

Shalom Achi! (ah kee,= peace my brother.)

It has been a week since I got your letter but things have finally slowed down enough for me to write! I'll try to deal with this posting systematically. I ask Wayne to address the Two-House and Noahside ways of being Messianic so you should get a letter soon if you haven't already.

First off; "...will a congregation accept a previous baptism, (immersion)... circumcision..." some will, some won't. There really aren't any Messianic Jewish denominations. There are two or three loose groupings but nothing like denominations. We here in SW Oklahoma would have no issue with what was done in the past but, let's look at what immersion really means.

In the Torah when a dish or clothing comes into contact with something unclean and is made *tamay*, (unclean) it is washed in water as the final step in becoming clean again. This is explicit in this weeks Torah portion from Leviticus 13:
Lev 13:47-48 "Also, if a garment has a leprous plague in it, whether it is a woolen garment or a linen garment, 48 whether it is in the warp or woof of linen or wool, whether in leather or in anything made of leather, ...50 The priest shall examine the plague ...53 "But if the priest examines it, and indeed the plague has not spread in the garment, either in the warp or in the woof, or in anything made of leather, 54 then the priest shall command that they wash the thing in which is the plague; and he shall isolate it another seven days...58 And if you wash the garment, either warp or woof, or whatever is made of leather, if the plague has disappeared from it, then it shall be washed a second time, and shall be clean.

NKJV

Washing was also done in Ex. 20 before YHVH spoke to all the people uttering the Ten Words, aka the Ten Commandments. The essence of what I am teaching about immersion is that it is a symbol of a change in status. The cloth in the Lev. passage was unclean, then the priest pronounced it clean, but it didn't officially become clean again until it was immersed/washed in water. Without the blessing of the priest it could be cleaned a hundred times and still remain ceremonially profane/unclean, but after he gives it his okay it still needs to be immersed to show its change of status. Likewise the people at the foot of Sinai in Ex 20 were about to be in the presence of YHVH and needed a "change of status" to move from the everyday into the Holy. (Moshe at the burning bush was told to take off his shoes as a sign of entering into the presence of holiness. He was not ask to immerse teaching us that the immersion is not the power that changes us but the symbol that we are changed.) At Pentecost, in Acts 2, the observant Jews present at Peter's speech ask, "[What must we do to be saved?](#)" The answer given was to repent and be immersed. These men didn't protest because they saw immersion not so much as a religious rite, although it is clearly a part of the faith, but they saw immersion as a common event to demonstrate an upward change in status. A few years back archeologist discovered several hundred Jewish "baptisteries", (mikvas) on the southern face of the Temple Mt. Those 3000 didn't need to go far, or wait long, to carry out the command to be immersed! They were willing to be immersed because they saw their revelation about the person of Messiah as having changed them and needing to be marked in their lives by a trip to the mikva. I have a teaching I do on immersion that I will try to copy down and send to you, but it may be awhile before I can get you that much detail.

The point I am making isn't that you should feel obligated to be re-immersed when you get the chance but just the opposite; if you believe that your status before YHVH has improved you may want to ASK to be re-immersed as a sign of your greater understanding and calling of service. There is a NT passage talking about one baptism one spirit etc but when you translate the Greek *baptisto* into English you get immersion. We all know that there is more than one immersion. You immerse every time you swim. Your donut immerses every time it is dunked in coffee. So, there is one immersion *into the change of status* of becoming a disciple of Yeshua, but there are other changes of status in our walk with the Lord. In the Orthodox Jewish community everyone immerses on Friday before sundown to prepare for Shabbat, to mark the holiness of the day that is about to begin. A woman immerses at the end of her monthly time as a change of her status.

[Eph 4:4-6](#)

[4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism/immersion; 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.](#)

[NKJV](#)

Your goal and mine as regards immersion/conversion, or anything, is to be fully convinced about what is or is not being done. When you are convinced, it takes all the pressure off what needs to be done. If the group you are in insist on immersion and you know that it isn't needed you have no problem saying no. If you are convinced it would be a good thing you have no problem insisting on an immersion.

By the way, in Hebrew thought immersion is a self immersion with 2 witnesses. The traditional Christian way of a minister immersing people, teaches our reliance upon help from Messiah in our walk. The Jewish self immersion reminds us that we are individually responsible for making our decisions. No one can be immersed for you. Both ways work in my mind although I prefer self immersion. That may also make it possible for you to immerse, with or without witnesses, if you feel that you personally need that sign post in your life, even now before you can join us. (I don't know what facilities you have at your disposal)

The next thing you spoke about was the answer to my question; "What is sin?" I like your answer a lot. You quoted 1 Jn 3:4 that sin is Lawlessness or breaking Torah. Often we are given the definition that sin is, "something that displeases God". That is a good Sunday School answer but not a biblical answer. Sin does displease God, but the over simplified SS answer is not specific enough to give a good frame work of how we should live now that we are followers of Messiah. At this point I am working under the assumption that we should try and live lives that are as free from sin as possible, that can't be done if we don't have a hard definition of what sin is so we can avoid it. I believe that this is what Paul meant when he talked of grace abounding where sin was present in Ro. 5-6.

[Rom 5:20-6:2](#)

[20 Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, 21 so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.](#)

[6:1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? NKJV](#)

As believers we are supposed to actively avoid sin! That is imminently doable with the biblical answer you have given. Sin is violating the law, aka Torah. Is this civil law or biblical law? Clearly the bible is talking about the biblical law. The word for law in Hebrew is Torah. The only part of the bible that is self titled is the first five books called the Torah aka Law. **(Can you think of an activity that is allowed in Torah but that God hates?)**

Deut 28:61-62 Also every sickness and every plague, which is not written in this *Book of the Law*, will the LORD bring upon you until you are destroyed. ... And the LORD would separate him from all the tribes of Israel for adversity, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this *Book of the Law*,... **Deut 29:21** your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this *Book of the Law*, and if you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. ...**Deut 30:10** if you obey the voice of the LORD your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this *Book of the Law*, and if you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. ...**Deut 31:26** "Take this *Book of the Law*, and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there as a witness against you; NKJV

The Hebrew phrase for book of the Law is *Sepher Torah*. Our bibles have sections called history, prophets, etc. We also separate the Torah into ceremonial law, moral law etc. (YHVH does separate his commands into *mishpateem* and *hookeem*, do you know what those are?) Only this section of the bible is self titled. I should also point out that YHVH does not separate His Torah into sections but treats it all as one.

Num 15:14-16 One ordinance shall be for you of the assembly and for the stranger who dwells with you, an ordinance forever throughout your generations; as you are, so shall the stranger be before the LORD. 16 One law and one custom shall be for you and for the stranger who dwells with you." ... **John 10:34-35** Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, "You are gods"'? 35 If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken)... NKJV

These two passages are a synopsis of how the bible teaches that it is to be treated as a whole and not picked into pieces that we can choose to read and obey or not. There is no ceremonial law only the Torah. Knowing that Torah references Gen-Deut, law is not a very good translation for the meaning. Genesis has very few "commands" in it and even Leviticus has narratives and not just commands. The root word for Torah really carries a meaning more in line with "instructions". Now the term Torah, works because the five books of the Torah do contain commands, but also have instructions on how YHVH made the world, chose His people, how to eat, and how to worship.

You closed your answer by saying that we are to include, "... every law of God", in our habits of obedience. I agree completely with that statement. Some people have tried to limit obedience to the commands repeated in the NT but there are several problems with that reasoning that have to do with the nature of God. Another approach taken to getting out of obedience is to say that we are only obligated to obey the Law of Christ.

Gal 6:2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. NKJV

Can you guess the problem with this approach? Rather than continue with my ideas on these issues I think I would like to hear what you have to say about them. So in your next posting tell me what is wrong with limiting obedience to the repeated

commandments in the NT. Also what is the issue with the Law of Christ concept? What is the permitted activity that YHVH hates? We'll talk about these ideas in the next posting.

On a personal note I think your idea of taking a survey class in OT or NT is a great idea but...be ready for information at a beginning level. I teach two intro classes and they are set up at the freshman/sophomore level and you may be beyond that at this point in your discipling. It is still worth doing if you want to get a degree in Bible because you will need to get those classes on your transcript even if they are basic. You might look for an intro to Biblical/Classical Hebrew. There are some self teaching books about this. If you are interested I can have one sent to you but be ready to get a little at a time. Hebrew isn't like learning a European language, it is much harder.

Well I am going to let you go for now. Have a great day and I hope to hear from you soon.

Shalom gg