

Message: 2026-05-16: Talmidut: תלמידות

Introduction

This week we are going to focus on discipleship. In Hebrew, that word is talmidut.

A disciple is a talmid. A group of disciples are called talmidim. Discipleship is talmidut.

When I look at the turmoil in our world and the turmoil we have seen in our community, I believe much of it is due to our failure as the body of Messiah to disciple the people that Adonai brings into our communities. We do what seems right in our own eyes, and it does need lead to life. As a body it has left us weak and vulnerable to attack from within and without, and it has left us without the strength and resilience we need to accomplish what Adonai has tasked us with in this world.

There are many reasons for this malady, but there is a fairly simple remedy. We need to focus on being talmidim Yeshua, and we need to teach others to do the same.

Now, we are not going to cover every aspect of discipleship in the next few minutes. Talmidut is a way of life. It takes time and effort, and it is worked out over a lifetime. What I am going to try to do is to convey the critical importance of talmidut. Like any good teacher, I am going to rely heavily on my teachers, and ultimately we are all relying solely on Yeshua HaMashiakh.

In this week's parashah, Parashah Bamidbar, Adonai instructs Moshe in regard to who he is to choose to lead the tribes and how they are to set up camp and how they are supposed to worship. How we do what we do matters to Hashem. Yeshua makes this abundantly clear to us.

בעזרת השם

Be'ezrat Hashem.

With God's help.

So, be'ezrat Hashem, with God's help, we will accomplish what He has for us this morning together.

The Great Commission

Our core scripture for today is going to be from the very end of the besorah of Matityahu.

Therefore, go and make people from all nations into talmidim, immersing them into the reality of the Father, the Son and the Ruach HaKodesh, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.

Matthew 28:19–20 (CJB)

In the TLV it translates it in a more familiar way.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, immersing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Ruach ha-Kodesh, teaching them to observe all I have commanded you.

Matthew 28:19–20 (TLV)

This is from the passage usually referred to as 'The Great Commission'. It contains Yeshua's final instructions to his talmidim about what they were now supposed to do. They had walked *with* their Rabbi, and now they were expected to walk *like* their Rabbi.

The great commission contains four basic instructions to his talmidim.

1. Go to all nations
2. Make disciples of all nations
3. Immerse them
4. Teach them to obey all I have commanded you

The Great Omission

Of those four imperatives, believers have done a good job of going and immersing. Many, many converts have been made. The world has been overwhelmingly changed for the good by believers sharing the good news of Messiah with the world and immersing them in faith.

I do also think it is important to study your history of the church. There have been some seriously bad things done by people claiming to be acting in G-d's name; some pretty serious missteps throughout history. I think most of those missteps can be traced to the two imperatives we have not done well.

In the greater body of Messiah, we have not done a good job of making disciples, and we have not done a good job of teaching people to obey **ALL** that Yeshua commanded. We have definitely taught much of what Yeshua

commanded, but what about His commandment to keep the Father's commandments?

If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

John 15:10 (TLV)

We don't get to judge what commandments we like. If we want to abide in Yeshua's love, then we need to keep His commandments just as He kept His Father's commandments. Yeshua's commandments are the Father's commandments. We are supposed to do what He did, and we are supposed to do it how He did it.

*Trust in ADONAI with all your heart;
do not rely on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge him;
then he will level your paths.*

Proverbs 3:5–6 (CJB)

That is what talmidut looks like.

However, when we, as the greater body of Messiah, were separated as a whole from our Jewish root, we lost what it meant to be a disciple.

The Art of Imitation

Talmidut is more than being a student. Talmidut is the art of imitation. This is how Yeshua describes the process.

A talmid is not above his rabbi; but each one, when he is fully trained, will be like his rabbi.

Luke 6:40 (CJB)

This is how Yokhanon, one of Yeshua's disciples, describes discipleship.

This is how we are sure that we are united with Him (Yeshua). A person who claims to be continuing in union with Him ought to conduct his life the way He did.

1 John 2:5–6 (CJB)

If we want to be talmidim Yeshua we should be striving to live our lives the way He lived His life. We should be striving to be like Yeshua, and we should be teaching others to do the same.

There's a story in the Talmud in Tractate Berakoth that many of you are already familiar with about a young Rabbi Akiva that demonstrates how radically committed talmidim were to walking like their rabbi. This passage essentially documents discussions about disciples following their rabbi into the bathroom. It starts with Rabbi Akiva saying, 'Once I went in after R. Joshua to a privy, and I learnt from him three things.'

You may be wondering what those three things were. Well, I will. Tell you.

Three Things Learnt in the Privy:

I learnt that one does not sit east and west but north and south; I learnt that one evacuates not standing but sitting; and I learnt that it is proper to wipe with the left hand and not with the right. Said Ben Azzai to him: Did you dare to take such liberties with your master? He replied: It was a matter of Torah, and I required to learn.

I'm not going to lie, I find this invasive and just a bit horrific. Don't do this.

The point of this story is to demonstrate how radically committed talmidim were to walking like their rabbi. They wanted to be like their rabbi in every way. They saw every aspect of their lives (the sacred things, the common things, the profane things) as critical for carrying on the traditions that were being passed down to them.

I think this level of scrutiny is why Ya'akov said...

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, since you know that we will be judged more severely.

James 3:1 (CJB)

The Main Tasks of a Talmid

Talmidut was a normal part of Jewish life and culture in the first century. It was how teachers of Torah passed down their teachings to their serious students. Every Jew was expected to learn Torah, but every Jew was not a talmid.

Jewish education was formalized in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, and it was made available to all men, woman, boys and girls. This was the beginning of the rabbinic system. Torah literacy was expected of all people. Beyond the Torah were the nevi'im and ketuvim, the prophets and the writings, the whole Tanakh. After that came the traditions of the fathers. Most people did not make it past the Torah.

That is because, when it was time to choose a path in life via a vocation, most people chose to pursue common trades. They were shepherds and carpenters and farmers and lawyers and doctors; whatever. They would apprentice themselves to a master in their trade, and they would learn. When they were fully trained, they would leave their master. They would eventually take on an apprentice, and the process would repeat. In this way, the knowledge of a master would be passed down from generation to generation, l'dor v'dor.

A talmid is not greater than his rabbi, a slave is not greater than his master. It is enough for a talmid that he become like his rabbi, and a slave like his master.

Matthew 10:24–25 (CJB)

It's very similar to the process of being a talmid. Normally the rabbi would choose his talmidim. They would have already demonstrated through their childhood education that they would be exceptional Torah students. They would have already likely shown their piety and the character. Their discipleship would start at the age of accountability, so around 12.

This system of learning is the context for the story in Luke of Yeshua at the age of 12 when He stayed behind after Pesakh to sit with the rabbis in the Temple.

On the third day they found him—he was sitting in the Temple court among the rabbis, not only listening to them but questioning what they said; and everyone who heard him was astonished at his insight and his responses.*

Luke 2:46–47 (CJB)

**He was also obviously 12, because only a 12 year old boy would think doing that to your parents would be ok.*

Yeshua was an excellent candidate for a talmid.

This is one of the things that makes Yeshua's choice of talmidim so exceptional. His talmidim were average. They were not exceptional Torah students. They had not astonished the rabbis like Yeshua did. They had already gone on to common trades, and they were working in them. However, they had the potential to be what Yeshua wanted His talmidim to be.

Talmidim had four essential jobs.

Key Word	Description
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Job Number One	TO MEMORIZE HIS TEACHER'S WORDS
Job Number Two	TO LEARN HIS TEACHER'S TRADITIONS
Job Number Three	TO IMITATE HIS TEACHER'S ACTIONS
Job Number Four	TO RAISE UP MORE DISCIPLES

That is what a talmid was expected to do. When fully trained, a talmid should have conformed his life in the way of his rabbi to the point that the life of the talmid would reflect his rabbi to the world.

Do I think anyone should strive to emulate me and reflect me into this world? No. Absolutely not. I spent almost 50 yrs being transformed by the renewing of my mind so that hopefully I can better and better reflect the light of Yeshua into this world.

This is what Rav Sha'ul is talking about in Romans when he says,

Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12:2 (TLV)

Honestly, how are doing with this? Are we successfully performing the four jobs of a talmid?

Do most followers of Yeshua know His words? I would say that they do. They may not understand the context of His words, and that can result in A LOT of misunderstanding. However, most of His followers since the Bible became available to the common man do know many His words. Have they memorized them all. No.

Do we know Yeshua's traditions? Outside of those of us in the Messianic community, no. Even if believers recognize that he did Jewish things, there is very little desire demonstrated to learn what His traditions meant or how He observed them. That has been rapidly changing in recent years, but it is still exceptional.

Do we imitate our Rabbi's actions? That's a big one, isn't it? That's a difficult question. That's a question we don't really have time to answer today, so I will let you ponder this on your own.

Do we raise up more disciples? Well, that's what we are talking about today, and, no, I do not think we have done a great job of this either. We could try to blame this on our teachers and the spiritual or religious traditions we come from, but I honestly think it is mostly because we have not always been good disciples.

If we do not know His words, know His traditions, and imitate His actions, how can we hope to make disciples of all nations?

Our Rabbi is Yeshua

The principal thing that defines Messianic Judaism is, wait for it, THE MESSIAH.

Is Yeshua your rabbi?

Will you follow Him or are you directing your own paths?

What are you doing to make disciples of Yeshua?

As talmidim Yeshua, we should be raising up talmidim Yeshua, not talmidim Yermeyahu or talmidim Shmuel. As rabbis, Rabbi Shmuel and I are shepherds caring for the community God has put in our care, but we are not building our own kingdom. This is not our community. It is our responsibility.

We are caretakers of a small part of Messiah's kingdom here at Or HaOlam, and we should all be conforming ourselves to the likeness of Yeshua HaMashiakh, Or HaOlam.

I would like to revisit this verse from earlier.

If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

John 15:10 (TLV)

What distinguishes talmidim Yeshua from all other talmidim should be love. We should abide in His love. Yeshua said this,

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, so also you must love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

John 13:34–35 (TLV)

We are already commanded in Torah to love Adonai with all our heart, mind and soul. We are already commanded in Torah to love our neighbor as ourself. What is new here is that, as talmidim Yeshua, we are commanded to love each other

as Yeshua loved us. The besorot are full of many accounts of Yeshua interacting with people. He doesn't spend his whole life running around hugging people. That's not a complete picture of love.

What we do see is a perfect picture of the balance of mercy and truth reflecting the character of God's love. Our job is to conform ourselves to the example Yeshua gave us, to love each other as He loved us.

Talmidut: תלמידות

Yeshua commanded His followers not only to evangelize and immerse people, but also to make disciples and teach obedience to all His commandments. A true disciple (*talmid*) seeks to live like Yeshua by following His teachings, imitating His actions, and walking in obedience to the Father- as He did.

So, is making talmidim of all nations and teaching them to obey ALL that Yeshua commanded in line with our vision?

The vision and purpose of Or HaOlam is working to bring Jewish people, and those grafted in, to their covenantal identity in Messiah.

Why, yes it is in line with our vision.

This is why we are starting the new discipleship class here in June. We have to prioritize discipleship if we have any hope of making disciples of all nations.

Yeshua's choice of ordinary people as disciples demonstrates that willingness and faithfulness matter more than status or education. Our challenge is to truly know Yeshua's teachings and imitate His life. We are not, nor do we need to be, exceptional. Yeshua is exceptional. All we need to do is know Him and walk like Him and teach others to do the same.

Then, in love, mercy, and truth, we will disciple others, bringing them into their covenantal identity in Messiah.

Final Admonishment

I understand that our alienation from the genuine Jewish character of Yeshua and the Jewish context of His teachings can be a difficult reality to wrestle with. We have filled in so much space with well-intentioned meaning and interpretation that there is often no room in our doctrines and theologies for the genuine Yeshua. Many of us were raised in a culture that had completely erased and replaced Israel with itself.

That is why we cannot lean on our own understanding. We have to put our trust in Adonai.

At that time you were separate from Messiah, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Ephesians 2:12 (TLV)

This verse, even though it was directed to believers from the nations, resonates with me. This is how I felt when my theological framework could no longer support the life I was experiencing. I was without hope. However, meeting Yeshua, the Messiah of Israel, changed my life. Even though I had walked with Jesus most of my life, when I finally recognized and accepted Him for who He is, it was life from the dead.

...what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

Romans 11:15 (TLV)

So I admonish you today to put aside your preconceptions and endeavor to be a disciple of Yeshua HaMashiakh. Memorize His words, learn His traditions, and imitate His actions. Become a talmid Yeshua.

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