

# Sabbath, Jewish Tradition

## To what extent, if any, do you believe that we should follow Jewish tradition in our Sabbath observance?

Biblically, we are told that the Sabbath day is to be a time of rest for our bodies, and that we are to make it holy (Exodus 20:11; Deuteronomy 5:12). The Scriptures tell us that *Shabbat* is to be “a holy convocation” (Leviticus 23:3). How we “fill in the details” of doing this requires us to examine instances in the Scriptures where the Sabbath is being kept and determine with accuracy the *halachah* that was practiced in the First Century community of faith. Jewish studies in the New Testament are revealing more and more that Yeshua and the Apostles indeed kept many of the traditions of their time. We do not believe it is wise for us to simply dismiss tradition, as many do, but once accurately determining what the Apostles would have done in the First Century, we must ask what they would do today. Would they have gone to the synagogue on *Shabbat*? Would they light *Shabbat* candles? Would they flip on a light switch?

The Sabbath is one of the most important elements of Torah observance in the Jewish community today, and there are many wonderful traditions that we can practice as Messianic Believers in making *Shabbat* a holy time. The Sabbath table of the candle lighting, the *challah* bread, the kiddish wine, and the *Shabbat* meal, are all elements that can be partaken of today. Attending *Shabbat* services where Hebrew liturgy is used and the Torah is honored in a service can be partaken of. These are all elements of Jewish practice that are quite commonplace in the Messianic community that we encourage everyone to follow, as they can all trace their origin back to the First Century period of the Messiah, and immediately before and immediately after. Of course, there are many variants among these basic elements of *Shabbat* practice among the Jewish community today, both in Israel and the Diaspora, and we certainly expect that you would adopt them similarly and those things with which you are most comfortable.

The alternative to not following any mainline Jewish custom to make the Sabbath a special time is sitting in the dark and eating cold bread—as was the errant practice of many Karaites during the Medieval period. Some in the Messianic community insist that if something is not explicitly in the Written Torah, then it should not be followed. Unfortunately for those who hold this view, following edifying traditions was commonplace among the First Century world of Yeshua, and in the Apostolic *halachah* we see in the Messianic Scriptures. Yeshua and His Disciples were by no means “Karaites,” and we believe that if they were living today they would adhere to the basic elements of Sabbath tradition, even though probably not to the extent of the Orthodox Jewish community. We believe that they would make allowances for the evolution of technology in their orthopraxy.

For a further discussion of these, and related issues, we highly recommend you consult the *Messianic Sabbath Helper*, published by Messianic Apologetics.