

ONE TORAH FOR ALL

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Traditions

“Excuse me, sir, but do you know that our Messiah was not born on Christmas?”

“Oh, yes!”

“Then why do you celebrate this day?”

“Because that is what we have always done.”

“Excuse me, ma’am, do you know that our Messiah was not born on this day?”

“Yes, I have heard that he was born in the fall, actually.”

“Then why do you celebrate this day?”

“It doesn’t really matter what day we celebrate on; He knows our hearts.”

“Excuse me, sir, do you know that our Messiah was born during the Feast of Tabernacles?”

“Yes, actually my understanding is that He was born on the first day and circumcised on the eighth day, the last great day of the feast.”

“Sir, you seem like an educated man; why then do you celebrate Christmas since you know that it is not related to the truth about Messiah?”

“I suppose it is for my family; you know, the kids. They have so much fun and everything. And besides, Grandma celebrated it; and if it was good enough for her, then surely it is good enough for us.”

The influence of traditions in our lives is much stronger than some of us would like to admit. All of us have traditions passed on to us from family, as well as the respective societies in which we live. These traditions, regardless of what they are or from where they originate, have a power

in our lives that is rarely confronted, let alone overcome. It takes a purposeful decision and powerful effort to overcome a long-standing tradition. And any effort to do so will most likely be met with failure unless the tradition which is being laid to rest is replaced with something better.

One of the difficulties with traditions as the above conversations illustrate, is not about what is best or even what is true; but traditions are about emotional ties that bind us to, and anchor us in, our roots, in our past. Traditions help give us our identity. This in turn, gives us security for the future. While the above conversations are not actual conversations, they are based upon actual conversations which I have had with individuals in the past. It is a very rare occurrence to talk to a person who does not know Christmas was not the day of the birth of Messiah Yeshua. This is a very puzzling thing to me personally. You may wonder why that is. Let me see if I can articulate the reason why it is such a puzzling thing.

At one point during His ministry, Yeshua stated that those who worship the Father in heaven must do so in Spirit and in truth. I have never met a person who claims to follow Messiah who does not believe the truth contained in that declaration. Yet, many of those same individuals who understand the truth in that passage celebrate a day which is devoid of His truth; e.g., Christmas. Personally, it leaves me scratching my head. When confronted with this contradiction, a person will invariably list off one or more reasons which are all based upon an emotional tie to the season, and the reason itself is devoid of logic, as well as truth. Again, more head scratching on my part.

If the followers of Messiah are so focused upon living a life that is pleasing to Him, then why are they celebrating a day, which in truth, has nothing to do with Him? I am more than just a little puzzled.

Are we as humans such herd animals that we cannot walk against the greater flow of humanity? Are our instincts for survival within the herd so great that these instincts overcome our sensibilities? There are few who would want to admit that such is the case, but all indications seem to point at the truth of this. Look at the reasons given by Christians for the keeping of a holiday such as Christmas, which in truth, has nothing to do with Messiah. Each reason stated is a reason rooted in what the herd is doing or has done.

Now mind you, not all traditions are of the same caliber. Some traditions are rather benign in nature. Lesser traditions we often call habits, but in reality, they are actually the same thing, that is, actions passed down to us from those who have gone before us. Traditions, like habits, which one adopts, can either be good for us or bad for us. "But," one objects, "what is the harm in keeping Christmas?"

For some, it does not really matter. But for others it matters a great deal. For those who claim to follow Messiah, for them it is a matter of life or death. It goes back to the "worshipping Him in truth" question. If one claims to follow this teaching of Messiah, yet in his actions does not

do it, then there is a word which describes such a person. That word is “hypocrite”. And no one likes a hypocrite!

It is at this point that a person’s emotions are likely to flare up into full flame. No one likes a hypocrite and we like it even less when someone calls us a hypocrite. “Of all the nerve, to suggest that my words and actions do not match up and that my walk with Messiah is being called into question. How dare you!”

My dear friend, may we reason together for just a moment? Is it possible for us to set aside our emotions in this matter and take a cold, hard look at the facts and the truth of this matter? I have no doubt that the desire of your heart is such that you want to please our Master and Savior. That is not in question here in this matter. What is in question is a manmade tradition; in this case, the tradition of Christmas. Now, as you know and have already admitted, Messiah was not born on that day. So to say that we are celebrating His birth, simply is not true. And if it is not true, then it becomes impossible to worship Him on that day in truth. Would you not agree with this? I am sure that you do, being a reasonable person. Since He is truth, how can that which is not true be used to worship Him who is truth? Truthfully, it cannot!

This is where the rub comes to play in this whole thing. I know; I have been through it. It is difficult to stand up and say, “Enough is enough!” and to be able to stand against the pressures of family and friends who will not understand why (at least, not at first); and some may never understand it. When you first accepted Messiah as your own personal Savior did it matter to you whether anyone else understood it or not? No, of course not. You did it because it was the right thing to do. It is the same thing here; if one bases his actions upon what others say and the pressure they put upon him, then he simply will not walk in His truth, for the herd of humanity does not follow Messiah; and seeing that truth can help one stand firm in the face of overwhelming pressure to conform.

Is it not better to walk in truth by yourself, than to walk with the herd in error?

May you find all the strength you need to stand in all of His truth!

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