

BREAKING AWAY?

A brief commentary dealing with the struggles of being at odds with your "religion" and "theology".

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Most of us had some sort of 'religious' background before we became involved in the Messianic way and perhaps a few had no 'religious' background at all. Ultimately it didn't really make a lot of difference in the way that others perceived us when we finally 'broke away' from the religious environment we had been living in.

For me personally, I came from a childhood background of Sunday masses which my Dad insisted on dragging me to, and holiday masses which both my mother and I were commanded to attend.

While in college and during the first 10 or 12 years of marriage, I was a 'Christmas and Easter' Christian, either at my Dad's church, and later at my in-law's church. Then, after a crisis in my husband's health, we both decided it was time to get serious and joined a local church and attended every Sunday and participated in almost every church-related activity for nearly 20 years. My husband even became head of the Church Consistory (Council).

Ever so slowly we began to see inconsistencies between what was in the Bible and what was becoming the 'standard' for the church. It was extremely hard to deal with. Talks with the minister were either fruitless or we were simply given some 'lip service', but nothing ever happened or was changed to bring our church community more in line with Scripture. Time passed, talks continued with the minister, but there was only less and less in common between the church and G-d's Word.

At some point, and I honestly don't recall how it happened, I was drawn to some books about Yeshua (Jesus) and how the people, not just the Jewish people, but plain everyday people loved Yeshua and followed HIM. And I began to see that HE did not establish the Christian Church or any other Church. HE was born into the followers of the G-d who chose Abram from among the goyim, and this awesome G-d, the Creator of the universe, established a relationship with Avram and changed his name to Avraham. And Yeshua was brought up learning about Avraham, Yitzach, and Ya'akov. This Yeshua attended Temple at the appointed times, and went to synagogue every Shabbat (from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset, not Sunday).

Now, when I was reading Scripture, I could plainly see that Yeshua never stopped following the ways of the G-d of Creation. HE never stopped going to Temple at the appointed times, and never stopped attending synagogue on Shabbat.

I was drawn to wanting to know more 'truth' about HIM, and began to want to know more about those who followed HIS Way. Something was drawing me in and I had questions about everything, and it seemed that whenever I turned on the radio or TV, there always 'just happened' to be a show or interview or blurb that answered my question. One thing in particular that I remember needing, was evidence that Yeshua ever actually existed. After all, if that wasn't true, then there was no reason to continue to learn from the Scriptures. And miraculously, for months, there were magazine articles and photos, TV shows, radio shows, documentaries, and all sorts of 'verifications' of HIS existence, real physical evidence that actual people had left. It covered all sorts of evidence...from archeological digs uncovering towns that Yeshua had been thru, symbols of the menorah, to dozens of other things, each one confirming something that I had questioned.

Although I still attended church, I started looking around to see if there might be a Messianic congregation in the area. I wanted to find out if they were anything like I imagined, or not. I checked out the 'worship schedule' section of the newspaper, asked around, and kept my eyes open, but found nothing. One day I picked up the phone book and found a listing for only one local Messianic Jewish congregation...but it was in an area that I knew from experience was strictly residential. I wanted to call and ask what they were like and if I would be welcomed there, or was it strictly for Jewish people? I hesitated, mostly because of an unfortunate reaction (a few years earlier) toward me from a group of Jewish women. I was afraid of being humiliated again.

So for at least another year, I kept hoping to hear of another Messianic congregation that might have a large constituency, some place where I could sort of 'slip in' and not really be recognized as an outsider. It didn't happen. And once again I turned to the newspaper, supermarket bulletin boards, etc, but found nothing. And once again I finally turned to the phone book. Still only that one listing, in the residential area... surely, at most, it could only be a small group meeting in a home and I was still afraid of being humiliated.

We were still attending the church, and the minister was going to be out of town for one weekend and my husband, as head of the Consistory, was asked to handle the service. The minister had asked a retired colleague to do the service itself, and the minister for some unknown reason had also previously engaged a Messianic Rabbi to be a guest speaker. My husband was supposed to greet this Rabbi before services began, make him feel welcome, and introduce him to the congregation.

I had no idea where this Rabbi was coming from, but I was almost salivating to meet him and find out if it might be possible to sit in on a Scripture study or something. At this point, I would be willing to travel as far as Philadelphia or somewhere to attend a study, just to find out what this Messianic stuff was all about.

My husband had left early to go to the church that Sunday morning, so I came a little later, and went into the minister's office to meet the Rabbi before services. As I approached, I could hear them speaking and the Rabbi was talking about their Bible studies. I was elated! I was so excited that I burst into the room, announced who I was and immediately blurted out: "Could I come to

one of your Bible studies?" For a split instant I think he was startled, but then replied: "Sure, and you can also attend a service if you would like. We have one on Friday night and one on Saturday morning. You are welcome to come anytime you like.

That Friday night we were among the 'early arrivers' for the service. And we were also there early for the service the next morning...and the following Friday and Saturday, and we continued showing up, week after week after week.

And now I can tell you 'the rest of the story' (as the guy on 60 minutes used to say). You see, we had a certain life-style before we started attending church, but once it became known that we were active church members, certain people that we used to have frequent contact with began to be absent more and more from our lives. Oh, they always had seemingly legitimate excuses: they were busy, they were tired, something had come up...but eventually they were gone.

But then we began to know the people from the church we were attending and we established relationships with them, some to a greater extent, and some to a lesser extent. Some even seemed to want to get deeper into G-d's Word, like we did, and this smaller circle of people became more prevalent in our lives.

But when we tried to introduce the concept of Yeshua (the Jewish Messiah) that we had uncovered, first in those Messianic books - and then from Scripture itself, they seemed to have deaf ears. Sometimes they would seem to be grasping the concepts, but it seemed that it just didn't 'stick'. Most seemed to want to re-convince us of the church theologies that no longer held up under the study of Scripture. And when we actually started to attend Messianic services, these people also began to slowly disappear from our lives. Some had the usual excuses, but some actually stopped even speaking to us, others even scurrying to a different aisle in the grocery store so they could avoid us. To our former brethren we had abandoned them ... abandoned Jesus.

I can see now that we were perceived by both groups of people as having 'broken away' from them - from their norm - from their orthodoxy. We no longer sought the same values in life. We no longer sought to be recognized for worldly possessions and associations. We didn't even talk about the same things as they did anymore. It had reached a point that we had very little in common with their view of the world.

And quickly we were actually experiencing a change in our values. We were intentionally trying to do what Scripture tells us to do. We were...we were...we were actually in the process of becoming 'people of the Book' because we were learning the true values that Scripture teaches and incorporating them into our lives. It still continues until this day. We pray that it will continue every day of our lives.

And now comes the whole 'gist', the real point to be conveyed...

We were not 'breaking away' from G-d at all. Rather we were chosen to be among those that

G-d desired to come unto HIM!!!! This was all G-d's doing, not our doing.

This was our own personal Exodus from Mitzraim (Egypt); thru the waters of the sea to be taught, for as long as it takes (going around some mountains numerous times), in a land that is not yet ours (New Jerusalem), so that we learn and practice and know the things we will do in this land that we will eventually be entering, in the land already prepared for us (the vineyards that we did not plant and the homes that we did not build), the land where G-d HIMSELF will dwell within us, the land where we will no longer need to be instructed in Torah, because Torah is written in our hearts.

All of this is actually not a 'breaking away' (by us), but instead, a 'gathering in' (a reaping) by G-d HIMSELF. We were not leaving Jesus - we were coming home to HIM!

HE CHOSE US!

HE has done all the 'doing'!

HE orchestrated it all!

HE offered the covenant!

All we had to do was CONSENT TO BE HIS, CONSENT TO BELONG TO HIM AND HIM ALONE, CONSENT TO BE HIS BRIDE.

Hallelu et Adonai! Praise G-d, Praise Yeshua!