

Discussing How To Restore The Early Church

Returning Intimacy and Power to the Father's Children

*"I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for,
it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.
For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."*
(Matthew 18:19,20)



SECTION 1 - LESSON 9

A HEBRAIC PERSPECTIVE

Life As A Pilgrimage

The Answered Prayer Of The Righteous

The Home, The Basic Spiritual Building Block

Fellowship Of Extended Spiritual Family



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Section 1 Lesson 9

A Hebraic Perspective:

Life As A Pilgrimage *The Answered Prayer Of The Righteous* *The Home, The Basic Spiritual Building Block* *Fellowship Of Extended Spiritual Family*

A Hebraic Perspective:

Life as a Pilgrimage

***“Blessed are those whose strength is in you,
who have set their hearts
on pilgrimage” (Psalm 84:5).***

Pilgrimage is a concept that you probably haven't heard before in contemporary Christian circles. However, you *are* a pilgrim, a traveler on a spiritual journey toward a destination or culmination.

The Hebraic view of life was understood in terms of a life journey, a pilgrimage centered around God. Life wasn't a here and now, live for today phenomenon. Rather, your existence was a *passage* with a divine plan and a Guide Who will bring fulfillment according to His will and purpose.

Life as an *ongoing journey* is the underlying theme of both Testaments. This reality of *progressing onward* strongly supports the concept of exploring the Bible from beginning to end if you are to fully grasp the significance of redemption.

Isn't pilgrimage the basis of Paul's letters — to keep pressing on? He exhorts the followers of Jesus in Philippi to be fully confident that ***“the One who began a good work among you will keep it growing until it is completed on the Day of the Messiah Jesus”*** (Philippians 1:6, CJB).

The entire history of the Hebrew people encompasses their journey with God.

As their Husband, their Defender, their Lord, He repeatedly delivers His people when they cry out in repentance for His intervention in their time of need.

The Bible chronicles again and again the satanic deception, domination, and attempted destruction of God's people — the same game plan of the enemy that's revealed in the Newer Testament (see John 10:10). And God was just as faithful to rescue whenever they turned to Him for help.

Evangelist Ed Silvoso speculated that the book of Exodus might have ended with the second chapter if the people of Israel had not finally recognized that calling out to God was their only hope for deliverance! It took thirty-eight more chapters in the book to show *how* God delivered.

Viewed from God's perspective, the Bible is an *ongoing story* of divine deliverance in response to the prayers and cries of His beloved. Even the Gospel embraced by the earliest Church was seen in the context of pilgrimage. At conversion a person accepted the conditions of the Covenant offered by the Father, which were made possible by the shed blood of Jesus. But, salvation itself was experienced at the end of life's journey, at the Judgment Throne.

The repetition of trials and deliverance in *your* life is part of your own pilgrimage. The pattern culminates in *final* deliverance when you stand before the King of kings and your name is

announced to the hosts of heaven. The reality of *His faithfulness* should strengthen and comfort you in any of your trials!

Examine your own life's pilgrimage: Recount a few of the times when circumstances in your life seemed too desperate to be resolved. Were you quick to cry out to God? How did He respond? Were you surprised by the answer He provided?

**A Hebraic Perspective:
*The Answered Prayer Of The Righteous***

“Answer me when I call to you, O my righteous God. Give me relief from my distress; be merciful to me and hear my prayer” (Psalms 4:1)

Some of the best examples of Hebraic prayer are found in the Psalms. David describes himself as “*a man of prayer*” (Psalms 109:4). A common thread is woven throughout the psalms: Prayer is communication *with* God. He Himself is the “one needful thing.” Embedded within prayer is worship, praise, intercession—letting God hear your heart. Prayer fully realizes that Someone is really listening.

Your prayer is communion with a holy God. His holiness calls for your *humility* in your prayer life:

- Mindfulness that He works *through others* on your behalf.
- Meekness when you realize that only by *His* grace and *His* approaching you can you even experience a love relationship with Him.

The condition of your *heart* is crucial as you seek to commune with God. HE already is aware of it; are *you*? This was the point behind Jesus's comparison of the self-righteous Pharisee and the humility-garmented Publican.

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’

“But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Luke 18:9-14).

Prayer from a Hebraic view is not so much a matter of what you say. Instead, prayer represents your heart's longing for your Lord, even when words can't express what is in your heart. This is perhaps what Paul was referring to in Romans 8:26: “*We do not know what we ought to pray, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.*”

You may have observed in the Book of Acts that it was *answered prayer* that got the earliest followers of Jesus noticed. They understood God's requirement for responding to their prayers: “*The LORD is far from the wicked but he hears the prayer of the righteous*” (Proverbs 15:29).

Peter affirms the need to walk in righteousness if you want God to hear your prayer: *“For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil”* (1 Peter 3:12).

James as well reiterates that the prayers of a *righteous* person are effective. He even reminds us of the prophet Elijah, a *“man just like us”*, whose prayer to withhold rain for three and half years was answered (James 5:16-18).

John, the apostle whom Jesus especially loved, built off Psalm 32 and David’s link of confession and God’s responsiveness. We’re told clearly what we need to do to walk uprightly: *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9).

Answered prayer is really our Father’s affirmation that you are *living repentantly* before Him, and that He has indeed made you righteous. Your prayer life is one of the best indicators of your *trust in Him*—*all the more* when He knows that delayed answer is best for you.

Another way to weigh the effectiveness of your prayer:

- If our Father is answering your prayers, He’s responding to your righteousness, both that which you receive in Jesus and the righteousness brought about by your confession.
- If your prayers are consistently unanswered, He is revealing that you’re holding on to unconfessed sin.

How would you describe your prayer life in terms of depth of communion *with* God?

What recent answered prayer comes to mind? How often do you share testimony to God’s faithfulness when He answers?

A Hebraic Perspective: *The Home, the Basic Spiritual Building Block*

***“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God,
the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God
with all your heart and with all your soul
and with all your strength.***

***These commandments that I give you today
are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on
your children. Talk about them when you sit
at home and when you walk along the road,
when you lie down and when you get up.***

***Tie them as symbols on your hands and
bind them on your foreheads.***

***Write them on the doorframes of your
houses and on your gates”***

(Deuteronomy 6:4-9)

The Hebraic home was a little sanctuary set aside for the worship of God, the study of His Word, and the offering of hospitality. Realize that the soundness of the entire Hebraic society depended on training up the next generation to know and apply God’s Word to their lives.

The home and the extended spiritual family of their fellowship in homes provided secure boundaries of truth for children as they developed their own response to the uniqueness of being chosen to be God’s people.

A man, as head of his own household, was the highest authority in his home. All other social entities supported his authority in his family and his responsibility for their spiritual development. He needed to

be well-grounded in God's Word and His ways so that if his wife had questions about spiritual matters, she knew she could find answers by asking him during the course of their life at home (see 1 Corinthians 14:35). Questions for which he had no answer he could bring to the rabbi or elders for their input.

Children expected their father to pass spiritual truth on to them. The Gentile followers of Jesus in Ephesus may not have had much of a background in the Hebrew Scriptures, but Paul still made clear that these men were responsible to investigate and apply God's Word in their homes: "*Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord*" (Ephesians 6:4).

[For more on this, see our Hebraic Article, [He Has Showed You](#)].

The "outsourcing" of wives and children for others to spiritually train in applying God's Word to life would have been unheard of among our Hebraic ancestors in the faith. In fact, the current outsourcing of children for others to guide (Sunday schools, youth groups) harkens back to England in the 1700's. Well-meaning people tried to help illiterate orphans who had been forced by circumstances to work in factories. What has now become the established practice of "Sunday school" was the only opportunity impoverished children had to learn to read.

In almost any congregation today, people question you when you or your family don't attend Sunday school. But programmed curricula offered in classroom format has undermined fathers in their responsibility to God and their family. Lax dads are excused, and their kids turn elsewhere for guidance.

Describe how your home is used for the spiritual development of your family. What is lacking? Who if anyone leads spiritual discussion and training in your home?

Do you rely on religious leaders and programs to *compensate* for what you aren't doing yourself? Or, do you look to them to *supplement* the truths you're already studying and applying?

**A Hebraic Perspective:
*Fellowship of Extended
Spiritual Family***

"Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved"

(Act 2:46,47).

Synagogues were not always part of the Hebraic scene. During the time of Elisha, it was common for a prophet to open his home as a meeting place for study and prayer. Ezekiel also mentions this: "*In the sixth year, in the sixth month, on the fifth day, while I was **sitting in my house** and the elders of Judah were **sitting before me**, the hand of the Sovereign Lord*

came upon me there” (Ezekiel 8:1). As these gatherings became more regular and more organized, they developed into the pattern of weekly Sabbath meetings after which the weekly gatherings of followers of Jesus were modeled.

Understanding the application of God’s Law was primary to our Hebraic ancestors in the faith. As His chosen people they had often experienced the rod of discipline as well as His abundance of grace. Holy obedience to His ways was key to enjoying the latter, so earnestly seeking that which pleased God was great motivation to gather together to learn from His Word:

*He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but **on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD** (Deuteronomy 8:3).*

Each gathering of Jews within a neighborhood or a town was an autonomous entity—there was no “denominational” authority or organization to whom they were responsible. Rather, every Jew was interconnected with others in the broader sense of “spiritual family”.

Any gathering of at least ten *righteous men* formed a *minyan*, the minimum number for a public prayer or worship gathering. The requirement for ten men came from Abraham’s attempt to save Sodom from God’s wrath (see Genesis 18:16-33). The patriarch pleaded for God to spare the city if ten righteous men could be found in its midst. God assured Abraham, “*For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it*” (v. 32). Tragically, ten could not be found.

Hebraic faith practice of Bible times wasn’t enacted in today’s manner with paid professionals hired from outside the community to perform religious duties and services. The rabbi was what we today would call a “lay person”, having no more special duties or offices during corporate gatherings than anyone else.

There was no hierarchical structure to which he had to report. A rabbi held no priestly office nor was he a synagogue functionary. Rather, he was a man consumed with love for God and His Word, recognized within his community as one who could discern both the meaning and the application of the Hebrew scripture.

A rabbi worked at an occupation to provide for the needs of his family and devoted time to scriptural study after that. In fact, he was considered a *fellow learner* along with his disciples, for a person never “graduated” from studying and applying God’s Word.

As a member of the local community, a rabbi, in conjunction with the elders, was motivated by his love for God and for his fellow man to help them establish *halakhahs* (biblical applications).

A rabbi’s capacity to identify with the frailty of man and also represent a responsive action of obedient trust was in direct contrast to the rigid restrictions of the Pharisees, who, Jesus noted, “*tie up heavy loads and put them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them*” (Matthew 23:4).

Men who were recognized as full of wisdom were revered as *zakenim* (*zaken* singular), that is, elders or sages. God’s representatives in guiding His children, these elders set a visible standard of the holiness called for by God. They dispensed just and merciful decisions on behalf of the entire community. As

you'll see in a later lesson, reliance on older, wiser men as shepherds was incorporated into early Christian faith communities. These older men were the Father's choice to shepherd His children.

When the people of the community gathered corporately, any member of the congregation who was able to instruct could be called up to read from God's Word, lead congregational prayers or preach. Paul gives us a glimpse of this mutual participation when he writes,

Whenever you come together, let every-one be ready with a psalm or a teaching or a revelation, or ready to use his gift of tongues or give an interpretation; but let everything be for edification (1 Corinthians 14:26).

Jesus showed Himself prepared at the synagogue in Nazareth when He was invited to read from the Bible and teach (see Luke 4:16).

When the Jewish people came together for prayer and public reading of the Hebrew Scriptures, the text was translated into the everyday language of the people, especially if they lived outside Israel. The passage was presented in a *halakhic* manner—a meaningful lesson that could apply to daily life. This pattern formed the basis of what would later be considered preaching in Christian gatherings—teaching with the goal of application.

While we were living in Israel we noticed an interesting phenomenon in our settlement community. One of the many neighborhood "synagogues" was two doors away. On the Sabbath, a particular family pulled their car out of their garage and set up chairs. People from the neighborhood came together to participate in worship and fellowship.

It was wonderful to see their relational intimacy with one another. This had come about through frequent contact during the week because they lived close to each other.

Do you fellowship as Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 14:26? Yes or No.

Does the teaching you receive bring practical application for your life? Yes or No.

Is sin confronted forthrightly and pointedly so that hearers are brought to self-examination and repentance? Yes or No.

What would you like to see happening in your fellowship gathering?

If your answer was "No" to any of the questions above, what is your motive for staying within that faith community?

Do you think your response holds merit with God?