charts

- Infant 0-3 Learning to Receive
- Child 4-12 Learning to take Care of Self
- Adult Learning to take Care of Self plus one
- Parent Learning sacrificial care of children
- Elder Applying Understanding/Parenting for Entire Community.
- When Skills are Accomplished
- When Skills have not been Accomplished
- What a community/family can do in each situation

The Adversary is prowling around looking for whom he may devour....Who do you think is most vulnerable? Different kinds of vulnerability?

*Coming to Him as to a **Living Stone**, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 2:4-5 NKJV*

Living Stones, where are you?



Are you a living stone standing alone, by choice or circumstances?



Are you a living stone rolling along as the geography or wind directs you?



Are you a living stone that occasionally gathers together with other living stones?



Are you a living stone being built together with other living stones into walls and spiritual houses of our Elohim?

We have observed over the years together with visitors and people from other assemblies that tenacity and ability to individuate from their former faith community may equal a resistance to commitment or oppositional behavior once in a new group.

- **Suspicious**
- **protective of their “turf”**
- **unwilling to fully commit to any new group**

They may find it easier to walk away *again*, rather than to ‘Pray, Stay and Not Run Away.’

It is our understanding that community walls equate with relationships while we are yet in exile. Those who are able to stand as living stones in walls provide boundaries and safety; keeping out what is bad and keeping in what is good, much as an ezer knegdo, or helpmeet does in a marriage. We understand that this is part of how a community shelters those who are less mature or weak, encouraging and exhorting them until they, too, grow strong and can step into functioning as a wall. This is a very deep prophetic picture that involves the identity of the Bride as well, covered more thoroughly in the series and booklet already mentioned: **Prepare Messiah’s Bride: I am A Wall in Need of Rebuilding.**

Some Recommendations for Strong Walls

- **Development of strong community identity and maxims. This is what it is “like us” to do**
- **Recommend plurality of leadership.**

- **Recommend interactive study, teaching study skills**
- **Recommend solid focus on worship/discipline of worship.**
- **Recommend development of corporate prayer style**

SAM Definition of Community

Our community definition is available at our website. It represents several weeks of working together, defining phrase by phrase what we understand we are called to do. It is not intended to be the same recommendation for all but as an example of how a group might understand what YHWH is directing them to form.

Our Mission Statement

Our mission statement is also listed at our website and is from the Book of Hebrews. (chapter 10: 32-39) This was arrived at based on an extended season of fasting and prayer. We have seen a progression through the content over the twenty years we have been together.

SAM Goals Chart

Our goals chart and statement were revised a number of years ago when we realized that each aspect of the list fit under the “categories” of the seven spirits resting on Messiah (Isaiah 11:1-3) Again, we encourage each assembly to be sensitive to the leading of the Spirit as to how He would have you establish the goals for your assembly.

This is a shorter PowerPoint teaching developed with an eye to helping those in leadership capacity in a fellowship to obtain at least an overview of various issues and concerns when shepherding people. A particular focus is on ways to consider patterns of behaviors in self and others to determine some of what was covered above: identifying and diffusing the more normal transition issues and differentiating from those more severe issues that can negatively affect an assembly; knowing when to get help! It is included among the more comprehensive topics in the following coaching course which is available through your email.

[Ten Proven Steps Toward a Stable Set Apart Fellowship](#)

10 Session Email Coaching Course

- **An email course that will lead you individually or as a group through ten steps of addressing the issues that arise as a new group is being formed or as an established group is being rejuvenated.**
- **Opportunities for discussion of these topics with me can be arranged to draw the most benefit.**
- **Information on our website**

Concluding Statement

Coming back to the statement about the **Purpose** of this article, I am repeating it here for your consideration and feedback regarding the material you have just read.

Please do let us know if this material has been helpful to you, or if we can be of any further assistance.

When we begin to honor Messiah, we rejoice in our salvation! We may struggle in our sanctification even when we recognize the need. Whether we are alone in this walk or in an assembly will have an impact on our progress.

Beginning to honor Messiah by keeping Shabbat and Feasts is a big milestone, but it IS a milestone, not the end of the journey. The level or maturity of any fellowship group you attend will have a bearing on your personal growth process just as a group's members personal growth has a bearing on the corporate growth.

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May it be so!

...Then we will no longer be infants, tossed about by the waves and carried around by every wind of teaching and by the clever cunning of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Christ Himself, who is the head.

Ephesians 4:14-15

Please contact us at info@set-apart-ministries.org or (920) 634-2760 if you would like to arrange for presentations on these subjects for your assembly!