

Walking in the Ways of the Lord

THE HEBREW METHODOLOGY OF LEADING AND FOLLOWING

BY VICTORIA SARVADI, TH.D.

The Hebrew Bible is often mysterious and hard to understand. Most people think that the language is archaic and the traditions are foreign. But unless you know the multi-dimensional aspects of the holy tongue and the idiomatic expressions that involve complex concepts of ancient culture and thought, the deeper meanings of the Bible may be lost to you. For example, phrases like *Narrow the Way*, *Paths of Righteousness*, and *Walking Upright* are Hebraically coined locutions for righteous living. In all these instances, there seems to be an underlying spiritualized pattern of thought regarding *walking*.

We live in the 21st century, and many of us are steeped in a Western society with a mindset that is definitely not attuned to the “ways” of biblical Middle Eastern times. In contrast to those times, we are highly educated in Western world views; we travel by cars, planes, and mass transit; women have equal rights and opportunity; we rely greatly on technology, and we have the convenience of food at our fingertips. Most of us don’t grow our own grains and bake our own bread, nor do we pack up a donkey and travel on foot.

In order to lead others in the faith of our Jew-

RESTORE!



ish Lord, we must comprehend the Scriptures more effectively by immersing ourselves in the time and perspectives of our Lord's antiquated biblical life.

Numerous Scriptures paint a picture of "walking." As this was the most common way people moved from place to place, there were major considerations involved. *Do I know the way where I'm going, or could I get lost? Is there a safe passage or is it treacherous? How much time will it take to arrive at my destination? How much provision should I bring?*

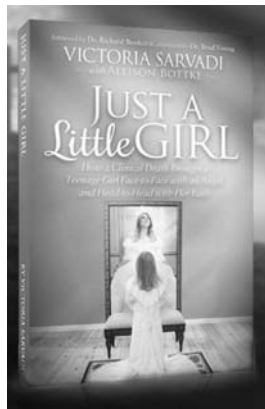
The physical aspect of walking was principal, and because it was a major occupier of thought, many "walking" idioms were used to express deeper elements of life.

THE CONCEPT OF WALKING

The Hebrew word for "he walks" is *bolake*. The idea of walking became synonymous with behavior and morality. Not only a description of traveling from one place to another on foot, the term *walking* in biblical lexicon also translates to a deeper meaning of conduct. How does one walk about in public places among men? Is his or her walk upright and admirable? In their walk, do they display character in business dealings where they travel? Are they courteous or helpful? *Are they worthy of following?*

The parable of the good Samaritan comes to mind in which Yeshua taught: "A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho. He was attacked by robbers, who stripped him and beat him. Then they left, abandoning him as half dead. And by chance, a *kohen* [priest] was going down that road; but when he saw the man, he **passed by** on the **opposite side**. Likewise, a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, **passed by** on **the opposite side**. But a Samaritan who was traveling came upon him; and when he noticed the man, he felt compassion. He went up to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on olive oil and wine. Then setting him on his own animal, he brought him to a lodge for travelers and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him. And whatever else you spend, upon my return I will repay you myself.' Which of these three seems to you a neighbor to the one attacked by robbers?" And he said, "The one who showed mercy to him." Then Yeshua said to him, "Go, and you do the same" (Luke 10:30-37, TLT).

In biblical lexicon, "walking" is "being" among the living. As you walk this earth and experiences life, you find that some people operate with a "credo" or a mindset that is governed by convictions, conscience, and personally



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kept morals. They often help people in distress, open doors for the physically challenged, give up their seat on the subway to the elderly. Maybe some go the extra mile and talk to strangers to encourage or compliment. This approach to interact with others is known in the Bible as "doing unto others."

It may be said of this caliber of people that, "they walk the high road" instead of merely passing by on the opposite side. Conversely, some people ignore, cheat, or lie to others. Still, Yeshua's advice to "*go and do the same*" remains for us a mandate to *walk in the way* of mercy and compassion for one another.

In ancient times, people listened to the rabbis and Torah teachers as they instructed them on "how to walk." Obviously, this wasn't a lesson in physical walking, as in how to put one foot in front of another and propel yourself forward. This "walking" was much deeper. That is, how do you govern yourself among others as well as how do you *approach* God. People in Yeshua's time often asked others, "Whose dust is on your shoes?" The implication was, "Who is the rabbi whom you follow?"

The roads in those days were always dusty, and most people wore sandals. It was necessary for travelers to wash their feet after a journey even if it were only a short distance. When Yeshua knelt to wash his disciples' feet, Peter quickly objected, saying, "You shall never wash my feet!" Yeshua, however, replied, "If I don't wash you, you have no part with me" (John 13:8, TLV).

The curious response by Yeshua is very Hebraic and is not often understood by those who possess a strictly Western

How do people walk about in public places? Is their walk upright and admirable? In their walk, do they display character in business dealings where they travel? Are they courteous or helpful? Are they worthy of being followed?

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ers were trying to stone you! And you're going back there again?" Yeshua answered, "Aren't there twelve hours in the day? If a man walks in the day, he doesn't stumble, because he sees the light of the world. But if a man should walk around at night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him" (John 11:9-10, CJB).

"Aren't there twelve hours in a day?" is an idiomatic phrase that emphasizes the concept of walking in goodness or **in the light**. Making a clear phrase in English would be "If even the daylight has twelve hours to shine light in order to illuminate a good path to keep one from stumbling, shouldn't we who are **always full of light**, walk in the ways of goodness?"


As Gentiles learning to walk in the ways or *halakhah* of Yeshua, it is, at times, challenging. Many *ways* of Yeshua are steeped in Jewish customs and traditions. Though unfamiliar to non-Jews, these traditions or *ways* were close to our Lord's heart. Should we also learn how to enter into these blessed ways and help others do the same?

It's not uncommon to find that when two people from different cultures marry they often desire to learn each other's customs to pass these heartfelt ways on to their children.

CROSSING OR WALKING OVER

Abraham was from Ur of Chaldees. He was a Gentile who "crossed over" to learn God's ways. The word *Hebrew* literally translates in English as "crossing over." Shouldn't we Gentiles, like Abraham, cross over from our national or ethnic barriers and allow God to graft us in into his cultivated tree? Shouldn't we learn how to grow from a deeper root system, to be a Hebrew at heart?

Yeshua told us implicitly to **allow him** to wash the dust and filth from our feet—from our "old sinful ways" and "our old erroneous paths"—and then to be a servant of God, leading others by helping them do the same.

"Now if I, the Lord and Rabbi, have washed your feet, you also should wash each other's feet" (John 13:14, CJB). May we be willing to help those who are wandering on paths that lead to nowhere to be clean and lost no longer by finding the way that leads to life and to walk therein. 

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mindset. He was showing them that if one does not allow the cleansing act of Messiah to wash *his walk* (that is, the nature of the old man), then one cannot enter into the covenantal promises of salvation.

A WAY TO WALK IN

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your **ways** my **ways**, declares the Lord" (Isaiah 55:8). God's ways are holy, upright, and perfect. But man, by nature, is selfish and limited in knowledge and good judgment. When we submit to God and become *born again*, he begins to change our nature and transform our minds. We learn about his goodness and character, and he begins to operate through us. We become students of the Lord learning to **walk in his ways**, thereby blazing a path for others to follow in. We become leaders of others when we follow the Master. As Paul said, "Follow me as I follow the Messiah."

As God takes away our selfish nature, he renews and regenerates us! The Bible says, "He restores my soul; he guides me in the paths of righteousness for the sake of his name" (Psalm 23:3).

In Judaism, the word *halakhah* is often used to define the effort to walk in God's ways. This word comes from the Hebrew word *halake*. The rabbis determined *halakhah* by interpreting Scriptures or laws thereby teaching their followers how to live out or walk out these laws.

We see a great example of implementing God's ways through a Hebrew idiom spoken by Yeshua when he decided to go to Bethany to raise Lazarus from the dead.

"Rabbi," the disciples say to him, "just now the Judean lead-

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Learning to walk in the ways or halakhah of Yeshua is sometimes challenging because they are steeped in Jewish customs and traditions. These ways are close to our Lord's heart, so we should learn how to enter into them and help others do the same.