

DAY FIVE

“WALK BY THE SPIRIT”

PSALM 119:33-40

Today is the fifth day of Counting the Omer. While taking the time to Count the Omer, one can be interrupted by some thoughts generated by articles, news reports, and even some e-mails that invade your meditations. But thankfully, in God’s mercy toward us, the desire to Count the Omer can be such a blessing, that refocusing on His Word as a priority can minimize, if not eliminate, such distractions. But before commenting on what our spiritual walk entails, let me first direct you to today’s selection for your own personal reflection:

PSALM 67:1-7

For the choir director; with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song. God be gracious to us and bless us, *and* cause His face to shine upon us—Selah. That Your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation among all nations. Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. Let the nations be glad and sing for joy; for You will judge the peoples with uprightness and guide the nations on the earth. Selah. Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. The earth has yielded its produce; God, our God, blesses us. God blesses us, that all the ends of the earth may fear Him.

PSALM 119:33-40

Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes, and I shall observe it to the end. Give me understanding, that I may observe Your law and keep it with all my heart. Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, for I delight in it. Incline my heart to Your testimonies and not to *dishonest* gain. Turn away my eyes from looking at vanity, and revive me in Your ways. Establish Your word to Your servant, as that which produces reverence for You. Turn away my reproach which I dread, for Your ordinances are good. Behold, I long for Your precepts; revive me through Your righteousness.

Once again as I have taken the time to meditate upon the suggested readings for the discipline of Counting the Omer, I have been blessed in my personal reflections. Even though some of the distractions of human life have penetrated my thoughts this morning, the commitment to consider His Word during the seven-week period toward the Feast of Weeks or *Shavuot* has resulted in additional blessings. Let me explain.

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One of the unique benefits of being in full time ministry is that different people from around the world, who are in need of spiritual encouragement or instruction, contact you. Since the Holy One has seen fit to give me a gift of encouragement and exhortation, it is with very little effort that I can often spend hours on the phone with a person, simply letting the Holy Spirit speak to one needing help. The fact that I have been dedicating the time to meditate upon the different Psalms and follow the command to Count the Omer, has been instrumental in some recent conversations. After all, if you are inculcating your mind with the words and wisdom of the Lord, it is only natural that when you are called upon to react to certain questions or situations, that you will have a much greater chance of responding according to His ways.

Two recent calls (2004), from different and unique persons, just happened to have the Spirit bring up a few different Scripture passages in my exhortations to the callers. They became a part of my reflection this morning, especially when I came to a verse within our daily selection (Psalm 119:33-40) which details how God's people are to walk in His commandments:

“Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, for I delight in it”
(Psalm 119:35).

One of my calls was from a Messianic pastor/teacher, who is presently ministering not only to his own fellowship throughout the week, but has also been helping six African-American evangelical pastors about the finer points of their Hebraic Roots for a few hours each week. They are convinced that the Torah remains valid instruction for God's people today, and have been wisely seeking to receive some solid instruction from an experienced Messianic Believer. My second call was from a charismatic Christian Believer in New Zealand, who has been consistently contacting me since he discovered our ministry. In his zeal to become Messianic and embrace his Hebraic Roots in a more tangible way, he has had to alter many of his religious habits, and has been carefully leading his family along.

These two calls inevitably enabled me to share how for the first time in my own personal walk with the Messiah, I am making a concerted effort to follow the Torah command to Count the Omer. And since the Father has recently been showering me with so much spiritual blessing, as a consequence of my commitment, I wanted to naturally encourage them to also Count the Omer at this time. During the course of the two conversations, the Holy Spirit prompted me to quote first from Psalm 90 to both, and then from some of the admonitions of the Apostle Paul to my friend from New Zealand.

In both cases, I was encouraging these individuals to consider the Messianic walk from the perspective of one who (if remaining healthy and fit) will probably receive seventy years, or if by strength, eighty years (cf. Psalm 90:10), to not only walk the walk—but most importantly, follow Yeshua's command to make disciples (Matthew 28:19). As I reviewed this text from Psalms this morning, I was reminded of the Torah's admonition of God numbering our days (Exodus 23:26; Numbers 14:34):

“As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, or if due to strength, eighty years, yet their pride is *but* labor and sorrow; for soon it is gone and we fly away. Who understands the power of Your anger and Your fury, according to the fear that is due You? So teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom. Do return, O LORD; how long *will it be?* And be sorry for Your servants. O satisfy us in the morning with Your lovingkindness, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days You have afflicted us, *and* the years we have seen evil. Let Your work appear to Your servants and Your majesty to their children. Let the favor of the Lord our

God be upon us; and confirm for us the work of our hands; yes, confirm the work of our hands” (Psalm 90:10-17).

Of course, as I was considering the process of numbering my days in conjunction with Counting the Omer, so that I could present a heart of wisdom to God, **my heart soared!** The confirmation that taking the time to actually count or number one’s days was something that meant a great deal to me, in this special season when we count fifty days toward *Shavuot*. When we come to the end of our lives here on Earth, we should desire the favor of the Lord God to be upon us and confirm the work of our hands.

Pondering more of Psalm 119 this morning, the concept that leapt out at me was a reiteration of my words of encouragement to the younger man, just coming into an appreciation of his Hebraic Roots. The day before, as I was giving him some advice on how to respond to some of his detractors, who have been challenging his newfound convictions, I mentioned the following thoughts.

Since the family and friends who were questioning his new desire to please the Lord by obedience to the Torah were evangelical Christians, I recommended that he refer them to some admonitions seen in the Apostolic Scriptures or New Testament, so that they would truly realize that he has not left his faith in Jesus. I reminded him that one of the indications of godliness, which most serious Christians would agree is consistent with Scripture, is the ability to walk in the Spirit and be led by the Spirit. I pointed him to some of Paul’s words, and suggested that he use them when any critics may confront him:

“For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, **so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.** For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, **for the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God...** So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Messiah, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God” (Romans 8:3-8, 12-19).

I then reminded my friend that if a Believer in Christ Jesus or Messiah Yeshua is truly being led by the Spirit and is walking in the Spirit, then he or she would naturally be following the Law of God. *God’s Spirit and God’s Law are surely not at odds with each other!*¹ And indeed, many Christians keep *most of the Torah* without realizing it! Almost all of the evangelical Believers I have known throughout my life have been upstanding, godly people,

¹ Consult the author’s article “Torah and the Holy Spirit,” appearing in the September 2010 issue of Outreach Israel News.

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who live according to the ethical and moral code of the Scriptures as first defined by the Law of Moses and explained in the Old Testament. They follow the Ten Commandments to the best of their ability, to be sure, and would agree that if they are found stealing, coveting, or committing adultery—or even thinking about such things—that they would be found sinning against the will of the Holy Spirit.

How today's Messianic Believers get to help our Christian brothers and sisters see the importance of submitting themselves to Moses' Teaching is not easy. Frequently in our faith community, many unfair accusations are issued toward Christian Believers, labeling them as being practitioners of lawlessness—when many of them are just under-informed as to what God's Torah actually teaches. Few have actually been told that the promise of the New Covenant not only includes redemption and cleansing from sins, but also a supernatural transcription of God's Law by the Holy Spirit on new hearts of flesh (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27; cf. Hebrews 8:8-12).² In Romans 8:4, Paul is clear how the Holy Spirit has been given to God's people "in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit" (NIV). This is fully consistent with what we see in our Psalm selection (Psalm 119:33-40) today:

“Behold, I long for Your precepts [לְפִקְדֹתֶיךָ, *l'piqudekha*]; revive me through Your righteousness” (Psalm 119:40).

While it is true that some Messianics need to be tempered with a little more wisdom and moderation, as they present the importance of our Hebraic Roots to Christian family and friends—it is equally true that there are some Christians who want little to do with obedience to God's Law. They would consider a discipline like Counting the Omer to be of very little value to modern Believers. It is incorrectly thought that after being forgiven of our sins via Yeshua (Jesus), with the Holy Spirit present in our hearts, very little effort needs to be expelled in terms of obedience. **But this is not true.** Salvation might come by grace through faith, but it requires us to demonstrate the good works that the Father has created us for (Ephesians 2:8-10).

There are many good works that we can be considering, especially those of love and service to those in need (James 1:27). Yet can the good works God expects of His people also include things like Counting the Omer? Only if we actually submit ourselves to His Instruction and follow it, can any of us truly see whether or not the Holy Spirit will uniquely minister to us during this time.

² Consult the article “What is the New Covenant?” by J.K. McKee, appearing in *The New Testament Validates Torah*.