

# Halacha and Observances

for

Sar Shalom Synagogue



**SAR SHALOM**  
SYNAGOGUE

Shining the Light of Torah in Messiah

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## Books for Further Reading

### Jewish History and Perspectives

- **Jesus the Pharisee: A New Look at the Jewishness of Jesus** by Harvey Falk
- **Meet the Rabbis** by Dr. Brad Young
- **This is My G-d** by Herman Wouk
- **Judaism: The Way of Sanctification** by Rabbi Samuel Dresner and Rabbi Byron Sherwin
- **Jesus the Jewish Theologian** by Dr. Brad Young
- **Constantine's Sword** by James Carroll
- **The Jewish Gospels** by Daniel Boyarin
- **Torah Rediscovered** by Ariel and D'vorah Berkowitz
- **Paul the Jewish Theologian** by Brad H. Young
- **Paul was not a Christian** by Pamela Eisenbaum

### Living As an Observant Jewish Believer in Yeshua

- **To Be a Jew** by Rabbi Hayim Donin
- **To Pray as a Jew** by Rabbi Hayim Donin
- **To Be a Jewish Woman** by Lisa Aiken
- **How to Keep Kosher** by Lise Stern
- **The Gift of Rest: Rediscovering the Beauty of the Sabbath** by Joe Leiberman
- **Gates of Shabbat** by Rabbi Mark Dov Shapiro
- **Going Kosher in 30 Days** by Zalman Goldstein

### Recommended Scriptures and Siddurim (Prayer Books)

- **The Stone Edition Tanach** by Artscroll
- **The Stone Edition Chumash** by Artscroll
- **Delitzsch Hebrew Gospels** by Vine of David
- **The Artscroll Complete Siddur (Ashkenazi)** by Artscroll
- **The Artscroll Ohel Sarah Women's Siddur** by Artscroll

### The Writings of the Apostles (Brit Chadasha)

- **The Tree of Life Bible: The New Covenant** by Messianic Jewish Family
- **Jewish New Testament** by David H. Stern

## Our Beliefs

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to include all the principles, precepts, and doctrines held and observed by Sar Shalom within a single resource such as this, and it is not our intent to do so. Rather, this document sets forth certain fundamental doctrines that are vital to our unity and purpose, and will continue to be expanded as appropriate.

### I. Scripture

We hold the Torah, in the original Hebrew form, to be the Word of G-d – absolutely unique, incontrovertible, and infallible – given directly by G-d to all mankind through the hand of Moshe. We hold the Hebrew Nevi'im (Prophets) and Ketuvim (Writings) and Besorot (Gospels) as equally Holy and infallible. The Torah, Nevi'im and Ketuvim together make the TaNaKh; coupled with the Besorot we have the eternal foundation and Holy Scriptures of the Jewish faith.

*I.A We hold subsequent Jewish writings (i.e. Talmud) and by the original Jewish disciples of Yeshua HaMoshiach (i.e. the apostolic writings and final book of prophecy) to be inspired and instructive on all matters of faith and practice. (Deut. 6:4-9; Prov. 3:1-6; Ps. 119:89, 105; Isa. 48:12-16;).*

*I.B We categorically reject any interpretation or application of the subsequent writings that would contradict or supersede the TaNaKh, the Besorot, and most especially the Torah in written form or living form (i.e. Yeshua HaMoshiach).*

### II. G-D

We believe that the Shema, “Hear O Israel, the L-rd our G-d, the L-rd is one” (Deut. 6:4), teaches that G-d is the One and Only G-d, the Creator of the Universe, and Eternal. He was, is and always will be. We affirm His Supremacy and Kingship and devote our very lives to His Divine Will.

### III. Man

**A.** Created in the image of G-d (Gen. 1:26-27), but:

**B.** Through disobedience, man fell from his first state and became separated from G-d (Gen. 2:17; 3:22-24). Therefore, according to the Scriptures, all men are born with a sinful nature (*a yetzer hara*). As a result of Adam's sin, men are cursed with death. (Ps. 14:1-3; 49:7; 53:13; Isa. 64:6; Rom. 3:9-12, 23; 5:12).

**C.** Man's only hope for redemption, atonement and restoration is through the final *Akeidah* made by the Messiah (Lev. 17:11; Isa. 53; Dan. 9:24-26; I Cor. 15:22; Heb. 9:11-14, 28; John 1:12, 3:36).

#### IV. Resurrection and Judgment

We believe in the resurrection of both the redeemed and the lost: the former to the Olam Haba and the latter to eternal fires of Gehinnom and separation from G-d (Job 14:14; 19:25-27; Dan. 12:2-3; John 3:36; 11:25-26; Rev. 20:5-6, 10-15; 21:7-8).

#### V. The Messiah – The Redeemer

We believe in a Divine Messiah, the “Image” Moshe spoke with in Numbers 12, the *Memra* (Divine Word) with whom our Forefathers and Prophets spoke. He is the finite expression of the infinite G-d, the “Angel of the Lord” in the Scriptures; the Holy Divine Torah made flesh.

The Scriptures promised two “comings” of the Messiah:

**A.** First coming: **Messiah ben Yosef** - Promised in Dan. 9:24-26. Its purpose was to make an atonement for sin (Dan. 9:24-26; Isa. 53; Rom. 3:21-31; Heb. 9-10; John 3:16-17).

**B.** Second coming: **Messiah ben David** - Promised coming in the air to receive the believers to Himself (I Thess. 4:13-18; John 14:1-6; I Cor. 15:51-57). Messiah’s return to the earth. The Redeemer shall come to Zion (Isa. 59:20-21; Zech. 14:4). Israel’s spiritual redemption (Zech. 12:8-13:1; Rom. 11:25-27; Heb. 9:28; Jer. 31:31-40; the New Covenant). Israel’s national restoration is to recover the remnant of His people Israel from the four corners of the earth, and restore the Davidic Kingdom (Isa. 11 – to re-establish the throne and kingdom of David, which will last forever) [Isa. 9:6-7 (cf. Luke 1:30-33); Jer. 23:3-8].

#### VII. A Light to the Nations

We recognize and affirm that the legal definition of a “Jew” is a Son of Abraham according to ancient Jewish authority. Thus, a non-Jew who converts to faith in the Messiah of Israel (and by inference, subject to His will; i.e. Torah) becomes a Son of Abraham and, therefore, legally a Jew. We affirm that it is the Will of HaShem that the entire world convert to the eternal covenant of Abraham. The nation of Israel is a nation of converts and our Father Abraham himself was a convert. We are called to make converts/disciples of the nations, collecting as many divine sparks as possible.

**A.** We reject any Christian / Paulinian theology that holds to a “Messianic Gentile” concept. The term “gentile” means and has always meant “pagan idolater”. One who follows Yeshua, and who has performed the halacha of conversion, is a Jew in every respect.

**B.** We reject any pseudo-Jewish theology of the Noahide which maintains that “gentiles” need only follow the seven Noahide laws. We maintain that it is and has always been the Will of HaShem that Israel should be a light to the nations drawing them into the covenant of Torah. As our Sages bring down that Abraham Avinu converted to Judaism and then went about making converts, we follow his model.

## Our Four Goals

### Making Disciples Of Torah

***“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. And remember! I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:19-20***

The goal of our Messiah is to make disciples of the nations. A disciple is one who not only believes that Yeshua is L-rd but who *makes* Yeshua Lord of their life. Our goal is therefore to train people to live a lifestyle of faith by becoming *Torah* observant. The Bible tells us that if we belong to the L-rd then we will prove it by obeying (implementing, observing, living-out) His commandments. (Ezekiel 11: 19-20, Matt. 7:21, Luke 6:46, John 10:27, 1 John 2:4) Sar Shalom’s goal is to encourage, train, and equip its members to become true talmidim (disciples) of Messiah.

### Strengthening Families In Torah

***“He will turn the hearts of fathers to the children, and the hearts of children to their fathers-“ Malachi 4:6 or 3:24 (depending on version of Bible)***

Our homes should be the most sacred sanctuary and our families the central focus of worship. Thus, our goal is to provide resources, training and ministry that will strengthen the family unit. We are focused on equipping men to be the priest of their homes, women to be an honored Proverbs 31 woman and children to be a joy and delight to their parents. If families are healthy then the synagogue is healthy. Sar Shalom is a ministry focused on strengthening families!

### Building Community Through Torah

***“All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had.” Acts 4:32***

“To be a Jew means first and foremost to belong to a group, the Jewish people, and the religious beliefs are secondary, and a sense, to this corporate allegiance.” Nicholas DeLange, *Judaism*, pg. 4. The concept of community is central to the theme of the Bible. Israel is first a family sharing Abraham as our Father and the Torah as the family ketubah<sup>1</sup>. Faith in the Messiah must be personal but our faith, itself, is not! We are called to be a *community* of faith. When you join Messiah you join a people; a family. We are called to be a robust community, sharing together, rejoicing together, mourning together, working together and succeeding together. Messiah prayed in John 17:11 that we should be *echad* (one) even as He and the Father are *echad*. In these end days, building and maintaining community will be all the more important (Hebrews 10:25).

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<sup>1</sup> A Ketubah (ketubah) is a marriage covenant signed by both bride and groom.

Belonging is a core need of the human heart. We recognize this reality and the divine call to unity. Sar Shalom's goal is to strive to build and maintain a true community of believers. Our synagogue members belong to an extended family. When we come together for worship we are not just a group of individuals gathered for a service, we are a family coming together as one...even as Yeshua and the Father are one!

### **Proclaiming Messiah The Torah**

*They will come and declare His righteousness to a people yet to be born—  
because He has done it! Psalm 22:31*

*“He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.’” Mark 16:15*

Chief among our goals is our call to proclaim Messiah Yeshua as healer, deliverer, savior, and king. Our goal is to proclaim Messiah to our city, our state, our nation and to the whole world. Everything that we do as a ministry must point to Yeshua. Sar Shalom is called to proclaim Messiah and His way of life to all peoples, young and old, male and female. Our desire is to be “A house of prayer for all nations” (Isaiah 56:7).

## A Note From The Rabbi

*“We remain Jews not because we are members of a philosophical society with superior principles.... We remain Jews because we are part of the community of Israel, which has agreed to live its life as a separate community, for all time, in obedience to G-d.”*

*To Be a Jew, pg. 31*

It is with great joy and enthusiasm that we present this important document: Sar Shalom Halacha and Observances! We live in an exciting time when the beauty, joy, freedom and life of Torah is being rediscovered by thousands of believers across the country. Daily men and women are awakening to a new and fresh understanding that there is a path of holiness for the redeemed. This awakening is the beginning of a fulfillment of Divine prophecy!

With the publication of this document, Sar Shalom finds itself on the cutting edge of this revival. There are virtually no existing works available that attempt to articulate, in clear terms, how to live out the mitzvot (commandments) from a believing Jewish perspective. I am prayerful that this manual will be a valuable aid and a wonderful resource for our families. I am equally prayerful that this publication will increase the spirit of unity in our shul, a condition which is vital for the dwelling presence of HaShem.

What is contained in this document is merely a codified expression of the halacha that we have followed since the founding of our shul. Furthermore, this halacha represents the official stance of our shul, the unified judgment of our Zakenim (Elders) and the spiritual understanding of the Rabbi.

To keep the Torah is to bring the Kingdom of Heaven into the realm of Earth. With faith we enter the Kingdom and in Torah we journey through its streets. This document is meant to be an aid, a guide and a blessing. I encourage the reader to begin the journey and enjoy the growth along the way. The duty of the Jews is to lift up all of life to HaShem, to hallow the everyday, so that all of life becomes holy, so that we become better people, so the society becomes improved. A living faith demonstrated by a faithful lifestyle. Therefore, the goal of halacha is to apply the Divine mitzvot (commandments) in every aspect of our daily lives. Know that there is only One who is good and perfect and that is HaShem, blessed be He. Let us strive, therefore, to imitate Him and to be holy even as He is holy (Leviticus 11:45).

***Rabbi Mordecai Aaron Griffin***

## Introduction

### 1.1 A Desire for Unity

*“A song of ascents. By David:*

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is  
for brothers to dwell together in unity!

It is like the precious oil upon the head,  
coming down upon the beard—Aaron’s beard—  
coming down on the collar of his robes.

It is like the dew of Hermon,  
coming down upon the mountains of Zion.  
For there *ADONAI* commanded the blessing  
—life forevermore!”

*Psalm 133 TLV*

The word “harmony” in this psalm is the Hebrew word יָחָד (yachad). It means united, together; mutual with one another. Perhaps the old English phrase would be, “to live in one accord”. For a community of believers, living in unity is a critically important factor. It would seem to even be mandatory. This psalm illustrates to us the Divine ascendancy that unity occupies in the spiritual realm. Unity is likened to the anointing oil which represents the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit). It is likened also to the “dew of Hermon<sup>2</sup>”, that is living water a picture of HaShem who is the *mikvah* of Israel (Jeremiah 14:8 & 17:13<sup>3</sup>). Additionally, unity is likened to the blessing that brings everlasting life. Yeshua called Himself the resurrection and the life. He is that blessing. Thus, unity encompasses the very nature of HaShem. Is it any wonder that we are called to live in unity? To do so is to live in the essence of the Divine nature. Perhaps this is why the passage says that it is *there* (within unity) that HaShem, blessed be He, has *commanded* the blessing!

It is for the purpose and desire for continued unity that this document has been created. At Sar Shalom we wish to facilitate a dynamic, joyful, sincere and spiritually healthy environment. We recognize the great wisdom in our Master’s statement that a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. The more that we can live in togetherness, the more we will experience His presence. It is the prayer of the Beit Din that this publication will be a blessing and a joy to our family. May it help us all to walk in unity, peace and security as we strive to be true disciples of Yeshua; with a faith that is a lifestyle.

<sup>2</sup> The “Dew of Hermon” would eventually become the water of the Jordan. The ultimate symbol of baptism / ritual purity.

<sup>3</sup> In each of these verses the English word “hope” is *mikvah* in Hebrew. A *mikvah* is a baptism pool of living water for immersion.

## 1.2 The Beit Din

A Beit Din is a Hebrew term applied to a Jewish religious or civil court of law. Beit Din, literally translates as “house of judgment,” a court that originated during the period of the Second Temple. This premise of the Beit Din has a biblical origin, and is recorded in Exodus. The text says that Moses sat as a magistrate among the people (Exodus 18:13), and he later delegated his judicial powers to appointed “chiefs of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens” (Ex. 18:21; Deuteronomy 1:15), reserving himself for jurisdiction in only the most difficult, major disputes (Ex. 18:22 and 26; Deut. 1:17). Judges were to be “able men, such as [those who] fear G-d, men of truth, hating unjust gain” (Ex. 18:21) and “wise men, understanding and full of knowledge” (Deut. 1:13). They were charged to “hear the causes between your brethren and judge righteously between a man and his brother and the stranger,” not be “partial in judgment,” but to “hear the small and the great alike; fear no man, for judgment is G-d's” (Deut. 1:16–17). According to Torah, the judges had significant authority; even speaking under the authority of HaShem. Commenting on Deuteronomy 17:1-10, Frank Crusemann in his book *The Torah*, says the following:

*“The conclusion we must draw from this is absolutely clear: the decisions of the court have the same significance in the same rank as the things that Moses himself said – which means Deuteronomy itself. The Jerusalem High Court rendered decisions with the authority of Moses and it had his jurisdiction. It spoke in the name of Moses and extrapolated forward the will of YHWH. The development and structure of deuteronomic law cannot be separated from institution of the Jerusalem Center court... According to Deuteronomy 17:8. This court speaks with the same authority as Deuteronomy itself – the authority of Moses.”*

These Torah commandments have given rise to the Jewish idea of the “oral Torah”. This is precisely why the Rabbis seem to have no problem in saying, for instance, “HaShem commands us to light the Sabbath lights” when in fact there is no such commandment in the written Torah. This “commandment” comes not from the written Torah but rather from the judges whom the written Torah appointed to decide such matters. They rule, as it were, on behalf of Moses and thus, in their interpretation of the law, on behalf of the Father Himself. The Messiah seems to agree with this level of authority when he admonishes us and the disciples in Matthew 23:1-3.

*“Then Yeshua addressed the crowds and his talmidim: “The Torah-teachers and the P’rushim,” he said, “sit in the seat of Moshe. So whatever they tell you, take care to do it...”*

The Master seemed to have no qualms regarding the authority of the Rabbis. In fact, how could He? They were simply fulfilling the expressed will of the Divine. What Messiah was concerned about was the fact that they were living as hypocrites; making rulings that they themselves, were not following. In contrast to these men, we are to follow the mitzvot in Spirit and in Truth!

“But don’t do what they do, because they talk but don’t act! They tie heavy loads onto people’s shoulders but won’t lift a finger to help carry them. Everything they do is done to be seen by others; for they make their t’fillin broad and their tzitzit long, they love the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, and they love being greeted deferentially in the marketplaces and being called ‘Rabbi.’”

When the children of Israel settled in their land, the allocation of jurisdiction on a purely numerical basis (“thousands, hundreds, fifties, tens”) was replaced by allocation on a local basis, and judges were appointed in every town within the various tribes (Deuteronomy 16:18; Sanhedrin 16b<sup>4</sup>). Historically, the Beit Din heard cases on virtually every question of Torah be it civil, moral or ceremonial.

Sar Shalom has an established and formal Beit Din comprised of the Rabbi and the three Zakenim (Elders): Rayford Hopson, Yosef Alva, and Yochanan Turbeville<sup>5</sup>. Together, these men review matters of doctrine, halacha and other cases. In addition, the Beit Din is responsible for bringing correction and restoration to members of the congregation. Their responsibility also includes counseling and shepherding the flock. These men make up what is commonly called a “board of elders” in church circles.

With respect to matters of halacha, the members of this Beit Din are responsible for deliberating over each topic of Torah observance and rendering a judgment for the way in which our community at Sar Shalom will keep the mitzvah (commandment) in question. The reader should take comfort in knowing several important points about our Beit Din. First, each decision is bathed in prayer. Second, each man is well educated in matters of Torah, Oral Torah, congregational life issues and Judaism. Every decision has thus received a thorough review with every argument being given its due consideration. Third, the Beit Din functions on the premise of consensus meaning that we must all agree before a decision is published. We depend upon the Ruach of HaShem to give us peace on a matter of halacha before we guide our flock down that path. Finally, our Beit Din does not confine their views to their own interpretation. When necessary and proper the Beit Din will inquire of other Leaders, those who have been vetted and are in a position of corporate accountability. As a result, our halacha positions us to be in unity even with the greater Jewish community.

### 1.3 The Internet

The internet is perhaps one of the great paradoxes of our modern age. It is both a great asset of education and, at the same time, a great detriment to education. As a result, the internet is the *last* source of information for our Beit Din. The web sites that are used are *only* those that are created by people who are both trusted and accountable to the greater Jewish or believing Jewish communities.

A tremendous amount of content on the internet masquerades as theological “truth”. In reality, it is dime store scholarship at best and malicious deceit at worst. Perhaps this is never truer than in regards to topics of Judaism. Myth, misinformation and conspiracy theories abound on the internet with respect to Judaism and its practices. Many websites consider everything that the “Jews do” as derived from pagan practice, whether directly or indirectly. The “evidence” submitted for these claims are purely speculative and completely rooted in a spirit of anti-Semitism. It is typically said that *such-and-such* Jewish practice vaguely resembles an alleged pagan practice and therefore the “Jews” borrowed it from paganism; but one will never read of pagan practices being adopted from Judaism. To this end one can find web page after web page from questionable authors who have no affiliation or accountability; nor do they have a real education in matters of Judaism. In general, their writings are a combination of folly, fiction and anti-Semitism.

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<sup>4</sup> “Sanhedrin” is a tractate of the Talmud.

<sup>5</sup> The Beit Din court may expand as future men are ordained as Zakenim.

Be on your guard against the leaven of the internet and remember: anyone can create a web page. What is more important than the information being presented is the person or persons doing the presenting, and what fundamental agenda (theology) they are propagating. The internet is both a wonderful tool and a harmful stumbling block for knowledge. Use it with caution.

## 1.4 Halacha: A Way of Life

*“According to one of the Rabbis of the Talmud, the most important verse in the Bible is that from the book of Proverbs, “Know him and all thy ways.” The word to emphasize in this verse is all. “Know him in all **my** ways.” This means that we can be religious, we can serve G-d not only in the synagogue or on the Sabbath, but while doing every action, while being in any place. It all depends upon what we do and how we do it. We may serve G-d by the manner in which we speak to our friend, relate to our parents, participate in sports or treat our younger brother. In each case we serve G-d by hallowing the deed we perform, by making it a holy deed.”*

*Judaism: The Way of Sanctification  
Rabbi Samuel H. Dresner and Rabbi Byron L. Sherwin, pg. 87*

Faith, from a Hebraic understanding, is not defined as creed or belief. That is only half of the equation and, to that point, the less important half. In the Hebrew or biblical mind, faith is only *true* faith when accompanied by action (outward expression). To the ancient Sages, faith was a point of beginning rather than a destination. The goal of the gospel was not to bring one to a point of faith but rather to a position of obedience. The word for faith, in Hebrew is אֱמוּנָה (*emunah*). It means both faith and faithfulness. To a Jew, faith is naturally and necessarily a lifestyle. To the Hebrew, deed is equally as important as creed; perhaps more important only because deed proves the truth of one’s creed. As the Apostle Ya’akov said, “Faith (creed) without works (deed) is dead.”

In Jewish thought The Torah<sup>6</sup> was never considered a document of mere theology. The Torah is a constitution; a manner in which one should live their life. The Torah serves not as a means to salvation<sup>7</sup> but rather a manual of holy living for the redeemed. How a community decides to walk out the Torah in daily life is called halacha. The word halacha itself means “the way on which one goes” and it is the overall term for Jewish law. Thus, halacha is practical and not theoretical. It is concerned with the proper application of the commandments (mitzvot) to every situation and circumstance.

Halacha was historically transmitted in oral fashion. After the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD and the subsequent exile of the Jewish people from Israel, the Rabbis retreated to Yavneh and began to pen Jewish halacha in an initial work called the Mishnah. Later Rabbis completed this teaching<sup>8</sup> developing what is called The Talmud<sup>9</sup>. The Talmud is a volume work of Rabbinic writings with the expressed purpose of developing a

<sup>6</sup> The Torah is the first five books of the Bible. It is the very foundation of the Word. Nothing can change, alter or abolish the foundation.

<sup>7</sup> “Salvation” in Judaism is equivalent to covenant. Jews do not “work for their salvation” because that presupposes that they view themselves outside of the Divine covenant which is not the case. Jews follow Torah precisely because they are members of the covenant.

<sup>8</sup> The word Talmud is from the root טַלַּם (lamed) meaning to learn or to teach.

<sup>9</sup> The Talmud is comprised of the Mishnah (1<sup>st</sup> century writings) and the Gemara (6<sup>th</sup> century writings).

proper halacha for Israel. It is important to note that there is both great consensus with Jewish halacha as well as great diversity. Generally, these diversities exist with respect to minor points of halacha. For instance, Jews agree that one should pray the *shacharit*, *mincha* and *ma'ariv* prayers each day. There is, however, some disagreement as to the precise times that those prayers should be offered. As a result, each community is advised to follow the halachic standards of their Beit Din. Due to the diversity within Judaism, the Jewish people tend not to be dogmatic about their particular halacha. Each congregation has the responsibility to determine its own halacha for the community. Each community is striving to live out the Torah in a practical way. In many ways our halacha will be the same as other synagogues and in some ways it may differ. We are all on the same path although our steps and strides may be slightly different.

There is a great misunderstanding that halacha represents new commandments. Many non-Jews have misunderstood Rabbinic law to mean that the Sages desire was to “add to” the Law; perhaps even to usurp the Torah, heaven forbid. There is often propagated a type of conspiracy theory that the whole of the Oral Torah<sup>10</sup> is both to replace the written Torah and to thwart faith in Yeshua as the Messiah. Both of these assertions are patently false. The purpose of halacha is to *interpret* Divine law not to usurp it. The Rabbis, far more than believers in Messiah, have been consumed with an attitude of fidelity to Torah. It is the very hallmark of their religion. To assert that the Rabbis purposely set out to undermine the written Torah is to misunderstand Rabbinic thought. Jews are extraordinarily particular about the observance of Torah. This is often interpreted as “legalism” by modern Christians. Yet the fruit of this very focused attitude is the preservation of the Torah itself. If it were not for the incredible endurance of the Jewish people *not* to assimilate, you kind reader, would not be enjoying the truth of Torah today.

Furthermore, Christians have historically been taught that halacha represented a type of “working for one’s salvation”. This concept of “works” is also untrue. As Marvin R. Wilson wrote in his book *Our Father Abraham*, “There is a common belief in today’s church that Judaism – whether in Paul’s day or our own – teaches salvation by works of the Law, whereas Christianity is a religion of grace. Such understanding of Judaism is in reality far more a caricature or misrepresentation of the truth. Indeed, as one Christian scholar explains, ‘to the extent that we propagate this view in our preaching and in our teaching, we are your guilty of bearing false witness’....Pinchas Lapide, a Jewish scholar of New Testament studies, concurs: ‘the rabbinate has never considered the Torah as a way of salvation to G-d... [We Jews] regard salvation as G-d’s exclusive prerogative, so we Jews are the advocates of “pure grace”.’” (Pages 20 – 21).

Halacha decisions are, in effect, court decisions. These courts were established in the desert by Moses shortly after the Exodus. (Exodus 18:17-26). These rulings were intended as expressions of living out the Torah. In many cases halacha was developed in areas where the Torah fails to provide specific details, clarity or where multiple interpretations exist. This can be likened to the way in which the Judicial and legislative branch of government works in the United States. The Constitution, like the Torah, is the foundational document. It cannot be changed, removed or amended<sup>11</sup>. The legislature, however, has the power to make laws that are in alignment with the constitution. The judicial branch, when appropriate, makes rulings on congressional legislation to determine its constitutionality. When affirmed by the Supreme court, these laws stand as *laws* not necessarily constitutional

<sup>10</sup> The Talmud is the “Oral Torah” in Judaism. It is viewed as inspired and subordinate to the written Torah. We value Talmudic writings but we do not believe that they are Divinely inspired.

<sup>11</sup> The US Constitution can be amended provided that 3/4ths of the States ratify the proposed amendment. A task that is not easily accomplished.

amendments (or additions). They are, for the purposes of the analogy, national halacha. So it is with the Talmud and Jewish law.

The common view that Jewish laws represents “working for one’s salvation” is, again, incorrect. This view carries the premise that Jews see themselves as *not saved*. Nothing could be further from the truth. The average Jew sees himself as a member of the covenant and *thus saved*<sup>12</sup>. As a result, Torah keeping is simply a natural result of being a member of the covenant. Hence our common creed: “We keep Torah not in order to be saved *but because we are saved!*”

Finally, a note should be said about *sola scriptoria*. There are many who come from Protestant Christian backgrounds that make a claim for *sola scriptoria*, which means scripture only. The idea sounds formidable and easily supportable. After all, who wouldn’t champion “Scripture only”? This idea presumes that we do not need traditions, customs or halacha (especially if all of these customs and traditions are Jewish!). A *sola scriptora* advocate will suggest that one need only follow the written word. Is this idea really practical?

There is a wide difference between what is theoretical and what is practical. History has proved that *sola scriptora* does not work in practical terms. One need only look to the champions of this doctrine, the Protestant church. Each denomination has its own halacha for baptism, communion, prayer, worship, and festivals. Looking at *sola scriptora* Torah groups we find similar halacha differences. They typically do not use “Jewish” customs but they tend to invent their own.

An example of this is one man who didn’t want to use a mezuzah because he was poised to be against, in general, Jewish custom. He was a “scripture only” Messianic. This man had a picture frame of the 10 commandments hanging near his door. When asked about the significance of its location, he proceeded to explain that the Torah commands that one write the word on one’s doorpost. He went on to explain that the Jews place a box on the door frame that *contains* a portion of the Torah. To him this was only a tradition rather than a legitimate fulfillment of the mitzvah from Deuteronomy 6:9. Naturally, the house guest asked, “Then why didn’t you write the whole Torah on your door frame? Wouldn’t that have been following a true ‘Scripture only’ path?” The man proceeded to stumble through his excuse for not doing so unraveling his own *sola scriptora* belief along the way. This man had developed his own halacha, but *why*? Because trying to follow a *sola scriptora* path is quite impossible.

In trying to live the Torah we are often left with little or no details. We are told to guard the Sabbath but what does that look like? We are told to bind the word to our foreheads but how? We are commanded to live in booths for sukkot but how should they be constructed? We are commanded to gather for Sabbath assembly but is that just a mob of people standing around? What does that meeting entail? Moses was commanded to slaughter the animals “Just like I showed you” but no where do we find such instructions in the Torah! Moreover, the Torah says that a man should not lie with another man but it does not say as much for a woman. Are we to assume, based on the premise of *sola scriptora*, that lesbianism is permissible? Of course not! Show me a believer in *sola scriptora* and I will show you a person who has developed his own tradition and customs. Would there be anything necessarily wrong in doing so? No. It should just be understood that in so doing one testifies to the very real need of halacha.

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<sup>12</sup> Ultimately the term “saved” means admitted into the covenant. To be outside the covenant is to be outside of the promise and lost.

The truth is that *everyone* has tradition and halacha. Our goal is to prayerfully ensure that the halacha we ordain for Sar Shalom is squarely founded on Torah and faithfully centered on Messiah Yeshua. May HaShem, blessed be He, help us to do so.

## 1.5 Who needs Halacha?

Actually, we all do for various reasons. The most obvious reason is that halacha provides the “how” for the command to “do”. A unified halacha helps us to make belief tangible. It helps us answer the question, “How do I live this from day to day.” Most importantly, halacha helps us to transform our faith into a lifestyle. In so doing, our walk with HaShem becomes more “who we are” than “what we believe.”

*“When the Torah, which is the blueprint for human life that was meant for all mankind and given to Israel and their behalf, becomes a reality, then we shall have the “Kingdom of Heaven”... Every kingdom implies a minimum of three things: a king to rule, laws to govern and a people who acknowledge the king and obey the laws. The Kingdom of Heaven can likewise be understood in terms of (1) His reign, (2) His laws,(3) His people.”*

*Judaism: the Way of Sanctification,  
Rabbi Dresner & Rabbi Sherwin, pgs. 343-344*

Spirit led halacha binds and builds. It brings life and points us to the source of life. One might feel that the lighting of candles, the wine, the challah bread, the hand washing and the blessings that we say on Friday night are just “too much tradition.” However, the fruit of such halacha, as verified by numerous families, is joy, a stronger family bond, stronger marriages and a deeper faith. One might think that the hand washing in the morning is far too Rabbinic yet it is a poignant reminder to live the day as a priest whose goal is to sanctify the Name of the Creator. These customs have a very real and measurable result in our lives. The result is a heightened focus on who we are, to whom we belong and what we are called to do.

Halacha is our understanding of what we are holding ourselves and each other responsible to do in honoring G-d through Torah obedience. We simply cannot hold each other responsible without such a standard. So it is that we in our congregation need halakhic guidelines to function as a kehillah kodesh - a holy community.

Secondly, we all need Halacha because it provides wonderful freedom. Halacha gives us guidance and clarity as to what do to in every area of life. That guidance and clarity provides comfort and security. Halacha answers the question, “What does it mean for me to glorify HaShem in this situation?” In fact, this is arguably the key question in Jewish spiritual life. Halacha builds upon the distilled wisdom of countless generations of our people who took seriously their obligations to G-d and Torah. Halacha helps us to identify the shape of obedience, so that we might retrace with the stylus of our own lives patterns of holiness worn deep by generations of our forebears. And when we do so as our gift of love to Hashem, it brings joy, not only to us, but also to Him.

Finally, we all need Halacha because it not only binds us to a standard of holiness but also frees us from needless guilt and worry. It is joyful to walk a path with a friend. Having a community halacha binds us together and frees us from the fear of “doing something wrong”. It keeps us all on the same page. When we interpret and apply Halacha with wisdom and love, it brings freedom rather than bondage. When we treat Halacha as a guideline for

communal obedience and relationship, we experience the character it shares with Torah, “the perfect Law that gives liberty” (James 1:25).

## 1.6 Our Approach to Halacha

In Jewish tradition as a whole, Scripture is of paramount importance and authority in the development of Halacha (the concrete application of Jewish law to daily life). In principle, issues become halacha because they are connected to some area of life in which Scripture reveals certain authoritative norms. In addressing those issues, Scripture is not the only resource consulted. However, it is always the source of greatest sanctity. Thus, when Rabbinic literature distinguishes between laws that are d'oraita (ordained by Scripture) and those that are d'rabbanan (established by Rabbinic authority), precedence is always given to those that are d'oraita.

Within Tanakh, Jewish tradition has always regarded the Torah (the Pentateuch) as possessing unique authority in the development of Halacha. While the Prophets and the Writings amplify and clarify the intent of the Torah, the Torah is always foundational in matters of Halacha.

Yeshua himself did not act primarily as a Posek (Jewish legal authority) issuing halakhic rulings, but rather as a prophetic teacher who illumined the purpose of the Torah and the inner orientation we should have in fulfilling it. Nevertheless, his teaching about the Torah has a direct bearing on how we address particular halakhic questions. As followers of Messiah Yeshua, we look to him as the greatest Rabbi of all, and his example and his instruction are definitive for us in matters of Halacha as in every other sphere.

In principle, Scripture always has highest authority in the halakhic process. However, in practice other sources also play an important role. While all halacha is rooted in Scripture, the text usually provides limited information on how the mitzvot are to be lived out and how they are to be adapted to new circumstances. In order to add concrete substance to halakhic decision making, we must have recourse to the way the mitzvot have been understood and observed by Jews throughout history and in the present.

We at Sar Shalom do not automatically assume that the Rabbis were incorrect in their interpretation of Torah. In fact, we tend to take the stance that their view is “correct until proven incorrect” as patterned after our own country’s judicial system of innocent until proven guilty. In the experience of the Beit Din, the Rabbis are proved right far more often than not. In addition, we recognize the enduring legacy of a people who have been blessed in every area of life despite the greatest of odds and forces opposed to them. We, as the Beit Din, recognize this obvious reality as a Divine endorsement of their approach to Torah. We therefore, do not wish to repair that which works just fine.

It is perhaps little wonder then that Messiah Yeshua taught obedience to the decisions of the Pharisaic Torah-teachers in Matthew 23:3. This verse echoes Deuteronomy 17:10, the key text in Rabbinic tradition undergirding the authority of Israel's sages. Thus, while we may critique traditional rulings, and argue for alternative positions, we are often reluctant to depart from halakhic rulings accepted by Jews throughout the centuries and held today by most of the branches of Judaism and most committed Jews. This is especially true when certain halachic decisions have won near universal acceptance in greater Judaism.

Therefore, like Modern Orthodox, we recognize that the new circumstances of the modern world require adaptation in traditional practices. Our halakhic decision making incorporates thoughtful reflection on these new circumstances, and the changes they may require. In this process, we pay special attention to the halakhic analysis and rulings of these branches of Judaism as compared to the teachings of Yeshua. Where there is no obvious scriptural conflict, we learn from these rulings.

May the Ruach of Adonai continue to give us guidance as we seek to carry on his work of raising up the fallen booth of David within the people of Israel.

## 1.7 An Observant Jewish Synagogue in Yeshua

It is important to reiterate that Sar Shalom is an observant Jewish synagogue firmly centered in and upon Yeshua as the Messiah. We place strong emphasis on being authentically “Jewish” and authentic disciples of Yeshua the Messiah. We are not a church, we are not a “Hebrew roots congregation,” we are not a Christian community that studies “Hebraic roots,” and we are not a new and distinct entity divorced from modern Judaism. We are not a “Two House” congregation, nor are we “Christians” in the classical sense, in that we do not believe “the Church” replaced “the Jews” as G-d’s chosen people. We do not view Judaism as intrinsically corrupt, nor do we view Rabbinic Judaism with an attitude of derision. To the contrary, we are very much an observant Jewish synagogue. In fact, whereas modern Judaism might be in need of theological adjustments, we view the modern Christian church as entirely foreign to the way of the Apostles in the first century. Our heart’s desire is to restore the book of Acts *ekklesia* which was thoroughly Jewish in its theology, lifestyle and expression of worship – and remained so even among early “gentile” believers.

Sar Shalom is a Jewish synagogue that proclaims Yeshua as the living Messiah and the Hope of Israel. We believe that Yeshua is the manifestation of HaShem in the flesh; He is the Living Torah and our Chief Rabbi. His words are the words of G-d and His teachings completely concur with the Tanakh<sup>13</sup>. Furthermore, we affirm that the words of Yeshua are also considered Torah.

**Why are we not a “Messianic” synagogue?** Messianic Judaism sees itself as a branch or segment of the church. In reality, Messianic Jewish congregations are simply churches with more of a Jewish décor than a gentile one. Most, if not all, Messianic Jewish churches have little or no emphasis on Jewish observance. For instance, it is not uncommon to visit a Messianic congregation on Sabbath and then be invited out to eat at a non-kosher restaurant after the service (violating two precepts of the Torah). Sar Shalom does not view itself as a branch or segment of the church. Additionally, we emphasize, promote and encourage an observant Jewish life.

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<sup>13</sup> The Tanakh is the entire Hebrew scriptures commonly, but not accurately, referred to as the Old Testament.

## 1.8 Our Jewishness

Sar Shalom is very proudly a Jewish synagogue. Though at times we disagree with traditional Jewish halacha and theological positions we are, for the most part, in affinity with greater Judaism. We *strongly* desire to remain in the mainstream of greater Judaism. We do not view Judaism as a religion that Messiah came to abolish. Neither do we view Jewish customs and traditions with contempt and misgivings. Quite to the contrary, we embrace the vast majority of Jewish traditions as biblical, beautiful and life giving.

One must remember that Yeshua was Jewish as were all of His disciples. The early believing synagogues were comprised entirely of Jews at least for the first ten to fifteen years. It is a part of our vision to restore the people of G-d to the original pattern of worship which was, at its core, Jewish. As a result, Sar Shalom encourages an observant Jewish lifestyle firmly centered on Messiah for all of its members. Our halachic approach draws greatly from the Modern Orthodox Jewish practice. We have ruled differently in cases where those practices seem to differ with the revelation of Yeshua. Frankly, however, those occurrences are few and far between. To put it succinctly, we are Jewish in our life and practice; a reality that we neither shy away from nor for which we offer apology.

## 1.9 Regarding Tradition

We embrace Jewish tradition at Sar Shalom. The fact of the matter is that *everyone* has tradition in their life. It is quite unavoidable. Some may wonder if we are simply trading church traditions (such as Christmas and Easter) for Jewish traditions. The answer is “no” though we do not believe there is a moral equivalency. We do not oppose church “traditions” simply because they are traditions, but we do reject cultural and religious traditions that are clearly pagan in origin and/or not well supported in Scripture.

Yeshua did not come to abolish tradition. In fact, He never, ever, nullifies a Jewish tradition in the gospel accounts. Quite to the contrary, He fully endorses Jewish tradition even elevating certain customs to positions central to our faith. These include the cup of communion and mikvah (baptism) both of which are rabbinic traditions based on Scripture. Clearly Yeshua did not oppose Judaism, rather He opposed (a) hypocrisy by the established religious leaders, and (b) the elevation halacha over the written Torah.

We oppose many modern “church traditions” because they are rooted in paganism and anti-Semitism. Jewish tradition is not rooted (derived or birthed) from pagan roots. Let the reader make no mistake on this crucial point. Sar Shalom does not believe, in any way, that traditional Jewish practice is rooted in paganism. That is an extremely anti-Semitic view point which will not be allowed to prosper in our shul! This slander, as stated by many in the so called “Hebrew roots movement” amounts to little more than a reformulation of the blood libel disseminated during the middle ages<sup>14</sup> and continued today under the guise of replacement theology.

Jewish traditions exist as a means to the end of keeping Torah and each of them are solidly based on scriptural principle. The Apostles carried forward the practice of teaching Jewish tradition, even to the new “gentile” converts to a life of Judaism in Yeshua. Paul, the Pharisee, states in 1 Corinthians 11:2, “I praise you for

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<sup>14</sup> The “blood libel” propaganda taught that Jews kidnapped Christian children during Passover and used their blood to make matzah. This slander was intended to paint the Jews as malicious shadowy people. The teaching that all Jewish practice is “pagan” has the same intention and effect.

remembering me in everything and for holding to the teachings, just as I passed them on to you.” The word “teachings” is the word *paradosis* in Greek and it is the very same word used to speak of the rabbinic traditions / halacha. He “passed them on” to the Corinthians, precisely the view of greater Judaism. This view is that the *traditions* of the elders have been passed on to us and we should pass them on to our children.

Tradition has value. To quote Tevye from the opening song in the movie *Fiddler on the Roof*, “Because of our traditions, we've kept our balance for many, many years.... and because of our traditions every one of us knows who he is and what G-d expects him to do.” At Sar Shalom we are rooted in Torah, guided by tradition and faithfully centered on Yeshua as Messiah.

### 1.10 The Shield of David

It is not uncommon to hear some espouse that the “Star of David” is a symbol of the occult. Typically, this “research” is sourced from one of the aforementioned web site of obscurity. Do not be alarmed, the Shield of David (This is the proper term rather than ‘Star of David’) is not a device of the occult. Though one may the symbol of two interlocking triangles used in paganism, this is *not* the point of origin. Shields of David, beautifully carved in pillars and crossbeams adorned the entrances to the village of Capernaum in Galilee Israel which was the headquarters of Yeshua’s ministry. One may capture pictures of these magnificent emblems among the ruins of Capernaum today. If the seal was of pagan origin (which we know that it is not) then why didn’t the Messiah say so? He drove out the money changers from the Temple, surely, as the quintessential Torah observant man, He would have dashed to pieces any pillar or gate that held such a device located at His ministry headquarters! In truth, our emblem represents our identity within Israel and our vision, to restore us to the original model of faith. The way of Yeshua and His disciples. The Shield itself has been understood to speak of Messiah since antiquity.

### 1.11 Our Halacha

This document uses two terms when describing our halacha. **The first is basic practice.** This refers to halacha observance the Beit Din of Sar Shalom commend to the members of the kehillah (congregation). These practices are strongly encouraged.

**The second term is expanded practice.** This refers to a more advanced or serious level of observance and fuller expression of the traditional norms of Jewish life. The Rabbi and Zakenim are acutely aware that the majority of our members (both from Jewish lineage and from non-Jewish lineage) are generally unfamiliar with Jewish life. It is with this consideration in mind and a sincere desire to lift any perceived burden of Torah observance from the people, that the Beit Din has made a distinction between *basic* and *expanded* practices. We do, however, encourage members to strive to live a Jewish life on the expanded practice level.

The most important aspect of Torah observance is ***to begin***. It is easy to feel a little confused or even overwhelmed at first, but rest assured HaShem is blessed that you have made a choice to submit your will to His will. We encourage you to step onto the path of Torah even today and enjoy the refreshing walk. Growing, learning and refining your observance is part of the joy of the journey!

## Foundations

### The Hebrew Calendar

In recent years there have arisen certain pseudo-Messianic groups and individuals who have taken upon themselves to “correct” the current Hebrew calendar. In most cases the attempts are well intentioned but the fruit of these efforts are often confusion, angst and disunity. In fact, few controversies have been more divisive than those surrounding the calendar. This, in our view, is evidence that the “spirit” of these calendar debates is not the spirit of HaShem. The arguments surrounding these corrections are vast and complex. As one might expect, different groups have different views regarding the method of correction to the extent that they, themselves, celebrate the festival times on different days. Their joint consensus is that the traditional Hebrew calendar is definitely wrong yet they cannot agree upon the alleged correction. Disunity, confusion and division abound.

It is beyond the scope of this publication to detail the varied arguments of these groups and a point by point discussion would not be profitable. Suffice to say that the Beit Din of Sar Shalom has thoroughly reviewed the evidence presented by these groups, studying copious amounts of literature from all sides, and has ruled to reject any changes to the current calendar. The Hebrew calendar was given to us by the last official Sanhedrin. There is no authority to change it until we have a new Sanhedrin, a new Temple and a new High Priest. It is our belief that this High Priest will be Yeshua, may He come soon!

*“But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels.”*

*2 Timothy 2:23*

*Note: The Word of HaShem tells us to judge the fruit of any doctrine or individual. This is a key test in addition to scriptural scrutiny. These calendar disputes are notorious for producing rotten fruit by dividing congregations, bringing fear into the hearts of believers, causing disunity and have generally weakening the Divine mission. It is a needless distraction from which nothing good has come. Moreover, the feast days bind us together in community more than any aspect of Torah. Thus, to have members celebrate the festivals apart from the rest of the congregation because they are following a “different calendar” is neither G-dly nor healthy. It undermines the mission, confuses the family, opens the door for division, and distracts from the focus of the shul. It is therefore imperative that we, as a shul, prevent these arguments over the calendar from existing in our synagogue. We will be a healthier, more joyful and more unified body as a result.*

#### 2.1 The Hebrew Calendar

Sar Shalom follows the current Hebrew calendar, in accordance with mainstream Judaism and celebrates the festival days according to the Hebrew calendar, along with greater Judaism. An exhaustive explanation of “counting days” is provided at the end of section 5.x (The Appointed Times.)

## The Divine Name

Within the Messianic community exists a pseudo-Messianic sub-group referred to as the Sacred Name movement or, more colloquially, “Sacred Namers.” The general theological view of this group is that the Divine Name must be pronounced and any attempt at a circumlocution (substitute) is a sin and a defilement of the Name. These groups espouse that the Divine Name has been “restored” and thus one must use it or risk their prayers not being heard at best, or eternal separation at worst. To date our Rabbi has documented one dozen (12) pronunciation variations of the so-called “restored” Divine Name from these various groups and individuals, each with allegedly “well documented proof” of being the *true* and *correct* pronunciation of the Divine Name. In reality, no one knows how to pronounce the Divine Name despite the best educated guesses. The lack of consensus among these groups only serves to prove this point. In the end these “restored names” are merely interesting speculations.

Likewise, the Divine Name doctrine also teaches that the Messiah’s name *must* include the Divine name based upon the passage in John 5:43<sup>15</sup> where Yeshua says, “I have come in my Father’s name...” As a result, these groups often invent a Hebrew name for the Messiah such as Yahshua (rather than the correct ‘Yeshua’) or other variations. There are absolutely no credentialed scholars or Semitic language experts from any background (Jewish, Christian, or Secular) who agree with this view. It is unanimous among these scholars that the name of the Messiah was / and is Yeshua.

### 2.2 Use of the Divine Name

The halacha of Sar Shalom is to use *HaShem* or *Adonai*<sup>16</sup> as a circumlocution for the Divine Name. *Adonai* is traditionally used when praying or reading scripture publically. We do not forbid individuals from attempting to pronounce the Divine Name. Neither do we encourage them to do so in any way.

We view the Divine Name as inherently and exceptionally holy. As a result we tend not to write it (or type it) on publications that are temporary in nature, such as bulletins, lest it be cast into the trash and defiled. Typically we will use a double *yod* as a substitute per Jewish custom as exemplified below.

ברוך אתה יי אלוהינו

[Eloheinu] [Adonai] [attah] [Baruch]

In addition, we deem it proper to use, when necessary, the term G-d and L-rd<sup>17</sup>. We reject the notion, as has been propagated by some in the Sacred Name movement, that these terms are inherently pagan.

There is a key verse in Revelation 19:12 that says “...*He (the Messiah) has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself.*” This is speaking of the Divine Name. Its precise pronunciation will be restored to us when the Messiah returns and not sooner. It will be part of the great restoration at the end of days.

<sup>15</sup> This verse is obviously speaking about the authority that Yeshua has come in. It is not a literal statement intended to mean that His name and the Father’s name are spelled the same or similar.

<sup>16</sup> HaShem means “the Name” and Adonai means “My L-rd”. Both are terms of respect and endearment.

<sup>17</sup> In Judaism it is traditional to insert a dash between G-d and L-rd as a sign of respect least one more the Name.

## 2.3 The Name of the Messiah

The halacha of Sar Shalom is to use the Hebrew name of the Messiah exclusively, which is Yeshua<sup>18</sup> ישוע (sometimes spelled Y'shua).

### Who is a Jew

According to Orthodox Jewish law, a Jew is defined as one who has a Jewish mother or who is a convert to Judaism, although the Torah is clearly a paternal lineage (Jacob the son of Isaac, etc.). Judaism adopted the custom of determining Jewish status based upon the mother in response to the many trials, pogroms and other Christian persecutions that plagued Israel. Before modern DNA science, it was difficult to determine the paternal heritage especially in the case of rape. However, it has always been clear who one's mother is. According to Rabbinic law, the question of Jewish identity has been addressed in one of two ways. Either the individual is born of a Jewish mother or they have converted, formally, to Orthodox Judaism. Anything short of this negates, according to Judaism, any legitimate claim to Jewishness.

The statement below aptly captures the Jewish idea of what it means to be a Jew:

*"It is important to note that being a Jew has nothing to do with what you believe or what you do. A person born to non-Jewish parents who has not undergone the formal process of conversion but who believes everything that Orthodox Jews believe and observes every law and custom of Judaism is still a non-Jew, even in the eyes of the most liberal movements of Judaism, and a person born to a Jewish mother who is an atheist and never practices the Jewish religion is still a Jew, even in the eyes of the ultra-Orthodox. In this sense, Judaism is more like a nationality than like other religions, and being Jewish is like a citizenship.*

*This has been established since the earliest days of Judaism. In the Torah, you will see many references to "the strangers who dwell among you" or "righteous proselytes" or "righteous strangers." These are various classifications of non-Jews who lived among Jews adopting some or all of the beliefs and practices of Judaism without going through the formal process of conversion and becoming Jews. Once a person has converted to Judaism, he is not referred to by any special term; he is as much a Jew as anyone born Jewish."*

*Tracey R. Rich, Judaism 101 web resource*

This is the traditional Jewish stance. Now the question becomes, "What is the Biblical position in light of the revelation of Messiah?" Some within Judaism teach that one is Jewish, not by faith or by works but by birth (or re-birth in the case of a convert). Yet what does Messiah say concerning the matter? The seemingly radical answer is this: Jewishness comes by repentance and faith. That is a radical concept to Jews and a great number of Messianic Jews as well! It is likely a shock to non-Jews also who would refrain from referring to themselves as Jews. This is also supported by Tractate Megillah 13a which states "For whoever repudiates idolatry is called a Judahite". In other words, anyone turning towards HaShem, thus repudiating idolatry is a Jew.

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<sup>18</sup> Yeshua means "salvation". It is the short version of the name Yehoshuah (Joshua). "Jesus" is a translation of a transliteration of this name.

Today, as in the first century, Judaism teaches that Jewish status (for Gentiles) comes through formal conversion only. Formal conversion primarily means circumcision. Thus, salvation was national, meaning that it *belonged* to Israel only. If you wanted to be saved then you had to become a Jew and that was defined as undergoing a formal conversion that included circumcision.

The message of the gospel to the Gentiles was quite different and quite radical. It was so radical that even Kefa (Peter) needed a direct revelation and Divine lesson from HaShem on the inclusion of Gentiles in the plan of salvation (see Acts 10). He reluctantly preached the gospel to Cornelius and his family in Acts 10 even after receiving a vision to do so from HaShem. Cornelius had faith in Hashem, he practiced Judaism, he gave tzedakah and he worshipped in the synagogue but he was not considered a Jew and thus outside of the covenant...so Kefa thought. To the disciples, Gentiles were unclean<sup>19</sup>. Kefa would later be challenged for his visit to Cornelius' home. In Acts 11 we read, "the circumcised believers criticized him and said, "You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them." Even eating or coming under the roof of a Gentile was forbidden in the first century. That goes for Cornelius too, a man who has the faith of the Jews and practices the religion of the Jews yet is uncircumcised. Because of the latter, he was considered a non-Jew and thus unclean and lost. After Kefa told the tale of what transpired, the council declared, "So then, G-d has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life." That means that they have *equal* covenantal status. With this equal status should, could and would naturally come *equal* covenantal rights and responsibilities. There is only one covenant and that is the covenant of Torah. To be in the covenant is, by definition, to be saved.

The salvation of Gentiles was a radical concept in the first century. So much so that Shaul called it the very mystery of the gospel itself (Ephesians 3:6). He declared that the Jew and the Gentile have become joint heirs and members of one body. In other words, Gentiles are spiritual equals with Jews in so much as they have become members of the very same family and in fact, through faith, Gentiles become Jews (Hebrews, Israelites.) The Messiah was prophesying about this adoption of the Gentiles into the covenant people when he said the following:

*"I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pin. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd." John 10:16*

The Messiah was surely pointing back to the prophecy in Ezekiel 34:23, "I will raise up one shepherd to be in charge of them, and he will let them feed — my servant David. He will pasture them and be their shepherd. "Notice here that the Divine analogy is one flock with one Shepherd. A single flock of sheep eat the same food, they drink the same water, they walk the same path and they follow the same leading of the Shepherd. More than any other species, they are a single unit. Messiah is the Shepherd and the Torah is the food, drink and path. To suggest otherwise is to erase the logic of the metaphor.

In the Brit Chadasha (Renewed Testament), is Jewish identity determined by the maternal lineage or paternal lineage? Does one receive the status of being a Jew through formal conversion only? On what basis do we establish Jewish identity? The answer is that Jewish identity rests with faith and repentance. Let's look at a few key verses:

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<sup>19</sup> Indeed to all Jews gentiles were considered as unclean as a corpse. As a result, it was taught and practiced that one could not associate in anyway with a gentile lest he become unclean and pass on to others that uncleanness.

*“If those who are not circumcised keep the law’s requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised? The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker. A man is not a Jew if he is one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code.”*

*Romans 2:26-29*

This verse is clear that Jewish status comes through repentance and faith. One who has faith **and** obeys the Torah is considered the true Jew! This includes Gentiles. This verse is a fulfillment of Psalm 87:4 “I will record Rehab and Babylon among those who acknowledge me – Philistia too, and Tyre, along with Cush – and will say, “This one was born in Zion.” Interestingly, in his book *This is My G-d*, Herman Wouk (an Orthodox Jew) makes a case for “Jewishness” predicated on faith. He writes, “A nation of some eleven million souls descends from one man, Abraham, and one tribal house, Israel. ...blood is not decisive in this kinship, faith is. A man or woman who undertakes to worship the G-d of Abraham, and to follow his law given at the hand of Moses, can become a member of our ancient house....Descent, then, or faith, determines who is a Jew. So our tradition holds.”<sup>20</sup>

The key to understanding how a Gentile can become a Jew through faith is to understand that Jewish identity comes through birth, or re-birth in the case of a convert to Judaism. In Jewish thought, Jewishness is a birth right. Thus, the convert, when he or she emerges from the waters of the mikvah, is considered a child of Abraham. It constitutes a very real adoption. According to Jewish law, the convert has altered their lineage having now been *born into* the Jewish family. Some claim that Abraham was only a Hebrew and thus one can be a “Hebrew” without being a “Jew”. However, there is no real distinction between the terms Hebrew, Jew or Israelite. They are all interchangeable, technical nuances aside. In Judaism, the very waters of the mikvah are considered a type of amniotic fluid. It is said that the convert who undergoes the mikvah has been born a-new; that is *born again*.

*“The mikvah simulates the original living water, the primal sea from which all life comes, the womb of the world, the amniotic tide on which the unborn child is rocked. To be reborn, one must reenter this womb and “drown” in living water. We enter the mikvah naked as an infant enters the world...At this point, a niddah says a blessing. So does the convert, since immersion in a mikvah is the final step in conversion, the rebirth of a gentile as a Jew. We emerge from the mikvah tahor [clean], having confronted and experienced our own death and resurrection.”*

*The Jewish Catalog, Siegel & Strassfeld, Pg. 170*

An analogy can be made here using natural / legal adoption. When a family in the United States adopts a child, that child is as much a member of the family as any natural children. They are afforded the very same legal rights and responsibilities. Therefore the question is really “what constitutes re-birth for the gentile?” Is it the water and the circumcision or is it through faith and repentance? According to the *halacha* of the Brit Chadasha,

<sup>20</sup> A quote taken from page 17 answering the question “Who is a Jew?” The conversion “process” comes about only because one has chosen the G-d of Abraham. Thus, faith, ultimately, is the deciding factor for the person adopted into the family.

re-birth comes through faith and repentance. By faith Gentiles are able to call Abraham Father, which is the crowning status of the convert in Judaism.

This point is perhaps the most important to understand. Ultimately, what makes a Jew, a Jew, according to Jewish law, is that he is a son of Abraham. Marvin R. Wilson confirms this point of view when he writes, “All Jews trace their ancestry to Abraham as father of the Hebrew nation.”<sup>21</sup> A quote from another Jewish publication, this one written by two Rabbis, provides further clarity for this concept, “I know where I'm going, I am the son of Abraham. Despite all my imperfections, deficiencies, faults and sins, I remain a part of the covenant that G-d made with Abraham. We begin with Abraham; we are going toward the Kingship of G-d and the Messianic era. This is the preciousness of being a Jew.”<sup>22</sup> Without question the legal definition of “Jewishness” begins with identification as a child of Abraham. According to the Brit Chadasha, this is precisely the status afforded to non-Jews who accept Messiah.

**Romans 4:11-12** *“And he received circumcision as a sign, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. And he is then also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also follow in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.”*

**Romans 4:16** *“For this reason it depends on trust, so that the promise according to grace might be guaranteed to all the offspring—not only to those of the Torah but also to those of the faith of Abraham.”*

**Romans 9:6-8** *“It is not as though G-d’s word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham’s children. On the contrary, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.” In other words, it is not the children by physical descent who are G-d’s children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham’s offspring.”*

**Galatians 3:7** *“Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham.”*

**Galatians 3:29** *“And if you belong to Messiah, then you are Abraham’s seed—heirs according to the promise..”*

**1 Peter 3:6** *“like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.”*

The Brit Chadasha is replete with *halacha* teachings that give the status of “Descendant of Abraham” to those who have the faith of Abraham. We would add that having the “faith of Abraham” is not simply a trust in Hashem but also obedience to HaShem. This truth is revealed in Genesis 26:5 and James 2:22. Thus a Gentile becomes a Jew through faith *and* repentance. Repentance is defined as turning from one’s own way to that of

<sup>21</sup> Our Father Abraham, Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith, Marvin R. Wilson , Eerdmans Grand Rapids Michigan, p. 4

<sup>22</sup> Judaism: The Way of Sanctification, Dresner and Sherwin, 1978, p.91

G-d's way. HaShem's way is Torah (Isaiah 2:3). A convert, according to the *halacha* of the Brit Chadasha is one who has faith and keeps the commandments (1 John 2:4; Rev. 12:17).

One might ask then, "Is this a form of replacement theology?" Quite to the contrary! Replacement theology teaches that HaShem is finished with Israel and that they have been stripped of the promises and replaced with a "true Israel" called the church. It teaches that the Gentiles are the new spiritual Jews and that the New Testament replaces the "Old" as the primary text. The Brit Chadasha teaches the precise opposite. Gentiles do not replace Israel they join Israel! Jews do not become Christian converts, Gentiles become Jewish converts! There is no "Old Testament", there is simply the Bible with the Torah as the everlasting foundation. The gates of the New Jerusalem are not marked with the names of nations but rather with the names of the Tribes of Israel. This is because it will be Israelites who pass through those gates (Rev. 21:12). Indeed the Renewed Covenant is promised to Israel (Jeremiah 31:33) yet the nations will come with the Jew to partake of its riches (Zech 8:23). The adopted sons join the family, they do not replace it!

Much more could be written about how the Gentiles have inherited the promises, become joint heirs with Israel, been brought near to HaShem and called a royal priesthood along with native born Israel. Suffice it to say here that Jewishness is by birth. The question is "What constitutes re-birth for the non-Jew?" The Brit Chadasha's answer is faith and repentance.

In conclusion, at Sar Shalom if one has received Yeshua as Messiah and has chosen to obey Torah and live a Jewish life then they are reckoned as converts to Judaism. They are as much a Jew as any one born of a Jewish mother. Perhaps this is the sharpest departure we have made from normative Judaism. This theology is as radical now as much as it was in the first century. Just as Abraham circumcised himself and his household after entering the covenant, we strongly encourage all to go through the formal conversion process.

*"While G-d's covenant is meant for all men, it is made first with a small segment of mankind, the people of Israel... No longer are they a nomadic, slave people, but a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, bound by a holy law, the blueprint of which they are charged to carry into the promise land and live by, so that one day the teachings of the one G-d through the one people will reach all mankind."*

*Judaism: The Way of Sanctification,  
Rabbis Dresner and Sherwin, pg. 106-107*

*"But I am not making this covenant and this oath only with you. Rather, I am making it both with him who is standing here with us today before Adonai our G-d and also with him who is not here with us today." Deuteronomy 29:13-14*

## 2.4 Conversion

The halacha of Sar Shalom embraces Torah observance as a right and responsibility for all believers regardless of their physical lineage. To embrace Messiah is to embrace His Torah.

Furthermore, our halacha dictates that spiritual conversion to believing Judaism occurs when one accepts the Messiah of Israel and chooses a Torah observant life. The spiritual transformation, as in the case of Ruth, occurs when the convert says in their heart, *“Your people shall be my people and your G-d shall be my G-d!”* In Jewish law the very definition of a “Jew” is a son of Abraham.

Following the spiritual transformation comes physical conversion. The physical conversion is a responsibility for all regardless of their physical lineage. Conversion to Judaism is implemented via the same means the Children of Israel first entered the eternal covenant with Hashem at Sinai. The process entailed a mikvah, learning some mitzvot, circumcision for males, adhering to the Torah, and a meeting with the court. In their case, the court was Hashem.

The physical conversion at Sar Shalom entails the following:

- Attending/participating in the 3 classes – Hatchalah, Antisemitism – The History and Effects, and To Be A Jew
- Committing to adhere to all of the mitzvot (commandments) of the Torah that are applicable today
- Committing to adhere to Sar Shalom’s halacha and continuing to grow towards the expanded practice in those areas with such a designation
- Circumcision (brit milah) or hatafat dam brit for males
- Minimum of one year of active attendance for liturgy, music, and shiur (sermon)
- A Zaken being assigned to you for sponsorship
- Sponsor Zaken recommending you for conversion
- Beit Din meeting with Rabbi and Zakenim
- Immersion in a mikvah

If someone is not willing or unable to meet the above requirements, then the physical conversion is delayed until such time the requirements can be met.

## 2.5 Basic and Expanded Practice in Halacha

Our halacha has two designations: basic and expanded. The basic practice is a standard for whomever is beginning on this journey. We felt it best to give everyone starting on this walk a standard to start with until they felt this was for them. Once someone accepts this way of life, one should continue to grow towards the expanded practice. The expanded practice is the standard for all those walking out this life at Sar Shalom.

## Kashrut

### Why keep kosher?

The Talmud says that the table upon which we eat is like the altar the Temple. It is likened to the altar because what is set before us is that which gives us life and sustains us. "Thus Judaism take something which is common and ordinary, which is every day and prosaic and ennobles it, raising it to the unexpected heights, endowing it with profound significance by laws of *what* to eat and *how* to eat, by teaching us that every act of life can be hallowed, even the act of eating"<sup>23</sup>

There are those who casually dismiss food laws. Often they consider the subject trivial and G-d disinterested. However, one should consider that the first commandment given to humankind was about food: "And the Adonai commanded the man, saying, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die'" (Genesis 2:16-17). It should be remembered that it was the violation of this commandment that caused the *fall of all mankind!* Perhaps the subject has more spiritual gravitas than we naturally suppose. Why this commandment? Why not the command to till the earth and subdue it? Why not some other commandments? Why is this one the very first, and therefore most prominent?

Perhaps the reason is that there is nothing more personal, nothing which we are so inclined to think of as nobody's business but our own, as the question of what we choose to put in our mouths. Which of us has not grown irritated with someone who says to us, "Do you think you should eat that?" We feel intruded upon. And for many of us, even when the doctor tries to regulate our diet, we feel invaded, diminished, demoralized. Food is often viewed as part of our culture and identification. To be asked to change our diet is to be asked to change who we are as individuals!

Perhaps this is the point? The command not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil was a relationship test in the Garden. Would Adam and Chava respect G-d's right to regulate their lives, even to the point of restricting their diet? They failed the test - and most of us Jews do as well, three times a day, every day. Kashrut is not primarily about food - it is all about relationship. Every time a religious Jew eats a kosher meal, he is reminded that he is a Jew, and that G-d is really G-d. And when we fail to eat like Jews, we weaken our awareness that we are part of a holy people, and that the G-d who established a covenant with us has rights over our lives.

Keeping kosher is also about honoring the very nature of being Jews, "a people that dwells apart, that shall not be numbered with the nations." Every time Jews eat kosher, they remind themselves, their children, and all around them that they are Jews. By eating kosher we are meant not only to stand apart from the other nations, but to stand together with each other - eating kosher is a means of group identity and cohesion. And wherever that practice is abandoned, group identity and cohesion suffers. But something far more crucial is compromised as well - the honor of HaShem. To eat kosher is to sanctify the Name of HaShem. When we eat according to Torah, we honor HaShem - we tell the Father,

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<sup>23</sup> Judaism: The Way of Sanctification. Dresner and Sherwin, pg. 152-153

ourselves, and all who observe us, that Hashem is our G-d and we are Hashem's people. And isn't that a good thing? Again, it's all about relationship. It's easy to say that we love G-d. But Yeshua reminds us that words are not enough - they never are. "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). And that applies also, even first, to what we eat.

It is very highly recommended that all food items purchased be stamped with a certified seal from a reliable Rabbinic kosher authority. Below are the most common hechsher's one will find in the metroplex. There are other acceptable hechsher's or seals as well.

**Common Kosher Seals**



**Kosher Authority Websites**

(in order above, from Left to Right)

- Orthodox Union..... [www.OU.org](http://www.OU.org)
- Kosher Supervision of America ..... [www.KSAkosher.com](http://www.KSAkosher.com)
- OK Kosher ..... [www.ok.org](http://www.ok.org)
- Kof-K Kosher Supervision ..... [www.Kof-k.org](http://www.Kof-k.org)
- Star- K Kosher ..... [www.Star-k.org](http://www.Star-k.org)

### 3.1 Fundamental Requirements

**3.1.1** All pork products, shellfish, and food containing their elements (e.g., lard) are forbidden.

All fruits, grains and vegetables are kosher. Fish with fins and scales are also kosher. Due to the way in which fish is processed, fish and fish products should be purchased only if they have a reliable hechsher (kosher certification seal)<sup>24</sup>.

Processed foods, cereals, can goods, chips and packaged goods should only be purchased if it has a reliable hechsher.

Goods from the bakery should also be purchased with a hechsher, however this may prove more difficult in our immediate area. Therefore, bread, pies, and cakes should be investigated to ensure that no ingredients therein contain lard (pork fat). This is our *basic* practice.

*These basic laws of kashrut are first enjoined in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14.*

*However, the distinction between animals that are tahor (ritually pure) and those that are not tahor is already found in the story of Noah (Genesis 7:2). As early as the story of Noah, we find the Torah making a distinction between clean and unclean animals. Prior to the flood, men were vegetarians. After, they are permitted to eat meat (Genesis 9:3), but logic dictates that this must be only clean animals otherwise the swine (of which Noah only had one pair) would quickly become extinct. In addition, only those that are tahor may be offered as sacrifices (Genesis 8:20). As a priestly people set apart for Hashem from all the nations of the world, Israel is summoned to limit the animals it consumes so that its table may be analogous to the temple altar; in fact we are the Temple of the Holy Spirit. If one is forbidden to bring swine into the earthly Temple, how much more so into the spiritual! Ultimately the biblical reason for eating kosher is to be holy even as HaShem is holy.*

*While many have argued that these dietary laws have hygienic value, the Torah itself provides a different rationale: "You shall be holy, for I am holy" (Leviticus 11:44; see Deuteronomy 14:2).*

*Some have supposed that reading an ingredients label is sufficient to render a "kosher" decision about a food product. However, many ingredients, even those that say "natural flavor" come from unkosher sources even horses, insects and domestic pets!*

**3.1.2** Following Conservative Halacha, we consider swordfish and sturgeon acceptable as part of our basic practice. Meats (except from the hind quarters) from cattle, lamb, goat, or deer, and from most common fowl (e.g., chicken, turkey, goose, duck) may all be eaten.

*The traditional dispute over swordfish and sturgeon concerns the status of their scales.*

*According to Ramban, the Torah refers only to scales that can be detached from the skin of the*

<sup>24</sup> Please see the APPENDIX A "Keep it Kosher" communique.

*fish. The scales of the swordfish and sturgeon can be removed from the skin, but only with difficulty. Thus, Orthodox authorities generally regard these fish as non-kosher, whereas the Conservative movement has ruled them kosher.*

*This dispute also affects the kashrut of caviar, which is derived from sturgeon.*

*On the prohibition of meat from the hind quarters of permitted four-legged animals, see decision 2.3.3.*

## 3.2 Gelatin, Cheese, Dairy and Wine

**3.2.1** For our *basic* practice we will adopt the practice that cheese is acceptable. As an *expanded* practice cheese should only be purchased if it says “no animal rennet” on the label<sup>25</sup>

**3.2.2** As an *expanded practice* it is commended to only purchase cheese products that have a kosher certification hechsher symbol such as the circle U or star K.

**3.2.3** Soft cheese (such as ricotta, cottage and mozzarella), sour cream, yogurt, milk, cream and other dairy products should be purchased only if they have a reliable hechsher (kosher seal).

**3.2.4** All products that contain gelatin must have a kosher hechsher (symbol / seal).

**3.2.5** All beers or other non-flavored alcoholic beverages are acceptable. Wine or grape Juice should have a hechsher. In the case of Jewish ceremonies and festivals only kosher wine or grape juice should be used.

*“When wine is used for the fulfillment of a mitzvah, such as circumcision, weddings, kiddush, and havdalah, it is proper to use wine that is certified kosher” (Dresner, 64). The fact that the wine was produced by Jews and the production process supervised by Jewish religious authorities adds to the sacred character of the occasion.*

All flavored alcoholic beverages must have a kosher hechsher.

## 3.3 Shechitah and Removal of Blood

**3.3.1** The most basic Biblical dietary law, addressed not only to Israel but also to the nations of the world in Noah, involves avoiding the eating of blood (foods that are cooked in or with blood). Concern to guard this core dietary law led to the institution of shechitah - the Jewish ritual slaughter of animals (which removes the vast majority of the blood) - and the special preparation of meat (which removes the remainder). Therefore, ideally it is recommended that only meat slaughtered and packaged under reliable kosher supervision be purchased.

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<sup>25</sup> It is common for cheese producers to use rennet that comes from the intestines of swine (pig). It is best to check with the label or the manufacturer. Kosher certified cheese, of course, would not use swine rennet.

*The prohibition of ingesting blood, enjoined on all humanity in Genesis 9:4 and confirmed in Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25, is given when human beings are first permitted to eat meat (Genesis 9:3). The allowance to eat meat is a concession to the violence that precipitated the flood (Genesis 6:11, 13). The prohibition of eating blood, the one universal dietary restriction, immediately precedes the prohibition of murder (Genesis 9:5-6) - the shedding of human blood. Thus, this universal dietary law expresses the biblical value of reverence for life.*

*It is striking that all carnivorous animals are ritually impure, according to Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. The nations of the world are forbidden to eat the blood of animals, but Israel must go a step further - it must avoid even the meat of animals that consume the blood of other animals. In this way the value of reverence for life is doubly reinforced.*

*The prohibition against eating blood is elucidated in Ezekiel 33:25, where the prophet speaks these words of condemnation on behalf of Hashem: "You eat with the blood" (which probably means, "You eat meat with the blood in it"). Thus, Jews must purge meat of blood to the extent that this can be reasonably accomplished. This is done through kosher slaughter and additional measures.*

*While shechitah refers specifically to the kosher slaughtering of an animal, in the above decision the term is used more broadly to cover both the kosher slaughtering (done by a shochet) and the processing and preparation of the meat (done by a butcher). The latter is technically called porging, and involves (1) removal of residual blood remaining after shechitah; (2) removal of fats prohibited by the Torah (Leviticus 3:17); and (3) removal of the sciatic nerve, as required by Genesis 32:33 (see below). Given the evident basis of these practices in the Written Torah, the institution of shechitah should be honored among us as Observant Jews in Yeshua, and if at all feasible we should seek to purchase meat slaughtered and packaged under reliable kosher supervision.*

**3.3.2** Most meat labeled kosher has been salted to remove the blood. One should investigate to see if this is the case with kosher meat one has purchased. If it is not the case, one should remove the blood oneself through salting or broiling.

*For a detailed description of the process of salting and boiling, see "How to Keep Kosher" by Lise Stern.*

Liver requires broiling because of the preponderance of blood in it.

*"Because it contains an excessive amount of blood, liver can be koshered only by broiling, and should not be soaked. Even if liver is to be cooked in some other way, it must first be broiled."  
(Dresner, 62)*

**3.3.3** While the purchase of meat slaughtered and butchered under reliable kosher supervision is highly recommended, our *basic practice* will not involve eating only such meat. It will involve urging that we

avoid meat from the hind quarters of permitted four-legged animals (a practice rooted in Jacob's injury in Genesis 32).

Cuts that are acceptable according to our basic practice include Chuck, Rib and Ribeye, Shank and Brisket, Skirt and Flank. Also permitted are London Broil (when from the shoulder), and Cubed Steak.

Due to the precarious nature of ground beef production, it should only be purchased if it has a reliable hechsher seal.

Cuts that are to be avoided include Top Loin (Strip or Shell) Steak, T-Bone, Porterhouse, Tenderloin, Sirloin, Tri-Tip, and Round. (London Broil from the Bottom or Top Rounds are likewise to be avoided.)

*The angel who wrestled with Jacob “wrenched Jacob's hip at its socket” (Genesis 32:26). The Torah tells us that this event is remembered by Jacob's descendants through a dietary restriction: “That is why the children of Israel to this day do not eat the thigh muscle that is on the socket of the hip, since Jacob's hip socket was wrenched at the thigh muscle” (Genesis 32:33). This dietary restriction remains a Jewish practice, and involves the removal of the sciatic nerve by a kosher butcher (m. Chullin 7:1-6). Since this procedure is very difficult even for a trained kosher butcher, it is customary in the diaspora to set aside the hindquarters and sell them to non-Jews.*

*If it is not feasible to obtain kosher meat or practice vegetarianism, and if we purchase meat of permitted animals from another source, our basic practice - in accordance with Genesis 32:33 - entails avoiding meat from the hindquarters.*

### 3.4 Separating Meat and Dairy

Our *expanded practice* involves avoiding the consumption of meat products and obvious dairy products (or foods containing obvious dairy products) together in a given meal. Meat may be eaten after eating obvious dairy foods with at least a 1 hour time interval. They should not be present together at the same table. After eating a meat meal, the minimum time interval before eating obvious dairy products should be one hour. Three (3) hours is recommended and preferred.

By “obvious dairy products,” we mean milk and milk products such as cheese, butter, yogurt, and ice cream. Some products normally considered “nondairy” (some nondairy creamers, margarine, dessert toppings) actually contain dairy derivatives, and so are technically not parve (containing neither dairy nor meat). Such products are included in “obvious dairy products.”

Sar Shalom’s halacha rules that fowl is **meat** and therefore it is not exempt from the separating of meat and dairy.

*Normative Judaism includes fowl in the definition of “meat”, however, it is universally recognized as a Rabbinic fence law (b. Chullin 113a). Never-the-less, we have chosen to remain with greater Judaism and 2,500 plus years of practice in keeping the “meat” designation for fowl.*

*The separation of meat and dairy products is associated with the Torah's prohibition of eating a kid cooked in its mother's milk (Exodus 23:19; 34:26; Deuteronomy 14:21). The Mishnah states: "No flesh may be cooked with milk save the flesh of fish and locusts; and it is forbidden to serve it up together with cheese upon the table excepting the flesh of fish and locusts" (m. Chullin 8:1). It is often supposed that the ancient ruling to separate meat and dairy is a mere fabrication of the Rabbis with no biblical foundation. However, this is not the case. There are biblical precedents for such a ruling and we must remember that Yeshua lived in a time when this practice was universal. He never condemned it even though He ate with Pharisees on numerous occasions. This point should be emphasized, namely, that the ruling is several thousand years old and that it was a common practice in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, and, that Yeshua never condemned it. The sages themselves viewed this as a ruling of the Written Torah not, as some suppose, a Rabbinic injunction. We recommend the reading of "Biblically Kosher" by Aaron Eby for more details on this topic.*

*Meat and dairy separation is universally understood to be a written Torah mitzvah among all branches of Judaism. The practice is dated back to **at least** a generation before Messiah.*

*The separation of meat and dairy products is also rich in symbolic significance. As noted above (5.3.1), the allowance to eat meat is a concession to the violence that precipitated the flood. In the creation narrative human beings are assigned an exclusively vegetarian diet (Genesis 1:29). While the laws of kashrut do not impose a return to that pristine regimen, their fundamental concern is the limitation of meat consumption. Only certain animals may be eaten, and even they must be slaughtered and prepared in a certain fashion (or they are also excluded). Now we add a further restriction - that even properly slaughtered and prepared meat cannot be consumed with dairy products. This final limitation points us back to the original reason for restricting the consumption of meat: reverence for life. As dairy products symbolize the nurturing of new life, it is fitting that they not be mixed with foods which require the taking of life. It is interesting that there are no prescribed "dairy" offerings for the Temple. Perhaps this is because the Temple was a place of meat offerings?*

*No particular time limit between eating meat and dairy products is specified in the Talmud. Therefore, a variety of customs developed in Jewish communities around the world. In some places the minimum interval was as long as six hours; in other places it was as short as one hour. In keeping with our principle of establishing a practice that is as accessible as possible, we have adopted the most lenient custom.*

### **3.5 Eating in Restaurants**

While eating out, under the basic practice one should continue to avoid all meat (and meat-products) from non-kosher animals (swine, shellfish, etc.). Beyond this basic practice, we commend the *expanded* practice of eating at kosher certified restaurants only or restricting restaurant foods to fruits and salads. This is truly the only way to eat completely kosher.

One should be aware that many restaurant dishes such as beans, tortillas, cornbread, peas, cabbage and other common southern foods may contain pork or pork lard. Likewise, many Asian restaurants use “fish sauce” made of unclean fish to season their dishes. It is recommended that one ask the server before ordering to make sure that no unclean food or product is used in the preparation of the menu item.

*The practice commended here (but not included as basic practice) is taught within the Conservative movement: “If it is necessary to dine in non-kosher facilities, meat and dishes containing meat may not be eaten. Some sanction only the eating of cold foods, such as salads, if the food contains no forbidden ingredients. Others approve eating permitted fish and other foods, even if cooked” (Dresner, 64).*

### **3.6 Medications and Nutritional Supplements**

In keeping with the views of many halakhic authorities, as our basic practice there are no restrictions on medicines and nutritional supplements derived from non-kosher animals when consumed in pill/capsule or elixir form.

*“Beyond the question of medical need, the question is whether we are eating food: swallowing without chewing may not be considered eating, and a foul-tasting substance may not be considered food. Pills that are swallowed whole rather than chewed need not be kosher (since they are not being eaten in the usual way, but pills that are chewed should be kosher. Liquids with a very unpleasant taste need not be kosher, but pleasant tasting liquids should be kosher” (Yehuda Wiesen, *Guide to Practical Halacha and Home Ritual for Conservative Jews* [2004], 12-13).*

## Shabbat

### Why keep Shabbat?

Shabbat is a constant and important reminder of two critical facts. First, that HaShem is the Creator of the Universe. Second, that we are the people whom the Creator of the Universe redeemed from slavery in Egypt. By keeping the Sabbath, we declare these two realities. If we cannot make room for Shabbat in our busy schedules, we neglect our responsibility to proclaim truth and we prove that the fact of our slavery has not changed, only its location.

Ahad Ha'am reminds us: "It was not the Jews that kept the Sabbath, it was the Sabbath that kept the Jews." It was keeping Shabbat that helped our forefathers hold fast to Jewish (biblical) life and identity amidst the threatening political and cultural cross-currents of two millennia in exile. And as we raise our children in this age, keeping Shabbat becomes even more critical. Without Shabbat, our children may forget that there is a Creator who has given them freedom.

In *Growing Up Religious*, Robert Wuthnow explores how spiritual identity is preserved and passed on from generation to generation. Speaking of religious practices such as keeping Shabbat he says, "the pursuit of any particular practice (such as Shabbat keeping) is accomplished only at the sacrifice of other possible activities. Growing up religious was a memorable part of people's childhood because it included...discrete, separable activities that took time away from other interests, but they were also embedded in social relationships. People did them with their mothers and fathers, their grandparents, their siblings, and their friends and fellow congregants... But spirituality also came to be understood as a way of life, and it did so because people grew up living it. The parents, teachers, and clergy who understood this best were the ones who created an environment in which spirituality was fully and deeply embedded. They honored the spirituality of chicken dinners, of gefilte fish, of family Bibles and of Shabbat tables, candles, meals, and the protected differentness of the day" (pgs.35-37).

The Torah reminds us that we are to be "a people that dwells apart, that shall not be numbered with the nations" (Numbers 23:9). Keeping Shabbat is indispensable if that Jewish distinctness and collective identity is to become real, something one can see, hear, taste and remember as lived experience. Our faith is meant to be tangible; to be felt, tasted and full of delightful fragrance. Anything less, is empty philosophy destined to dissipate like the morning dew.

Interestingly, it is with Sabbath observance that Jews often recapture or lose their Jewish identity. Jews who leave the faith often do so *first* by leaving the Sabbath. Those who return often do so by *first* making the Sabbath holy. It is very much a gateway to living faith.

While the rest of the world treats Saturday as a day off, a day to shop, or even a day to catch up on work, (biblically to "go one's own way") Jews are to treat Shabbat as the holiest of days. It is this day in which we are privileged to host the Holy One at our table and sing his praises in our gathered families. It is a day where all our creativity is devoted to Sabbath joys, and to receiving and celebrating the life we

did not make, but have been given by the Holy One. It is a day to remember our Exodus and our soon coming entry into the Promised Land....where we will experience an eternity of Sabbath rests! Perhaps you will ask, "What good will keeping Shabbat do for me?" That is, of course, the wrong question. The question is, "What will *not* keeping Shabbat do to you?" Thousands of years of Jewish history supply the answer: "Nothing good." Come, keep - and be kept by - the holy Shabbat

## 4.1 Starting/Ending Time

**4.1.1** Shabbat begins and ends according to the times determined and accepted by the wider Orthodox and Conservative Jewish world. This means that we are accepting the Rabbinic fence around the law, with an earlier time for starting and a later time for ending. We should begin 18 minutes<sup>26</sup> before sundown Friday evening and end when we see three stars in the sky Saturday night.

*According to the Jewish reckoning of time, days begin at night. But when does "night" begin? Jewish tradition recognizes a transitional period between "day" and "night" that is technically neither day nor night. This is the period that commences with the setting of the sun, and concludes with the appearance of the stars (when the evening sky is clear). In Hebrew this period is called beyn hashmashot - the time "between the suns."*

*Though the status of this transitional part of the day is inherently ambiguous, for halakhic purposes it needs to be regarded as either part of the day that preceded or the night that follows (e.g., the yahrzeit of someone who dies during this period of the day needs to be determined). In setting the beginning and ending times of the Sabbath, Jewish law has traditionally followed a sound halakhic principle: when there is doubt concerning the application of a law that has biblical authority (that is d'oraita), we should follow the stricter of two possible interpretations. In the case of the Sabbath, this means that we should reckon the time "between the suns" as part of the Sabbath both on Friday and on Saturday. Thus, Shabbat begins with the setting of the sun on Friday, and ends with the appearance of the stars on Saturday.*

*Rabbinic tradition provided further protection against violation of Shabbat by adding roughly twenty minutes to the day at the beginning and the end. This addition also derives from a talmudic principle that we should "add from the profane to the holy" (b. Rosh Hashanah 8b-9a), and so fulfills a positive as well as a negative (protective) purpose. Thus, the times listed in Jewish calendars for the beginning of Shabbat are slightly earlier than sunset, and the times listed for the ending of Shabbat are slightly later than nightfall.*

**4.1.2** In keeping with common observance, Shabbat can be extended, but not diminished. For instance, one may light Shabbat candles before the appointed time, but should not begin Havdalah before the appointed time.

<sup>26</sup> Interestingly 18 in the numerical value of the Hebrew word 'N Chai or Life!

**4.1.3** One should prepare for Shabbat in order to make it special. Food, clothing, and table setting should be special (not just different but at a higher level than usual), and prepared for in advance

*“You should rejoice in the coming of Shabbat. Imagine how you would put the house in order in honor of the arrival of a dear and distinguished person, all the more so [should you exert yourself] in honor of the Sabbath Queen” (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 72:7).*

*The Sages interpreted Isaiah 58:13, “You shall honor it [Shabbat],” as meaning that one should wear finer clothing on Shabbat than on weekdays (b. Shabbat 113a).*

## 4.2 Candle Lighting

**4.2.1** If it is not possible to light candles before Shabbat begins, traditional Halacha would strictly prohibit lighting the candles at a later time. We respect this traditional halakhic decision, and the honor it shows to the objective temporal boundaries of Shabbat built into the natural order.

*The custom of lighting Shabbat candles, in order to honor Shabbat and to define the beginning of the holy day within the home, is not a biblical commandment, but is presumed by rabbinic authorities in the Mishnah (m. Shabbat 2:1-7). This means that the custom itself is 2,000 years old or more. It is very likely that Yeshua watched His mother, Miriam, light the Sabbath lamp every Friday night. It is a mitzvah that has been embraced enthusiastically by the Jewish people as a whole, and - like a mezuzah on one's doorpost - it expresses a family's fundamental commitment to Judaism. Furthermore, the prophetic custom of a woman lighting the candles speaks of the woman who brought the light (Yeshua) into the world; this custom suggests a Divine inspiration.*

*The beginning and ending of Shabbat have both objective and subjective dimensions. The objective dimension results from the earth's turning on its axis as it orbits the sun. The subjective dimension involves the deliberate acknowledgement of the day's temporal boundaries by the Jewish people. The importance of the subjective dimension is shown by the fact that one can light candles earlier than the stipulated time, and from that point on one must treat the day as holy. The interdependence of these two dimensions is seen from the traditional principle stated above: Shabbat can be extended, but not diminished (decision 3.1.2). We can take from the profane and add to the holy, but we should not take from the holy and add to the profane.*

*Traditional Halacha prohibits both kindling and transferring a flame on Shabbat. Nevertheless, the two actions are distinguished, as is evident in halakhic rulings concerning the holidays. On a holiday one may transfer but not kindle a flame (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 98:1, 31). This suggests that the prohibition of transferring a flame may be an extended stringency protecting the special sanctity of Shabbat. At the very least, one may assume that transferring a flame on Shabbat is a less serious violation than kindling a flame.*

*On the prohibition of kindling a flame on Shabbat, see decision 4.1.6.*

**4.2.2** Between Pesach and Sukkot, it is permissible to light Shabbat candles as much as three hours in advance of the beginning of Shabbat.

**4.2.3** The berachah recited at the lighting of the candles will be the traditional mitzvah berachah. If one wants to use an alternative berachah reflecting faith in Yeshua, one may do so.

Normally at least two candles are lit although more may be used. Two, however, should be the minimum. It is customary for the woman of the household to officiate, lighting the candles and then reciting the blessing while covering her eyes with her hands. She then removes her hands, and looks at the candles. If no woman is available for the lighting, then a man may perform the mitzvah.

*If there are no women in the household, or no women are available at the appropriate time to perform the mitzvah, a man may and should light the candles.*

*This practice derives from the combination of two important rules:*

*(1) A blessing associated with a mitzvah should be said before doing the mitzvah, in order to demonstrate that one is consciously acting in obedience to a divine commandment;*

*(2) A fire may not be kindled after Shabbat begins. Since the recitation of the blessing signifies the beginning of Shabbat, the candles could not be lit after the blessing - but the blessing should come first! To show respect for both rules, one covers one's eyes while reciting the blessing - as if the candles were not yet lit. (See Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 75:4). This custom is also a symbol of anticipation. We light the candles and expect the Divine Glory to enter with the Shabbat. Thus, the woman covers her eyes so as not to gaze into the shekinah glory of HaShem.*

*Normally the candles are lit in the room where Shabbat dinner will be served and kiddush recited, in order to indicate that the candles were lit in honor of Shabbat (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 75:8).*

### **4.3 Participation in Shabbat Services**

One should participate in the weekly Shabbat service. The Shabbat service includes the liturgy, music and shiur. Gathering on the Sabbath is a Divine commandment (Lev. 23:3, Hebrews 10:25).

*Shabbat is a sign of G-d's eternal covenant with the people of Israel (Exodus 31:12, 16-17). As such, it is important that Jews gather before G-d as a community on this day, to honor the covenant and the One who gave it.*

*Jews throughout the centuries have recognized the special importance of gathering on Shabbat for prayer and study. It is noteworthy that one of the earliest Jewish documents attesting this practice is the New Testament (Luke 4:15-16, 31-33; Acts 13:13-15; 15:21).*

### **4.4 Kiddush, Havdalah, and the Meals of Shabbat**

**4.4.1** Friday night erev Shabbat meal: The *basic* practice includes reciting kiddush, hamotzi (over bread), and an abbreviated birkat hamzon (all prayers to be said in Hebrew if possible).

We commend as *expanded* practice ritual hand washing (netilat yadaim) with its traditional berachah, use of two loaves of bread, salting the bread, recitation of Proverbs 31 for the wife, blessing of the children, the Aaronic blessing, singing of zemirot (special Sabbath songs), full birkat hamazon, and discussion of Torah (divrei Torah).

**4.4.2** Saturday evening meal: The basic practice includes hamotzi and an abbreviated birkat hamazon. We commend as expanded practice the singing of zemirot and the full birkat hamazon.

**4.4.3** The traditional havdalah service should be recited after Shabbat ends (when one sees three stars in the sky).

*The Talmud sees the recitation of kiddush (literally, “sanctification”) over wine at the beginning of Shabbat as a fulfillment of Exodus 20:8 - “Remember the Sabbath day, to sanctify it” (b. Pesachim 106a). Maimonides applies the verse also to havdalah (Mishneh Torah, Shabbat 29:1). Friday evening kiddush and Saturday evening havdalah serve both as ceremonial declarations (corporate and verbal acts of “remembrance”) of the holiness of the day, and as lines of demarcation, subjectively distinguishing the sacred from the secular.*

*Wine symbolizes and conveys the joy of the Sabbath day. In Judaism, holiness and joy are indissolubly united. Kosher grape juice may be substituted.*

*On hamotzi and birkat hamazon, see decisions 4.1.4.2 and 4.1.4.3.*

*According to rabbinic tradition, the ritual washing of hands should precede all meals at which bread is eaten. This custom derives from the Torah's ritual for priests before offering sacrifice or performing service within the tabernacle/temple (Exodus 30:17-21). By extending this practice to all meals outside the temple, Jewish tradition implies that the role of every Jew is priestly and the table of every Jew is a sacred altar. If this is true for all meals, how much more so for the meal that inaugurates Shabbat!*

*The Besorot (Gospels) record a dispute between Yeshua and Pharisaic teachers concerning the practice of hand washing before meals (Matthew 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-23). The dispute had less to do with hand washing itself, and more with the primacy of biblical law over Pharisaic oral tradition, the primacy of basic moral imperatives (such as honoring parents) over ritual minutiae, and the nature of true defilement and purification. It is perhaps better stated that the issue was really hypocrisy more than anything. It is also important to recognize that ritual hand washing in the first century was a distinctive Pharisaic custom, and not a generally accepted Jewish norm, as it later became. The text says that “some” of Yeshua’s disciples were not washing their hands. This indicates that some did wash and perhaps even the Master Himself. Furthermore, the Pharisees ask Yeshua why His disciples are “not following the traditions of our Father’s” a question that is nonsensical unless they viewed Yeshua as one of their own....a Pharisee. Perhaps*

*His customs and biblical perspective were more Pharisaic than anything else. It appears that the gospels present this theory as more fact than fiction. For more on this topic, see “Meet the Rabbis” by Dr. Brad Young.*

#### **4.5 Practicing Ones Occupation**

One ceases from his or her profession, trade, or daily occupation on Shabbat, except in the following occupations: health care workers and care-givers, police, military, emergency personnel, and synagogue personnel who are involved in the synagogue activities of the day.

Accommodations may be made on a case-by-case basis by a Bet Din handling a conversion.

*“If you refrain from trampling the Sabbath, from pursuing your own interests on my holy day; if you call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the LORD honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, serving your own interests, or pursuing your own affairs; then you shall take delight in the LORD, and I will make you ride upon the heights of the earth” (Isaiah 58:13-14a)*

*Isaac Klein points out the halakhic implications of this text from Isaiah: “The obvious intent of this passage is that one should not pursue his chosen profession, trade, or daily occupation on the Sabbath; the merchant should not go to his store, the manufacturer to his plant, the laborer to his shop, or the professional to his office” (80-81).*

*All traditional Jewish authorities recognize exceptions to this rule, and to all Shabbat restrictions, in matters pertaining to the saving or preserving of life (b. Yoma 85a, b. Shabbat 132a). Yeshua highlights this principle, and even appears to extend it beyond matters of life and death to include basic acts of kindness to those in genuine need (Mark 3:1-5). Similarly, the Torah commands priests to perform tasks in the temple on Shabbat that are prohibited to others engaged in secular pursuits (Matthew 12:5). Accordingly, a rabbi serving a congregation on Shabbat is fulfilling a mitzvah rather than performing forbidden work.*

## 4.6 Kindling Fire

According to our basic practice, one should not kindle a flame on Shabbat. Halakhic authorities disagree about whether the use of electrical devices and the combustion involved in starting and running an automobile violate this commandment of the Torah. Our *basic practice* will follow the more lenient interpretation. At Sar Shalom, “kindling a fire” is prohibited specifically in reference to cooking of any kind. To that end, kindling a fire, such as an outdoor camping fire, should be avoided on the Sabbath except in cases when it is absolutely necessary for heat.<sup>27</sup>

*“You shall kindle no fire throughout your settlements on the Sabbath day” (Exodus 35:3). So what about this prohibition to not light a fire? The best understanding may just come from the original Chumash, the Stone Edition Artscroll Chumash:*

*“Since kindling fire is necessary for cooking and baking, the Torah uses it as the prototype labor that is necessary to prepare food...The Oral Law makes it clear that only the creation of a fire and such use of it as cooking and baking are forbidden, but there is no prohibition against enjoying its light and heat. Deviant sects that denied the teachings of the Sages misinterpreted this passage to refer to all uses of fire, so they would sit in the dark throughout the Sabbath, just as they sat in spiritual darkness all their lives.”*

*This understanding would seem to work homiletically with the prohibition to gather manna on the Shabbat. Plan ahead so that you do not have to labor over a hot stove on your day of rest. This is the will of our Father.*

*The kindling of fire, which involves creating a flame, transforming the nature of the material consumed by the flame, and giving off light and heat, serves as a paradigmatic illustration of the sort of creative activity prohibited on Shabbat. It also recalls G-d's first act of creation in Genesis 1 - the formation of light.*

*While all Orthodox halakhic authorities prohibit the use of electricity on Shabbat, some see this restriction as a rabbinic extension of the biblical commandment rather than a prohibition carrying the full weight of the Written Torah (see Donin, To Be A Jew, 92).*

*In a ground breaking responsum issued and adopted in 1950, the Conservative movement accepted the view that the prohibition of electricity on Shabbat carried rabbinic and not Scriptural authority. As such, it was to be respected, but it could also be modified in light of other important considerations.*

*On an even more controversial point, the same responsum ruled that combustion for energy (such as that which occurs in an automobile) does not constitute the type of “kindling” prohibited on Shabbat. For Sar Shalom “kindling fire” refers primarily to cooking, baking, boiling or frying.*

<sup>27</sup> See the note from the Artscroll Chumash commentary. Ancient Rabbinic authorities viewed this prohibition primarily in relation to kindling a fire for the purpose of cooking. A task which requires a good deal of work.

## 4.7 Buying and Selling

**4.7.1** One should normally neither buy nor sell on Shabbat. This includes both the buying and selling of goods for profit and the buying and selling of goods that are not for profit (such as religious articles). Thus, we will not sell items (such as books, Judaica or CD's) in our synagogues on Shabbat.

**4.7.2** “Buying and selling” here also includes payment for food or entertainment. Therefore, dining out or other recreational activity that involves spending money is inappropriate on Shabbat.

**4.7.3** Credit card purchases (including internet transactions) are buying.

**4.7.4** Offerings and tzedakah on Shabbat do not constitute buying and selling.

*The prohibition of practicing one's occupation on Shabbat implies that Jews should not sell merchandise on Shabbat. While this is not explicitly stated in the Torah, it is presumed as early as the prophet Amos, who indicates that even the wicked refrain from selling wheat on Shabbat (Amos 8:4-5). Nehemiah makes clear that the purchasing of goods on Shabbat likewise profanes the holy day (Nehemiah 10:31; 13:15-18).*

*Rabbinic tradition extended this prohibition of buying and selling by forbidding any contact with money on Shabbat. This helpful custom reinforced the basic prohibition, and fostered an experience of the holiness of the day. Strict adherence to this halakhic extension would, of course, rule out the giving of offerings and tzedakah on Shabbat. Sar Shalom's Beit Din has determined that giving tithes, offerings and charity on the Sabbath does not violate the Torah's basic prohibition of buying and selling on Shabbat because it is not trading for product or services.*

## 4.8 Traveling

In general, traveling on Shabbat conflicts with the spirit of the day. Nevertheless, limited travel may be appropriate to uphold certain values that are themselves associated with Shabbat. Thus, our basic practice does not prohibit travel on Shabbat to attend services at the synagogue, to visit the sick, to visit someone in mourning and to sustain contact with the synagogue community and with one's family, though such travel should not occupy a substantial portion of the day. Normally one should avoid traveling on Shabbat for other purposes such as vacation or non-religious recreation.

*“Each of you stay where you are; do not leave your place on the seventh day” (Exodus 16:29).*

*A strict reading of this text could lead to the view that one should not leave one's house on Shabbat. However, the Talmud interprets the passage as meaning only that one should not travel far from one's residence on Shabbat (b. Eruvin 51a).*

*Rabbinic tradition established clear limits to such travel: within a city one could go any distance, whereas beyond city limits one could go two thousand cubits (about three quarters of a mile).*

*Knowledge of and respect for such limits is seen in the Book of Acts, which refers to the distance between the Mount of Olives and the city of Jerusalem as “a Sabbath day’s journey” (Acts 1:12).*

*Rabbinic tradition likewise prohibited riding a horse or a wagon on Shabbat. The authorities understood this to be a rabbinic rather than a Scriptural rule, ordained because such forms of travel may lead indirectly to the violation of Shabbat.*

*Traditional rabbinic concerns still apply today. While these concerns may not lead us to avoid all travel on Shabbat, they should cause us to limit our travel to a minimum.*

#### **4.9 Food Preparation**

On Shabbat we are prohibited from cooking, boiling or baking. Therefore, all food for Shabbat should be cooked in advance, or the cooking should be initiated in advance (as in a crock-pot). However, food may be reheated.

*The traditional prohibition of cooking on Shabbat is implicit in the story of the manna (Exodus 16). The people gather two days supply of manna each Friday, and prepare their Shabbat meals before the holy day begins: “This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD; bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil, and all that is left over put aside to be kept until morning’” (Exodus 16:23). The baking and boiling must be completed while Shabbat is still “tomorrow.”*

#### **4.10 Writing and Drawing**

The concept behind the prohibition of drawing or writing on the Sabbath has to do with the desire to cease from creating. We agree with this general principle, however, we see the need to have the ability to write or draw *for the sake of Torah study and teaching* on the Sabbath. Therefore, our basic practice will not include prohibitions of the sort of writing and drawing that enhances the community's ability to experience Torah learning and that does not violate the spirit of Shabbat. At the same time, we appreciate the reasons for these prohibitions and recognize the spirit and purpose in which they were given. The legitimacy of the custom is both honored and validated at Sar Shalom.

Writing and drawing should be limited on the Sabbath to such as is only necessary for Torah study and synagogue activities. Writing for personal use or business is not appropriate.

*As should be clear by the last sentence, this decision neither encourages nor sanctions writing or drawing on Shabbat. It merely states that observance of the traditional prohibition is not required as part of our basic practice.*

#### **4.11 Laborious Activity**

Laborious activity such as moving heavy appliances or heavy furniture is not appropriate on Shabbat.

*Speaking in the name of G-d, the prophet Jeremiah sees the “bearing of a burden” as incompatible with the holiness of Shabbat: “Thus says the LORD: For the sake of your lives, take care that you do not bear a burden on the Sabbath day or bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem. And do not carry a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath or do any work, but keep the Sabbath day holy, as I commanded your ancestors” (Jeremiah 17:21-22).*

*While this text appears to us to focus on the carrying of any heavy load on Shabbat, rabbinic tradition understood it differently. It is there interpreted as applying to the carrying of any object, regardless of its size or weight, but only when that object is moved from one domain to another. According to the Mishnah (Shabbat 7:2), the thirty-ninth major category of work prohibited on Shabbat is “removing an object from one domain to another.” As with the other basic categories of work, this prohibition is traditionally viewed as Scriptural rather than rabbinic in nature.*

*Traditional Halacha also prohibited the carrying of heavy objects within a domain, but this was seen as a rabbinic rather than Scriptural limitation, imposed to preserve the spirit of Shabbat.*

*In our view, the authoritative sources of the two commandments (not carrying from one domain to another, not bearing a heavy burden) should be reversed. We understand the prohibition of bearing a heavy burden as Scriptural, and the prohibition of carrying any object from one domain to another as rabbinic. We respect the rabbinic limitation and commend it as an expanded practice, but we have not included it as part of our basic practice.*

#### **4.12 The Spirit of Shabbat**

On Shabbat one should avoid as much as possible activities that, while not strictly defined as work, are not in keeping with the spirit of Shabbat. This principle is called *shevut*.

In order to guard the Shabbat, one must keep the spirit of Shabbat. In determining which social amusements are fitting to Shabbat and which are unfitting, one may be guided by the words of Morris Joseph (Judaism as Creed and Life, New York: Bloch, 1920), quoted by Issac Klein (pages 89-90): “The Sabbath is a sacred day and there are certain kinds of enjoyment which by their very nature are out of harmony with its inherent holiness. Participation in them on the Sabbath is like a sudden intrusion of a shrill street organ on a beautiful melody sung by a lovely voice. It is difficult, almost impossible, to lay down a definite rule on this point, to say 'This sort of amusement is allowable, that sort improper, on the Sabbath.' The matter must be left to the individual conscience, to each person's sense of what is seemly.”

The Sabbath is a holy day in which we are commanded to guard it and to keep it. One should seek the Holy Spirit's guidance to determine if a particular activity, not specifically prohibited, is appropriate for the Sabbath day.

**4.12.1** Due to the socially fragmenting effect of television on families, normally it is best to avoid television on Shabbat. In particular, we consider the watching of commercial television to be inappropriate on Shabbat.

**4.12.2** It is best to leave mail unopened until the Sabbath is over.

**4.12.3** It is best to not compose, send, retrieve, or read e-mail on Shabbat.

**4.12.4** Use of the telephone, cell phones and electronic devices should be minimized. One should especially avoid usage which intrudes upon the spirit of Shabbat.

**4.12.5** Fasting on Shabbat should be strictly avoided except when Yom Kippur falls on a Sabbath day. The Sabbath is about joy and freedom. To fast on a Sabbath would be to violate the spirit of the day.

*Isaac Klein provides a clear and concise statement of the meaning of shevut: "The term shevut (resting) covers a whole area of activities which are not strictly work but are to be avoided because they are not in the Spirit of the Sabbath, or because doing them may lead to acts that constitute a major desecration of the Sabbath" (84). This is a crucial concept for making Shabbat a transforming experience rather than a mere compliance with a set of arbitrary external restrictions.*

*It is possible to avoid all forms of work, yet never enter into the spirit of Shabbat. To partake of that spirit, one must combine the joyful experience of the day's holiness with the avoidance of all activities that detract from that holiness.*

*In addition to television, we must be careful in our use of computers and recorded video. It is possible to employ these media in a way that preserves the spirit of Shabbat. However, they also have great potential for undermining that spirit, especially when members of the family retreat to their own monitors and their own private worlds, or when the contents viewed involve intense sensory stimulation, or are violent or immodest.*

*Abraham Joshua Heschel described Shabbat as "a palace in time which we build. It is made of soul, of joy and reticence" (Heschel, The Sabbath, 15). While Shabbat exists whether we observe it or not, our experience of the day depends on how we build that palace in our lives. The habit of avoiding distracting activities and thoughts while actively participating in Shabbat-related activities has the cumulative effect of creating an atmosphere entirely different from the other six days of the week, a time without struggle or worry.*

### 4.13 Marital Relations

Sexual intimacy with one's spouse is not prohibited on Shabbat. To the contrary, it is a long standing custom to engage in sexual intimacy on the Sabbath. This, of course, should be limited to married couples. The laws of family purity still apply.

*Contrary to common Christian ideology, sexual intercourse is not considered a "necessary evil" in Judaism. Nor is sexual intimacy between a husband and a wife considered carnal or vulgar. Quite to the contrary, this intimacy is considered natural, spiritual and Divinely ordained. In fact, having sexual intimacy with one's spouse on erev Shabbat is nearly considered to be a mitzvah in Judaism. Most certainly, it is in no way prohibited for any reason except family purity.*

*"Family purity" refers to a wife in niddah which is her monthly time of menstruation. The Torah forbids sexual intimacy at this time.*

## Sabbath Customs of the Synagogue

### 4.14 Modesty

Dress for Sabbath services should be neat, clean and modest. An individual's attire should be commensurate with social norms for participating in a public worship service. This appearance should be neat, clean and in no way distracting to the service. It is an age old Jewish custom for one to "dress up" on the Sabbath. The idea being that casual attire is appropriate for friends; more formal is more appropriate for the King of kings.

Shorts and tank tops are not appropriate attire for Sabbath services. Women are permitted to wear pants with our basic practice but they are encouraged to wear skirts. Our expanded practice entails a skirt at least knee length, a blouse that covers the collar bone and sleeves that cover the elbow. Men are encouraged to wear slacks, a jacket, and a tie.

*Admittedly, the above sounds "old-fashioned" especially in an age where casual attire is seen as a virtue; even a religious one. Moreover, immodest attire is extraordinarily popular in our day and age. We often hear the cliché "Don't judge a book by its cover" when discussing the way a person presents themselves. While this sounds good, it is simply not how the world works. Lisa Aiken, in her book "To be A Jewish Woman", writes the following, "Whether we admit it or not, we all make statements to the world about who we are via our clothes and body language. Our clothes define and describe us to some degree...Whether we like it or not, society is very image conscious. When we don't convey the images that we desire, we often pay the price in how others react to the discrepancy." She continues her thought with respect to modest dress, "G-d created men in a way that they are attracted to women. He wanted these feelings of attraction and arousal to be put to productive use within a marital relationship. Therefore, a woman who*

wants men not to be overly distracted by her sexual qualities should downplay those aspects of herself rather than try to change human nature.” (pgs. 124-125)

*The Jewish model of modesty is viewed by many as archaic and outdated. What cannot be overlooked however is the fact that within observant Jewish communities certain cultural dysfunctionality is nearly non-existent. For instance, pregnancy among teens is virtually absent. An observant Jewish couple has a 97% less chance of getting a divorce, according to Christianity today's survey, than a Christian couple. Illegitimate children and single mothers simply do not exist in observant Jewish communities. Much more could be said about the lack of crime, promiscuity, alcoholism and other cultural faults. These statistics are no accident. They are the fruit of a Torah life guided by traditions that often seem archaic to the western thinker. Something so simple and yet so foreign as concept of “modesty” is one of those little customary nuances that produces great gain.*

*The issue of modesty entire cannot be understated. Many people are inclined to believe that the downfall society occurs when the big things start to collapse such as the economy, the political structure, internal strife or other natural catastrophe. However, there are social norms that begin to decay first. These values start to erode much slower, much quieter and on a much smaller scale. Understandably to the amazement of many, the concept of modest, attire (and manners) is a key factor in the health or the decline of the society. Casual attire erodes self-esteem and promotes apathy. Immodest attire leads, eventually, to promiscuity and dysfunction.*

*The truth of the matter is that men, when smartly dressed, think of themselves with a higher esteem. It is an everlasting fact that those who choose to dressed poorly will act poorly. Of course there will be those who would argue vehemently against what has just been written. That there are modern agitations about this subject does not change what is proven fact; and has been proven fact for many, many centuries. The idea of modesty is not simply for the benefit of the religious, is for the benefit of the individual and the society as a whole.*

*In the book Character Building, published in 1897, is written these thoughts on the idea of dressing attire: “if I had my life to live over again,” said Horace Mann, “I would pay more attention to dress and address.” And the man who would succeed in life will have to pay great attention to both.”*

#### **4.15 The Kippah, the Female Head covering, and the Tallit**

The wearing of a kippah among men at Sar Shalom is strongly encouraged.

*Orthodox Jews wear a head covering (usually a kippah) all of the time. In general, Jewish men and women, of all denominations, cover their head for services in the shul and during the high holidays. There are some who may object to this practice based on 1 Corinthians 11, citing that men are forbidden from covering their head while praying or prophesying. This alleged injunction however is problematic for several reasons. First, in the verse preceding this statement, the*

*Apostle says that he has handed down the “traditions” of the fathers and the members of the Corinthian congregation should follow them. Covering one's head while praying was a very well-known practice in the first century Jewish society, i.e. the custom of the fathers. Furthermore, HaShem himself commanded the priest and the Levites cover their head when ministering in the tabernacle, the quintessential place of prayer and prophecy. Additionally, the high priest when entering the holy of holies on Yom Kippur, the very throne room of Divine glory, was specifically commanded by G-d to wear head covering. For the Apostle to suggest that wearing a head covering while prophesying or praying is un-G-dly is illogical. This would be tantamount to abolishing Divine commandments, a concept expressly forbidden according to the words of the Master in Matthew 5:17. Much more could be written about the fact that every person (including David and Elijah) covered their head while praying and that the bible is replete with statements that a head covering is part of our spiritual attire. To forbid it seems completely preposterous.*

*Scholars debate what exactly the Apostle Paul was writing about in 1 Corinthians 11. He is apparently addressing a question and we are reading his response. Unfortunately, we do not have the luxury of being able to read the question to which is responding. As a result we are operating with very limited information. But we do know, however, is that within the Greek culture it was common for women to shave their heads and act very masculine. At the same time it was common for men to let their hair grow long, to wear a veil in the pagan temples and to act effeminate. In fact, the Greek wording of the verse in question says, “don't wear something down over your head.” This seems to imply a veil rather than a head covering. There is a certain consensus, among credentialed scholars, to believe that the Apostle is here writing that men should look and act like men and women should look and act like women. To that end, the NIV Bible provides an alternative rendering, in the footnotes, for verses 4-7, “everyman that prays or prophesies with long hair dishonors his head. And every woman who prays or prophesies with no covering [of hair] on her head dishonors her head – she is just like one of the ‘shorn women.’ If a woman has no covering, let her be for now with short hair, but since it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair shorn or shaved, she should grow it again. A man ought not to have long hair.” The ‘shorn hair’ statement is clearly a reference to Numbers 5.*

**4.15.1** Women should not wear a kippah. The Torah forbids women to dress like men and visa-versa. The kippah, for centuries, has been a male garment. Thus, it is unseemly for women to wear a kippah. Married women are encouraged, but not required, to wear a hat, head scarf or shawl as a head covering.

*In traditional Orthodox Judaism married women cover their head at all times. This custom is based upon two thoughts from antiquity. The first is that a woman's hair is sensual and should be reserved only for her husband's eyes. The second is the presumption that women, dating back all the way to Mount Sinai, wore head coverings for the normative mode of dress. This is based on the Torah commandment regarding the unfaithful wife from Numbers 5:18, “The cohen will place the woman before ADONAI, unbind the woman's hair and put the grain*

*offering for remembering in her hands, the grain offering for jealousy; while the cohen has in his hand the water of embitterment and cursing.”*

**4.15.2** The wearing of a Tallit at Sar Shalom is strongly encouraged but not required. Women are permitted to wear a tallit. However, ladies who wear a tallit should take care to use one that is distinctively feminine.

**4.15.4** The tallit, the siddur and the Bible should not be taken into the restroom.

## **4.16 Reading from the Bema**

Due to the special and unique sanctity of reading the weekly Torah portions from the Bema, Sar Shalom’s custom is to require the wearing of a head covering for this purpose. The head covering may be a kippah or tallit for men.

## **4.17 The Torah Scroll Procession**

Each week we celebrate the giving of the Torah with a joyful “Torah Walk” around the sanctuary. The Torah scroll represents the Ark of the Covenant which why we quote Numbers 10:35. The text tells us that when the Ark would travel Moses said, “Arise Adonai...”. The Ark was a physical object that represented the essence of HaShem. It, in and of itself, was not HaShem. So it is with the Torah scroll. The Scroll is the Word; the representative essence of the Most High G-d. For Observant Jews in Yeshua we understand that the Messiah was the Word (Torah) made flesh (John 1) and that the Word of G-d is likened to G-d Himself. For these reasons we hold special regard for the Torah. It is customary to face the Torah as it is traveling about the sanctuary.

One should use their bible, siddur or corner of their prayer shawl (tallit) to touch the Torah. Bare hands should not touch the Torah scroll. It is customary, after having touched the Torah, to then kiss the bible, siddur or corner of the tallit used to do so.

## **4.18 The Giving of Tithes and Offerings**

The giving of tithes and offerings at Sar Shalom should be a joyful act of worship. To that end, we receive them during a special moment in the service whereby we invite families to come forward and deposit their gift in the tzedakah boxes at the front of the sanctuary. Of course, families may give whenever they so choose.

## **4.19 Blowing of the Shofar**

We blow the shofar as the families come for two reasons. First, the Torah commands the blowing of trumpets over our offerings as it is written, “Also on your days of rejoicing, at your designated times and on Rosh-Chodesh, you are to sound the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; these will be your reminder before your G-d. I am Adonai your G-d.” Numbers

10:10. Second, the priests blew the shofar in the Temple while people brought their offerings (2 Chronicles 5:12). In addition, King David, while bringing up the Ark of the Covenant, presented offerings while simultaneously blowing the shofar. It is for these reasons that we lift up the blast of the shofar when our families are offering up their “sacrifice”.

*Flavius Josephus (the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Priest and Historian) testifies that the shofar was used in the Temple worship. One should remember that the entire purpose of the Temple was to offer sacrifices and offerings. Therefore, to blow the shofar in the Temple was, by logical inference, to sound the shofar over the offerings. Furthermore, one should realize that during the first and second Temple periods, pilgrims were bringing sacrifices and offerings to the Temple all day every day. In the Antiquities of the Jews 11.4.2 (80) we read, “and when the Temple was finished, the priest, adorned with their accustomed garments, stood with their trumpets, while the Levites, and the sons of Asaph, stood and sung hymns to G-d, according as David first of all appointed them to bless G-d.” Furthermore, in speaking concerning the administration of the silver trumpets, Josephus records, in the Antiquities of the Jews 3.12.6 (294) “They also made use of these trumpets and their sacred ministrations, when they were bringing their sacrifices to the altar, as well on the Sabbath as on the rest of the [Festival] days; ...”. In saying this, Josephus is speaking about the acts of the Israelites in the desert. Thus, “blowing trumpets over the offerings” dates back all the way to Mount Sinai. It is a matter of biblical and historical fact that trumpets and shofarot were employed, by Divine decree, as an act of worship while men and women brought their gifts to HaShem. In keeping this custom at Sar Shalom, we continue a Divine act of worship inaugurated by Moses and our forefathers in the Wilderness.*

#### **4.20 Halacha While at Shul on Shabbat**

While attending the shul on Shabbat the expanded practice of the halacha should be followed at all times. All food and drink items should be certified kosher or vegan. The only exception is hard cheese, which can be certified kosher or those cheeses that do not contain animal rennet – it must state no animal rennet. Unless designated otherwise, all food items for oneg must be dairy/parve – no meat.

## The Appointed Times

### Why Celebrate the Jewish Holidays?

Just about everyone has a calendar in their kitchen, and there is probably not a kitchen calendar anywhere without hand-drawn circles and scribbled notes. What are these notes and circles? They are the appointments and commitments that make each family unique - the dental appointments, soccer games, music lessons, birthdays, celebrations, vacations, graduations, and anniversaries that distinguish one family from another. The appointments, commitments, celebrations, and observances on each particular calendar constitute the stitching that makes each family unique and binds it together as one.

What is true for every family in America is true as well for the family of Israel scattered around the globe. The holidays of Israel are our unique family calendar, circled and scribbled, stained with cholent, wine, charoset, birthday cake, and sometimes blood. But this calendar is what stitches us together as a family, enabling this scattered and trans-generational family to rejoice together, to weep together, and to steep in fragrant memory.

And just as it is erosive to family ties to forget birthdays and anniversaries, so Jewish identity erodes and our ties with each other unravel when we fail to honor our common calendar. While neglecting these holy days, both the happy ones and the sad, will not annul our family status, can there be any doubt that such neglect weakens family ties? The appointed times, perhaps more than any other of the mitzvot, bind us together as a mishpacha (family).

Because it is important for us to be family to each other, all the *family* holidays are important - the big ones and the small ones. These mo'edim are the stitching that binds us to each other, and by which we honor the One who is the Father of us all.

More important is the reality that these "Jewish holidays" are actually *biblical* holidays. They are of Divine origin and not the imagination of humankind. These festivals are *mo'edim*, appointed times. They are prophetic and holy times of visitation and connectivity. By keeping the festivals we are reminded of what HaShem has done, what He is doing and what He will do in the future. To miss a festival is to miss an appointment with the Most High G-d!

The cycle of the feasts is a cycle of life for the Jew. It is too easy to forget; too easy to take our covenant for granted. It is too easy to become complaisant, to be distracted and to venture after false G-ds. This is what happened to the church. The gentile "Church fathers" rejected the Torah out of contempt for the Jews. When they rejected the Divine path with its appointments they created a man-made path...they developed their own Torah borrowed entirely from paganism. As a result, history records, at that precise moment, the world entered the Dark Ages. Why? Because the light of Torah had been abolished by arrogant men masquerading as followers of the Messiah. The diming of light began with the first festival, the Sabbath. Why is it important to keep the feasts? Because it is important to keep the light on. This is why HaShem commanded us to keep the festivals forever.

## 5.1 Moedim

**5.1.1** According to the explicit teaching of the Torah, we should avoid m'lechet avodah (servile work) on the mo'edim (Leviticus 23:7, 21, 35-36). According to Jewish tradition, this includes all Sabbath restrictions on work with the exception of the transferring of flame, the preparation and cooking of food, and the carrying of objects, all of which may be done on mo'edim.

*What are the mo'edim? They are the "fixed" or "appointed" times listed and described in Leviticus 23. In that chapter they are also called "holy assemblies" (mikra'ey kodesh), occasions set apart for Israel to gather and worship the Holy One. Leviticus 23 lists the following holidays as mo'edim: Pesach, Shavuot, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, and Shemini Atzeret.*

*According to Ramban, melechet avodah (servile work) refers to work that is a burden, such as ordinary labor in factory and field. Exodus 12:16 describes the work that is permitted on Pesach: "only what every person is to eat (okhel nefesh), that alone may be prepared for you." Based on this verse, the Mishnah states: "The difference between a holiday (yom tov) and Shabbat is only the food (okhel nefesh)" (m. Megillah 1:5). The preparation of food is forbidden on Shabbat, but permitted on holidays.*

*Rabbinic tradition understood the halacha to include all actions that would be involved in normal food preparation, such as transferring a flame for cooking, and carrying objects from one domain to another. According to b. Betzah 12a, the houses of Shammai and Hillel disagreed over whether the doing of such activities (e.g., transferring a flame and carrying objects from one domain to another) were allowed in general on holidays, or only when food is actually being prepared. The House of Hillel took the more lenient view, and their position prevailed.*

*It should be noted that the Shabbat prohibition of buying and selling also applies to holidays.*

**5.1.2** The last (seventh) day of Pesach and Shemini Atzeret are full mo'edim.

*The Torah is unambiguous on this point: the final day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Exodus 12:16; Leviticus 23:8) and the eighth day after the beginning of Sukkot (Leviticus 23:36, 39) are full holidays. This needs to be stressed because so few Jews today outside the Orthodox world observe these holidays.*

**5.1.3** It is the traditional practice of Diaspora Jews to honor the additional day added to Pesach, Shavuot, Rosh Hashanah, and Sukkot as mo'edim. However, since the establishment of these days is d'rabbanan (Rabbinic Law) rather than d'oraita (Biblical Law), we do not observe the extra days as mo'edim.

*The day added to Sukkot after Shemini Atzeret is called Simchat Torah. It celebrates the end of one year's cycle of Torah readings, and the beginning of the next year's cycle. In the land of Israel Simchat Torah and Shemini Atzeret are observed on the same day, and are in fact one holiday.*

**5.1.4** We acknowledge that refraining from work on the mo'edim is obligatory d'oraita, and thus part of the written commandments. Therefore, we include refraining from melechet avodah on the mo'edim as a basic practice (most especially on Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah).

**5.1.5** We commend the avoidance of all activities that would detract from the peacefulness, rest, and sanctity of the mo'edim.

**5.1.6** We commend attendance at communal worship services on the mo'edim, but if such attendance is not possible one should use the standard holiday Amidah in one's daily prayer. It is appropriate to make special preparations for holiday meals, since such preparations add to the distinctiveness, sanctity and communal aspect of the mo'edim.

## 5.2 Yom Kippur

**5.2.1** On Yom Kippur one should fast completely (no food or drink) beginning before sundown and ending after nightfall the following day. This applies to all of bar/bat mitzvah age and over. Those who have special health needs should eat and drink according to those needs.

*The Torah commands the practice of "self-affliction" ('inuy nefesh) on Yom Kippur (Leviticus 16:29, 31; 23:27, 32; Numbers 29:7). Other biblical texts demonstrate that this phrase implies fasting (Psalm 35:13; Isaiah 58:3), along with other expressions of self-denial. In the Acts of the Apostles the day is referred to simply as "the fast" (Acts 27:9). According to the Mishnah (m. Yoma 8:1), and the consensus of Jewish tradition, the fast required on Yom Kippur involves abstention from both food and drink.*

Children nine years old or younger should not fast on Yom Kippur. Children more than nine years old should learn to fast, adding hours each year as they grow older.

*"Children need not be made to fast on Yom Kippur, but they should train them the year before or two years before, in order that they become accustomed to the observance of commandments" (m. Yoma 8:4). The Shulchan Aruch recommends that the training begin at age nine (133:19).*

**5.2.3** On Yom Kippur one should not bathe for pleasure, but washing the hands and face for hygienic purposes is not inappropriate.

**5.2.4** On Yom Kippur one should not engage in sexual relations.

*The Mishnah defines the "self-affliction" required on Yom Kippur as involving abstention from washing (for pleasure), sexual intercourse, and the wearing of leather sandals, in addition to a total fast (m. Yoma 8:1).*

**5.2.5** It is customary to wear white on Yom Kippur as a symbol of purity and righteousness.

### 5.3 Rosh Hashanah

On Rosh Hashanah one should hear the sounding of the shofar.

*The Torah (Numbers 29:1) calls the first day of the seventh month (reckoned according to the festal calendar, in which Nissan is the first month) a “day when the horn is sounded” (yom teruah). It also states (Leviticus 23: 24) that the day is “commemorated with loud blasts” (zichron teruah). According to the Mishnah, this implies that a Jew is obligated to hear the sounding of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah (m. Rosh Hashanah 3:7).*

### 5.4 Sukkot

**5.4.1** As weather permits during Sukkot, one should eat as many of one's meals as possible in a sukkah (whether a congregational sukkah, a friend's sukkah, or one's own). We would also commend the *expanded practice* of sleeping in the sukkah.

*“The Sukkah is a temporary structure...erected in the open air, under the sky, not in a room or under a tree. It consists of three or four walls and removable covering...Theoretically two complete walls and part of a third wall satisfy the minimum requirements for a Sukkah, but it is customary to have four walls, and these should be strong enough to withstand the impact of ordinary winds...The covering, called sekhakh, must be of material that grows from the soil, has been detached from the ground, and cannot be defiled...The sekhakh should be loose enough so that one can see the sky, yet thick enough so that the shadow it casts on the ground exceeds the light thrown by the sun.” (Klein, 162-63) One of these walls may be a permanent structure such as a house outside wall.*

*“You shall live in booths (sukkot) seven days; all citizens of Israel shall live in booths” (Leviticus 23:42). The Mishnah teaches that this means making the sukkah one's primary home and one's house a secondary home during the seven days of the holiday (m. Sukkah 2:9). However, the Mishnah also teaches that one should move from the sukkah to the house when harsh weather intervenes. The Shulchan Aruch expands on this concession: “If staying in the sukkah causes you discomfort, that is if you are troubled by the cold weather or the wind, or by a bad odor or similar annoyances, you are exempt from the mitzvah of sukkah on all nights other than the first night, and on all the days of Sukkot” (135:17).*

**5.4.2** As an expanded practice, we commend building one's own sukkah for the celebration of Sukkot.

**5.4.3** One should wave the lulav and etrog at least once during the holiday in accordance with traditional practice. The traditional mitzvah berachah should be recited before waving. While it is acceptable to wave a lulav/etrog that belongs to the congregation or to a fellow congregant, it is preferable to purchase one's own. As an *expanded practice* we commend purchasing a certified kosher lulav for the holiday of Sukkot. However, as a *basic practice* one may obtain the elements of the lulav from a local florist.

*“On the first day [of Sukkot] you shall take the product of hadar trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your G-d seven days” (Leviticus 23:40). According to the Talmud, the “product of hadar trees” is the citron (etrog), and the “leafy tree” is the myrtle (b. Sukkah 35a, 32b).*

*The lulav consists of palm, myrtle, and willow branches placed together. To fulfill the mitzvah of waving the lulav, the etrog is placed in the left hand, the lulav in the right hand, and they are held together so that they touch one another. When reciting the mitzvah blessing, the tip of the etrog points downward and the stem upward. When waving, the tip of the etrog points upward and the stem downward. The lulav and etrog are waved first toward the east, then toward the south, then west, north, up, and down.*

## 5.5 Pesach

**5.5.1** From 10 a.m. on the day of the first Seder (the 14th of Nissan) till the end of Passover eight days later no leaven shall be eaten.

*According to the traditional rabbinic interpretation, the Written Torah forbids eating leaven from noon on the day the Passover lamb was sacrificed (m. Pesachim 1:4). This time was set by calculating the earliest hour when the afternoon sacrifices (which on this day included the Passover lambs) would begin in the Temple (m. Pesachim 5:1). The Sages then added an additional two-hour buffer, as a fence around the Torah.*

**5.5.2** Leaven (called chametz) refers specifically to five kinds of grain which rise when put in contact with water. These are wheat, barley, spelt, rye and oats. Specifically, chametz is defined as any food that contains these five grains *and* leaven (yeast).

During Pesach we do not eat or prepare food items that contain these five grains so as to avoid, even the possibility of them becoming chametz.

*These five grains, when combined with water, can become chametz. As a result, it is best to avoid them completely during the week of Pesach.*

**5.5.3** Foods that have a “Kosher for Passover” hechsher (symbol indicating official kosher certification) are guaranteed to contain no leaven. During the eight days of Pesach shoppers should look for the distinctive markings on food packages.

**5.5.4** While we commend the traditional approach to kashering dishes and silverware or having separate dishes and silverware for Pesach, we do not consider this to be a basic practice.

**5.5.5** We commend the tradition of b'dikat chametz - the search for leaven.

*After sundown on the night before Pesach, all the lights of the home are turned off, a candle is lit, a berachah recited (al b'ur chametz) and the search for a few intentionally scattered crumbs*

*of bread is begun. After these are scooped up, they are set-aside until morning and burned. The power of the symbolic removal of chametz in such a deliberate and dramatic fashion is especially meaningful for families with small children.*

**5.5.6** The chances of accidentally eating food mixed with chametz is great when eating in restaurants. Therefore, during the week of Pesach one should avoid eating in restaurants, unless one is merely purchasing a beverage.

**5.5.7** Beer, grain alcohol, balsamic vinegar and other vinegars are considered chametz. Foods containing vinegars should only be purchased and consumed if the label specifically reads “Kosher for Passover”. Likewise wine, used for Pesach, should be certified “kosher for Passover”.

## 5.6 Counting the Omer

**\* Please see Rabbi’s article at the end of this section for a full explanation of Counting the Omer.**

The counting of the omer is to be done in accordance with the existing Halacha, commencing on the second day of Pesach (16<sup>th</sup> of Nisan) and culminating at Shavuot fifty days following.

*The practice of counting the omer derives from Leviticus 23:15: “And from the day on which you bring the sheaf (omer) of elevation offering - the day after the Sabbath - you shall count seven weeks.” The Sages understood the command “you shall count” as requiring a formal, liturgical act in which the days between Pesach and Shavuot would each receive a numerical designation. Following the interpretation adopted by the Pharisees during the Second Temple period (and supported by the Septuagint, Philo, and Josephus), rabbinic tradition understood “the Sabbath” of Leviticus 23:15 to be the first day of Pesach. Thus, the counting of the omer would commence on the second day of Pesach. Apparently the Sadducees and the Qumarn community interpreted the word as referring to a Saturday - either the Saturday after Pesach began, or the one after the seven-day Pesach holiday ended. According to their reckoning, the practice of counting the omer would always begin on a Sunday.*

*Josephus record the following: “But on the second day of unleavened bread, which is the sixteenth day of the month, they first partake of the fruits of the earth, for before that day they do not touch them....they offer the first fruits of their barley...” The Antiquities of the Jews 3.10.5 Josephus, being a Priest, General, and chief historian of the 1st century here gives us a clear and precise determination of when the omer was counted in the days of Yeshua. We have no instructions from the Master as to the unbiblical nature of this practice, thus, we must conclude that this is how the omer was counted and that it was appropriate to do so.*

## 5.7 Minor Fasts and Festivals

**5.7.2** The Ninth of Av. Our *basic practice* includes fasting on the Ninth of Av.

*Zechariah 8:19 refers to four fasts, all associated with the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE. The most important of these occurs on the Ninth of Av. According to the Mishnah (m. Taanit 4:6), both the first and the second Temples were destroyed on this day. Many other historical calamities (such as the expulsion from Spain) have befallen the Jewish people on the Ninth of Av. Consequently, after Yom Kippur this day has been the most solemn fast in the Jewish calendar. While work is not prohibited (a common characteristic of all the minor fasts and festivals), one avoids all eating and drinking from sunset to sunset, as on Yom Kippur.*

**5.7.3** Chanukah. Our *basic practice* includes lighting menorah candles on Chanukah, accompanied by the traditional berachot. (As with Shabbat candles, an alternative berachah may be added.)

**5.7.4** Purim. Our *basic practice* includes hearing the Megillah (the Book of Esther) read on Purim. Giving gifts to the poor on Purim is also a *basic practice*.

**5.7.5** Yom HaShoah and Yom HaAtzma'ut. Our basic practice involves commemorating these days by gathering (if possible) with others from our congregation or with the wider Jewish community. As an expanded practice we commend lighting a yahrzeit candle on Yom HaShoah.

*These holidays commemorate the two monumental events of twentieth century Jewish history: the holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel. These events, both of profound spiritual significance, have left an indelible mark on the consciousness of the Jewish people.*

## Why We Count The Omer From The 16<sup>th</sup> Of Nisan

By Rabbi Mordecai Griffin

In certain “Hebrew Roots” circles it is believed that the counting of the Omer, as commanded in the Torah, should commence on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the Week (Sunday) after the 7<sup>th</sup> day Sabbath of the week of Unleavened bread. Justification for this view is typically founded upon the fact that the Messiah was raised from the grave on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week. Therefore, the Jewish method of counting the Omer beginning on the 16<sup>th</sup> of Nisan (which could fall on any day) is viewed as a *tradition of men* and a perversion or gross misunderstanding of the Torah. In some case, these Messianic Christians are bellicose regarding their view; stating such phrase as “we celebrate Shavuot on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week according to the bible”. In these instances these individuals regard the traditional counting method as a violation of law, blindly following man-made traditions and in direct opposition to the revelation of Messiah Yeshua. But is this view accurate? Where the Rabbis and Sages wrong concerning when we are to begin counting the Omer? Is counting the Omer from the 16<sup>th</sup> of Nisan a “tradition of men”? More importantly, is it against Torah or contrary to the teachings of Messiah? The answer, of course, is **no!** We contend, based upon biblical, historical and expert evidence, that the counting of the Omer from the 16<sup>th</sup> of Nisan is the correct interpretation of the Divine commandment. To put it more emphatically: The counting of the Omer from the 16<sup>th</sup> of Nisan is the correct, biblical and proper fulfillment of the Torah commandment. Furthermore, we believe that this was the practice of the Messiah and His Apostles in the first century. The following will explain, in detail, our case for this conclusion.

First, counting the Omer from the 16<sup>th</sup> of Nisan is not a mere tradition of men. Rather it is a sincere and valid interpretation of the Scripture in Leviticus 23. The ancient Sages interpreted the “morrow after the Sabbath” to mean the Sabbath which is the first day of Unleavened Bread. Often this counting is attacked as a tradition but it is not. It is a sincere and valid interpretation and an ancient one at that. By ancient, I mean that it predates the birth of Messiah.

Second, some insist that one must count the Omer from the 7<sup>th</sup> Day Sabbath *and* that the 50 days *must* include 7 Sabbaths. Thus, to count from the 16<sup>th</sup> of Nisan would be a violation of the Torah commandment to count 7 Sabbaths. This is based on the standard English translations that read

*“You shall also count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day when you brought in the sheaf of the wave offering; there shall be seven complete Sabbaths. You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall present a new grain offering to the Lord.” Lev. 23:15-16.*

This assumes that the text is clear and that one is to count seven (7)- 7<sup>th</sup> Day Sabbaths. However, it is important (critically important) to understand that this is NOT the interpretation from Hebrew speakers! In addition, the Ancient argument *never* included this discussion. The ancient argument was regarding about which Sabbath the text was speaking. In other words, even the Sadducees didn’t believe that one had to count seven Sabbaths *even though* they believed that one should count from the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the

week! How can that be? Hebrew speakers and those who have a credentialed education in Semitic languages interpret the verse differently. This is the standard English interpretation of this passage from native Hebrew speakers and Hebrew scholars:

*“You shall count for yourselves – from the morrow of the rest day, from the day when you bring the Omer of the waving – seven weeks, they shall be complete. Until the morrow of the seventh week you shall count, fifty days; and you shall offer a new meal offering to HaShem.”*

*Artscroll Stone’s Addition*

*“And from the day on which you bring the sheaf of elevation offering – the day after the Sabbath – you shall count off seven weeks. They must be complete: you must count until the day after the seventh week – fifty days; then you shall bring an offering of new grain to the Lord.”*

*Jewish Publication Society*

*“From the day after the day of rest — that is, from the day you bring the sheaf for waving — you are to count seven full weeks, 16 until the day after the seventh week; you are to count fifty days; and then you are to present a new grain offering to Adonai.”*

*Complete Jewish Bible*

*“After the first festal day of Pascha (or, the day after the feast-day of Pascha) on the day on which you elevate the sheaf, you shall make (the sacrifice of a lamb of the year, unblemished a burnt offering unto the Name of the Lord: and its mincha, two tenths of flour, mingled with olive oil, for an oblation to the Name of the Lord, to be received with acceptance; and its libation, wine of grapes, the fourth of a hin. But neither bread nor parched corn (of the ripe harvest) nor new ears may you eat until this day, until the time of your bringing the oblation of your G-d: an everlasting statute unto your generations in all your dwellings. And number to you after the first feast day of Pascha, from the day when you brought the sheaf for the elevation, seven weeks; complete they shall be.”*

*Targum Onkelos (a 1<sup>st</sup> Century Aramaic translation of the Torah)*

The command is to count fifty days rather than seven weeks. If we count from the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week every time then what is the point of counting 50 days? Why not just say, “count seven weeks”? But the main point that I wanted to highlight is that there exist a real dispute with respect to the Hebrew of the text. Hebrew speakers believe that it reads one way and Christian interpreters believe differently. But, this former view is not limited to Jews. Below is the discussion of this text in the volume work on the “Old Testament” by Keil-Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*:

*“When the Israelites had come into the land to be given them by the Lord, and had reaped the harvest, they were to bring a sheaf as first-fruits of their harvest to the priest, that he might*

wave it before Jehovah on the day after the Sabbath, i.e. after the first day of Mazzoth.... מִחֲרַת הַשַּׁבָּת (The morrow after the Sabbath) signifies the rest day after the first day of the feast of Mazzoth, i.e. the 16th of Abib (Nisan), no the day of the Sabbath which fell is the seven days feast of Mazzoth, as the Baethoseans supposed, still less the 22nd of Nisan, of the day after the conclusion of the seven days feast, which always closed with a Sabbath, as Hitzig imagines. The "Sabbath" does not mean the seventh day of the week, but the day of rest, although the weekly Sabbath was always the seventh or last day of the week; hence not only the seventh day of the week (Ex. Xxxi. 15, ect.), but the day of atonement (the tenth of the seventh month), is called "Sabbath", and "Shabbath Shabbathon" (ver. 32, chap. Xvi. 31). As a day of rest, on which no laborious work was to be performed (ver. 8), the first day of the week of Mazzoth is called "Sabbath", irrespectively of the day of the week upon which it fell; and "the morrow after the Sabbath" is equivalent to "the morrow after the Passover" mentioned in Josh. v.11, where "Passover" signifies the day at the beginning at which the Paschal meal was held, I. E. The first day of unleavened bread, which commenced on the evening of the 14th, in other words, the 15th Abib.... This offering was six for the second day of the feast of the Passover, that the connection between the harvest and the Passover might be kept insubordination to the leading idea of the Passover itself (see at Ex. Xii.15 sqq)..... 70 weeks, or 50 days, were to be reckoned the day of the offering of the sheaf, and then the day of Firstfruits (Num. xxviii. 26) or feast of weeks (Ex. Xxxiv. 22; Deut. Xvi. 10) was to be celebrated. From this reckoning the feast received the name of Pentecost. That שַׁבְּתוֹת (ver 15) signifies weeks, like שִׁבְעוֹת in Deut. xvi. 9. And in the Gospels (e.g. Matt. Xxviii. 1), as evidenced from the predicate תְּמִימָה, "complete", which would be quite unsuitable if Sabbath – days were intended, as a long period might be reckoned by half weeks instead of whole, but certainly not by half Sabbath – days. Consequently "the morrow after the seventh Sabbath" (verse 16) is the day after the seventh week, not after the seventh Sabbath. On this day, i.e., 50 days after the first day of Mazzoth, Israel was to offer a new meat offering to the Lord, i.e. made of the fruit of the new harvest (chapter 16:10)." A direct quote from pages 439-442.

"Lev 23:11 "On the morrow after the Sabbath - It is most probable that these words denote the 16th of Abib, the day after the first day of holy convocation (see Lev\_23:5-8 note), and that this was called "the Sabbath of the Passover", or, "the Sabbath of unleavened bread". Seven Sabbaths - More properly, seven weeks (compare Deu\_16:9). The word Sabbath, in the language of the New Testament as well as the Old, is used for "week" (Lev\_25:8; Mat\_28:1; Luk\_18:12, etc.).

*Lev\_23:16*The morrow after the seventh week was the 50th day after the conclusion of a week of weeks. The day is called in the Old Testament, “the feast of harvest” *Exo\_23:16*, “the feast of weeks,” “the feast of the first fruits of wheat harvest” *Exo\_34:22*; *Deu\_16:10*, and “the day of the first fruits” *Num\_28:26*. The word “Pentecost” used in the heading of this chapter in English Bibles is found only in the Apocrypha and the New Testament, *Tobit 2:1*; *2 Macc. 12:32*; *Act\_2:1*; *Act\_20:16*; *1Co\_16:8*.”

*Albert Barnes Notes on the Bible*

“*Leviticus 23:15* Ye shall count unto you - seven Sabbaths - That is, from the sixteenth of the first month to the sixth of the third month. These seven weeks, called here Sabbaths, were to be complete, i. e., the forty-nine days must be finished, and the next day, the fiftieth, is what, from the Septuagint, we call Pentecost. See the note on *Luk\_6:1*.”

*Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible*

“*Leviticus 23:15-22* Here is the institution of the Feast of Pentecost, or Weeks, as it is called (*Deu\_16:9*), because it was observed fifty days, or seven weeks, after the Passover.”

*Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Bible (emphasis ours)*

“**The Morrow after the Sabbath:** the expression, “the Morrow after the Sabbath” (*Leviticus 23:11*), has sometimes been misunderstood as implying the presentation of the so-called ‘first sheaf’ was to be always made on the day following the weekly Sabbath of the Passover week. This view, adopted by the Boethusians and the Sadducees and the time of Christ, and by the Karaite Jews and certain modern interpreters, rest on a misinterpretation of the word “Sabbath” (*Leviticus 23:24, 32, 39*). An analogous allusion to other feast in the same chapter, it means not the weekly Sabbath, but the day of the festival. The testimony of Josephus (*antiquities 3.248 – 249*), of Philo (*Op. ii.294*), and the Jewish tradition, leaves no room for doubt that in this instance we are to understand by the “Sabbath” the 15th of Nisan, on whatever day of the week it might fall. Already, on the 14th of Nisan, the spot whence the first sheaf was to be reached have been marked out by delegates the Sanhedrin, by tying together in bundles, while still standing, the barley that was to be cut down. Though, for obvious reasons, it was customary to choose for this purpose the sheltered ashes Valley across the Kedron, there was no restriction on that point, provided the barley had grown in an ordinary field – of course and Palestine itself – and not in garden orchard land, and that the soil had not been maneuvered nor yet artificially watered. When the time for cutting that she had arrived, that is, on the evening of the 15th of Nisan (even though it were a Sabbath), just as the sun went down, three men, each with a sickle and a basket, formerly set to work. But in order clearly to bring out all that was distinctive in the ceremony, they first asked the bystanders three times each of these questions: “Has the sun gone down?” “With a sickle?” “Into this basket?” “On this Sabbath (with the first Passover – day)?” And, lastly, “shall I read?” Having each time been answered in the affirmative, they cut down

*barley to the amount of one ephah, or ten omers, or three seahs, which is equal to about three pecks and 3 pints of our English measure. The one ephah, or ten omer's, the barley was cut down, only one Omer of flour, or about 5.1 pints of our measure, was offered in the Temple on the second Paschal, or 16th day of Nisan.... This is what is popularly, though not very correctly, called the presentation of the first or wave sheaf on the second day of the Passover feast, or the 16th of Nisan."*

*The Temple, by Alfred Edersheim, pgs. 203-205*

So, you see that **scholars, Rabbis, Sages and Hebrew speakers** have determined that the day for counting the Omer should begin on the 16<sup>th</sup> of Nisan. To put it another way, six credentialed expert witnesses have taken to the witness stand to verify that the traditional Jewish translation of this text (by Hebrew speaking Jews) is true and correct. This testimony conflicts with "Hebrew Roots" teachers who have no credentials in Semitic languages and who, in most cases, have been walking in Torah for less than a decade. The point here is not to denigrate these Hebrew roots teachers. We must assume that their intent and motivation is pure. Rather, this is an attempt to help the reader think critically and look objectively at both the evidence and who is presenting it.

Perhaps the most critical witness is Joshua, the chief Disciple of Moses and only companion atop Sinai. Joshua proves that the Omer count should begin on the 16<sup>th</sup> of Nisan as recorded in **Joshua 5:11**.

*"They ate from the grain of the land on the day after the Pesach-offering, matzah and roasted grain, on this very day."*

They would NOT have eaten of the "grain of the land" *unless* they had first offered the wave offering. For to partake of the grain of the land without offering the wave would be to violate Torah! Who would know that more than Joshua? Are we to believe that Joshua was mistaken and that the modern "Hebrew roots" teacher of 2013 is accurate? Whose witness would the reader believe if this was presented in court? Would we listen to Joshua or to the modern preacher of 2013? We choose the former. Joshua counted from the 16<sup>th</sup> and thus testifies to the credibility of the Jewish calendar.

Dr. C.F. Keil in his work *Commentary on the Old Testament*, wrote the following concerning Joshua 5:11:

*"When the whole nation had been received again into covenant with the Lord by circumcision, they kept the Passover... The next day, i.e. on the 16th, or the day after the first feast day, they ate unleavened loaves and parched corn ("roasted grains," cf. Leviticus 2:14) of the produce of the land (עֲבוּרָה, which only occurs in ver. 11 and 12, is synonymous with תְּבוּאָה in ver. 12), i.e. Corn that had grown in the land of Canaan, as the manna entirely cease from the state courts. "The Morrow after the Passover" is used in Numbers 33:3 for the 15th of Nisan; but here it must be understood as signifying the 16th, as the produce of the land, of which they ate not only on that day, but, according to verse 12, throughout that year, cannot mean the corn of the previous year, but the produce of this same year, i.e. the new corn, and they were not allowed to eat any of it until it had been sanctified to the Lord by the presentation of the wave sheaf on the second*

*day of Passover (Leviticus 23:11). According to Leviticus 23:11, the presentation was to take place on the day after the Sabbath, i.e. the first day of the feast of matzah, which was kept as a Sabbath, or the 16th of Nisan, as the seven days feast of matzah commenced on the 15th (Leviticus 23:6; the numbers 28:17). "On the Morrow after the Passover" is the same as "on the Morrow after the Sabbath" Leviticus 23:11, the term Passover being used here not in its original and more restricted sense, in which it applies exclusively to the observance of the Paschal meal, which took place on the evening of the 14th, and is expressly distinguished from the seven days feast of matzah (Exodus 12:23, 27; Leviticus 23:5; Numbers 28:16), but in the broader sense, which we have already met with in Deuteronomy 16:2, and which did the name was gradually extended to the whole of the seven days feast. The writer assumes the facts themselves were already well known for the Mosaic Law, and therefore did not think it necessary to give any fuller explanation. Moreover, the words, "they did eat of the fruit of the land," etc. are not to be understood as signifying that they began to eat unleavened bread for the first time on the 16th of Nisan (they had already eaten as an accompaniment to the Paschal lamb); but unleavened bread of the produce of the land, the green corn of that year, was what they ate for the first time on that day. A special prominence is given to this by the words, "in the selfsame day," because not only did the eating of the new corn commence on that day, but from that day forward "the children of Israel had manna no more." Volume 2, Pgs. 60-61*

The undeniable fact at hand is that Joshua counted the Omer from the 16<sup>th</sup> of Nisan. It is inconceivable that he, having witnessed the dreaded consequences of breaking covenant with HaShem; having personally experienced the wandering in the desert for 40 years as a direct result of breaking the Torah, would now, after such a vivid life lesson, directly violate that covenant. To the contrary, Joshua (whose name is Yeshua in Hebrew) would have been most particular about following the covenant and even more so given the fact that this was *the first Passover* in the promised land.

*"On the morrow after the Passover - These words denote in Num\_33:3 the 15th Nisan, but must here apparently mean the 16th. For the Israelites could not lawfully eat of the new grain until the first fruits of it had been presented, and this was done on "the morrow after the Sabbath," i. e. the morrow after the first day of Unleavened Bread, which was to be observed as a Sabbath, and is therefore so called. (Compare Lev\_23:7, Lev\_23:11, Lev\_23:14.)"*

*Albert Barnes Notes on the Bible*

*"On the morrow after the Passover - That is, on the fifteenth day; for then the feast of unleavened bread began. But they could neither eat bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, till the first-fruits of the harvest had been waved at the tabernacle; (see Lev\_23:9, etc.); and therefore in this case we may suppose that the Israelites had offered a sheaf of the barley-harvest, the only grain that was then ripe, before they ate of the unleavened cakes and parched corn."*

*Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*

*“On the morrow after the Passover-Sabbath they were to wave the sheaf of first-fruits before the Lord, Lev\_23:10, Lev\_23:11. And this they were particularly ordered to do when they came into the land which G-d would provide them: and they were furnished for this with the fruit of the land that year (Jos\_5:12), which was then growing and beginning to be ripe. Thus they were well provided for, both with old and new corn, as good householders. See Mat\_13:52. And as soon as ever the fruits of this good land came to their hands they had an opportunity of honouring G-d with them, and employing them in his service according to his appointment.”*

*Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*

*“old corn: The people would find abundance of old corn in the deserted granaries of the affrighted inhabitants, and the barley harvest being ripe, after offering the sheaf of first-fruits, they ate also new parched corn; and thus the manna being no longer necessary, ceased, after having been sent them regularly for almost forty years.”*

*Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*

*“And now that they entered the land of Canaan, they were obligated to bring the sacrifice according to all the laws of Passover. On the second day of Passover the Omer sacrifices brought. This offering is brought from grain of the new crop. Israel the grain harvest is in the spring. It begins a little before Passover. The Torah tells us that we are not allowed to eat from the new crop into the day of the Omer sacrifice until then we are only allowed to eat the crops of the previous years.... On the 16th of Nisan they were able to her harvest the grain and bring the Omer.”*

*The Torah Anthology, the Book of Yehoshua, Pg. 132*

Five expert witnesses agree that Joshua counted the Omer from the 16<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, the day after the Passover. We could conclude, resting our case with a closing statement, having presented more than sufficient evidence to establish the premise. With such an abundance of witnesses, the discussion hardly requires additional debate. In a civil court of law the standard of proof is a preponderance of evidence. In certain cases a higher standard is required referred to as *clear and convincing evidence*. Both of these standards have been met in this article. For one to conclude otherwise would be to ignore hard fact and undeniable proof. Two realities have been established. First, the Torah dictates that we should count from the 16<sup>th</sup> of Nisan. Second, Joshua believed that to be correct.

However unnecessary, we shall continue with the presentation of evidence in order to meet the highest standard of proof. This standard, used in criminal court cases, is universally known as *beyond a reasonable doubt*.

At this point we call an important witness: Flavius Josephus, to illustrate *how the Omer was counted in the First century*. Josephus was a Priest, Historian and General of Israel in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. He was born and raised in Jerusalem, He served in the Temple, He was from a long line of wealthy Priests and he

witnessed the fall of the Temple and Jerusalem. Josephus touched the original Menorah. He held the Sabbath bread from the Shulchan and his eyes witnessed the grand scene of the pilgrimage festivals. He was there; he served in the Temple. He was a son of Aaron from the priestly order of Jeriah. He was a Hebrew of Hebrews; known as a prodigy and expert at interpreting the Torah (The Life of Flavius Josephus). He was a contemporary of the Apostles; serving in the Temple while many of the Apostles were meeting in the outer courts for prayer. He is our expert witness who would know, more than anyone else, when the Omer was to be counted. What was his witness? Answer: The 16<sup>th</sup> of Nisan.

*“In the month of Xanthicus, which is called Nisan, and is the beginning of our year, on the 14th day of the lunar month, when the sun is in Aries (for in this month it was that we were delivered from the bondage under the Egyptians), and law ordained that we should every year slay that sacrifice which I before told you we slew when we came out of Egypt, and which was called the Passover; and so we do celebrate this Passover in companies, leaving nothing of what we sacrifice of the day following. The feast of unleavened bread succeeds that of the Passover, and falls on the 15th day of the month, and continue seven days, wherein they feed on unleavened bread; on every one of which days two bulls are killed, and 1 ram, and seven lambs. Now these lambs are entirely burnt, besides the kid of the goats which is added to all the rest, for sins; for it is intended as a feast for the priest on every one of those days. **But on the second day of unleavened bread, which is the 16th day of the month**, they first partake of the fruit of the earth, for before that day that you were not to touch them. And while they suppose it proper to honor G-d, from whom they obtained this principal provision, in the first place, they offer the first fruits of their barley... Once a week of weeks has passed over after the sacrifice “which weeks contain 40 and nine days”, on the 50th day, which is Pentecost, but is called by the Hebrews Asartha which signifies Pentecost....”*

**The Antiquities of the Jews 3.10.5 & 6**

*“Now when that feast, which was observed after seven weeks, in which the Jews called Pentecost (I. E., The 50th day) was at hand, its name being taken from the number of the days[after the Passover]...”*

**The Wars of the Jews 2.3.1**

*“And truly he did not speak falsely and saying so; for the festival, which we call Pentecost, did then fall out to be the next day to the Sabbath...” The phrase “did then” indicates that in this year Pentecost fell on a Sunday whereas it did not always do so.*

**The Antiquities of the Jews 13.8.4**

Here we have testimony from Josephus that the counting of the Omer occurred from the 16th of Nisan. Josephus's testimony tells us that this was the practice during the second Temple period. This means that this was the practice which was done during the days of Messiah and the apostles.

There is one final point that is rather significant. Those who argue against the Jewish calendar make it seem as if celebrating Pentecost “on the wrong day” is a major violation of Torah. It would stand to reason that if it was a major violation of Torah then the Messiah and or the Apostles would have rebuked the practice that was taking place in the Temple at that time. After all, if the Pharisees and the priests were counting the Omer from the wrong day wouldn't it be incumbent upon the Messiah to correct that practice? If it is a major sin, and I believe the detractors say that it is, (breaking Torah equals sin) then certainly the Messiah or the Apostles would have clearly discussed the transgression. However, we find no such record in the gospels or the Apostolic writings. In fact, the Apostles continue to participate in the Temple service and even Paul says that he wants to get to Jerusalem *before* Pentecost. He never, *ever*, says that they are celebrating on the “wrong day”. Here we know that they had counted from the 16<sup>th</sup> of Nisan. Not a word from the Master or the Apostles. This silence speaks volumes.

The conclusion? It is safe to say that counting from the 16<sup>th</sup> of Nisan is absolutely correct. Our people have done so since they first crossed the Jordan and may we continue to do so.

#### **Rabbi Mordecai Griffin**

*Note: There are those who will object to this halacha based primarily on interpretation or speculation with respect to the chronology of the passion of Messiah, often coupled with various interpretations of the Jonah prophecy as proclaimed by Messiah in the gospels. In point of truth, there are many and varied speculations concerning the passion chronology and, for that matter, the precise interpretation of the Jonah prophecy. Respectable scholars have debated this issue for years and each come to their own conclusions, but nobody has the exact answer. Every passion chronology is entirely speculative; and each has its own fatal flaw(s). Theory, hypothesis, educated guesses and personal speculation cannot be submitted as viable evidence in an objective search for truth. It is, at best, inconclusive and thus unhelpful in solving the question at hand. As a result, such theories are not included in the discussion of proper counting of the Omer.*

## Prayer

### Why pray in the traditional Jewish manner?

To pray is to *daven* in Hebrew. Davening is perhaps the most neglected and most essential element in a life of faith. To daven is to bring an elevation offering to the Most High G-d. To daven is to connect with the Divine, to examine one's self and to draw near to the Shekinah. Moreover, to daven with the traditional liturgical prayers, at the traditional times, is to connect in unity with Jews across the globe. It is the quintessential act of a Priest and member of a community of faith.

Yeshua and His disciples were examples to us of men who prayed and they prayed in the traditional Jewish manner. Yeshua encouraged His followers to commit themselves to prayer. The book of Acts tells us that the Apostles committed themselves to a lifestyle of prayer even to the extent that they continued to attend the regular morning and evening offering / prayer times in the Temple. The Apostle Shaul encouraged us to "pray without ceasing" an illusion to the Jewish custom of speaking a blessing over every aspect of life; from the moment one rise to the time one goes to sleep.

When the Temple was destroyed the Sages envisioned that the ancient prayers used in the sacrificial service would and should continue. In the absence of a physical sacrifice and physical incense, our prayers would act as these offerings. Indeed, the book of Revelation confirms that the prayers of the saints are sweet incense that arise before the throne of HaShem. To daven then is to offer up a sacrifice of praise. It is to draw near to the Glory of HaShem. May we do so daily and may He cause our faces to glow as He did for Moses!

### Halacha for Prayer

#### 6.1 Shacharit (morning prayer)

Our *basic practice* should include praying the Shema and the Amidah prayer each morning. Prayer may be recited in the person's native language or Hebrew, whichever allows the individual to more actively engage in the prayer. We would however commend Hebrew as the preferred language of prayer.

The *shacharit* (morning) prayer should be recited before  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the day is completed counting from sunrise. As an *expanded practice* we commend the inclusion of the entire morning service beginning with the *Modeh Ani*.

For *shacharit* we strongly encourage men to daven with tefillin and a tallit.

We strongly encourage our members to daven with a traditional orthodox prayer book (*Siddur*) such as the complete Artscroll Siddur. These ancient prayers are not only inspiring and beautiful, they are generally written in the plural. As we pray the traditional prayers we are davening, not only for ourselves but for the entire community of Israel.

*The Shema consists of three paragraphs from the Torah (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21; Numbers 15:37-41). According to the Mishnah (m. Tamid 4:3; 5:1), these three paragraphs (plus the Decalogue) were recited daily by the priests who officiated in the temple. After the destruction of the temple, Rabbinic tradition saw this recitation (minus the Decalogue) as incumbent upon all adult free Jewish males (m. Berachot 3:3). Since Deuteronomy 6:7 and 11:19 command that we recite these words “when you lie down and when you rise up,” it was determined that the three paragraphs of the Shema should be recited each morning and evening.*

*While the sages viewed the daily recitation of the Shema as ordained by the Written Torah, they recognized that the Eighteen (Shemoneh Esreh) Blessings of the weekday Amidah derived from the post-biblical period. Maimonides teaches that the commandment to pray daily is biblical, but the precise wording and timing of the Amidah (which fulfills that commandment) was determined by later tradition (Mishneh Torah, Laws of Prayer 1:1-3).*

*Just as the recitation of the Shema can be traced back to temple practice, so the Amidah appears to have its origins in the prayers offered by the people while the priests fulfilled their sacrificial duties. Such prayers were offered by the crowds gathered in the temple courts (Luke 1:10). When Peter and John go up to the temple at the time of the afternoon sacrifice (Acts 3:1), the author of Acts even speaks of it as “the hour of prayer” (rather than “the hour of sacrifice”). Apparently the devout would pray at this hour, even if they could not be in Jerusalem (Acts 10:1-3, 30). Thus, the Talmudic traditions that link the Amidah to the daily sacrifices appear to have some merit (see b. Berachot 26b). This link would also explain the term “Amidah,” which means “standing”: this was the posture of the priests as they offered sacrifice, and it is also the posture of those who recite the Amidah, even today, at the times of the daily sacrifices.*

*When we pray the Shema and Amidah daily, we are plunging into the heart and soul of the traditional Jewish encounter with G-d, and are also fulfilling Israel's corporate obligation to come before G-d as a priestly people.*

## **6.2 Minchah (midday prayer)**

Our *expanded practice* includes praying the Minchah service. The *minchah* prayer should be offered ½ hour after midday from sunrise until 3 hours thereafter.

*The Minchah service, prayed in the mid-afternoon, consists primarily of the daily Amidah. As its name suggests (minchah means “gift” or “grain offering”), this service has its roots in the prayer accompanying the afternoon sacrifice in the Jerusalem temple (Acts 3:1, 10:1-3, 30). It is a venerable tradition to be honored and commended.*

## **6.3 Ma'ariv (evening prayer)**

Praying the *Ma'ariv Shema* service is our *basic practice* for evening. This may be substituted with the bedtime Shema. As an *expanded practice*, we commend the recitation of the three paragraphs of the

Shema, its accompanying blessings, and the *Ma'ariv* Amidah. *Ma'ariv* should be offered after sunset any point in which three stars would be visible in the night sky. As a general rule, this is 45 minutes after sunset.

*The statutory core of the standard Ma'ariv service is the Shema. The sages of the Mishnah disagreed about whether the Amidah was also a necessary part of this service (b. Berachot 27b). They decided to include the Amidah, but in recognition of its ambiguous status they ruled that it should not be repeated publicly by the Reader (unlike the Shachrit and Minchah Amidah).*

## 6.4 Shema

The Shema section should consist at minimum of the Shema and the V'ahavta. But we also commend as *expanded practice* the recitation of all three paragraphs of the Shema (including V'haya im-shmo'a and Va-yomer), along with the blessings before and after the Shachrit and Ma'ariv Shema.

*"In the morning one recites two blessings before it [the Shema] and one after it. And in the evening, two before it and two after it" (m. Berachot 1:4). While the themes of these blessings were already determined by the time of the Mishnah, the precise wording varied from location to location.*

*Reuven Hammer explains the function of these blessings: "First we need to know why there are blessings surrounding the Shema at all. Why not simply recite the passages from the Torah? Surely they are the main concern. Rabbinic Judaism, however, prescribed that blessings be recited before and after the ritual recitation of any biblical passage... Thus the blessing immediately prior to the Shema and the blessing immediately following it really serve first to introduce it as a biblical reading and then to affirm the truth of what has been read" (Entering Jewish Prayer, 135).*

*The first blessing before both the morning and evening Shema acknowledges G-d as the creator of all, with attention given especially to light and darkness (as appropriate to the time of day). Since the blessing after the Shema focuses on G-d as redeemer, Hammer notes the theological significance of the three basic blessings surrounding the Shema: "Thus the theme of creation is joined to the Shema, so that the three themes basic to Jewish belief are explicitly discussed: creation, revelation, and redemption" (137).*

## 6.5 Amidah

The Amidah referred to above is the entire weekday Amidah.

## 6.6 Shabbat Prayer

On Shabbat our basic practice is the same as our daily basic practice with the substitution of the Shabbat Amidah.

## 6.7 Holiday Prayer

On holidays our basic practice is the same as our daily basic practice with the substitutions and additions appropriate for the particular holiday.

## 6.8 Berachot

**6.8.1** Our basic practice is to recite the relevant blessing upon the performance of those mitzvot which are themselves part of our basic practice, when acknowledging G-d's provision of food, and the Shehecheyanu when appropriate.

*The formula of blessing (Baruch Atah...) is the basic unit of Jewish worship. As seen above, it is integral to all of the statutory services (Shachrit, Minchah, Ma'ariv). It also provides the framework by which Jews have traditionally sanctified the events of daily life. The standard berachot can enable us as believing Jews to fulfill Paul's charge: "everything you do or say, do in the name of the Lord Yeshua, giving thanks through him to G-d the Father" (Colossians 3:17).*

*Before fulfilling a ritual mitzvah, one recites the blessing associated with that mitzvah (...asher kid'shanu be-mitzvotav ve-tzivanu...). In this way we acknowledge that the mitzvah is G-d's gracious gift to us, and also demonstrate that we are consciously and deliberately acting in obedience to a divine command.*

*The Shehecheyanu blessing is mentioned in the Mishnah (m. Berachot 9:3). There we are told that it is recited when one builds a new house or buys new things. These examples are evidently meant to illustrate rather than exhaust its use. Its significance in Jewish life is noted by Reuven Hammer: "The blessing that for many elicits the most profound emotional reaction is the shehecheyanu. Recited at every holiday, at every special new occasion, this blessing is attached to the experience of life itself. To be able to say, 'Who has kept us in life, sustained us, and allowed us to reach this moment,' means having survived to reach yet another season, another milestone. We bless G-d, whose sustaining force keeps us alive" (263-64).*

**6.8.2** Our basic practice for acknowledging G-d's provision of food consists of prayer before meals. The general blessing before meals is the hamotzi. If one is primarily eating fruit, one recites P'ri Haetz; if vegetables, P'ri Ha'adamah, and if pastry, Miney Mezonot.

*The basic rules governing blessings before eating are found in m. Berachot 6. The Talmud sets these blessings within a broader context: "It is forbidden to a person to enjoy anything of this world without a blessing" (b. Berachot 35a).*

**6.8.3** As a *basic practice*, we also commend prayer after meals, consisting of at least the first blessing of Birkat Hamazon (Hazan et Hakol).

*The sages saw the recitation of the Grace after Meals (Birkat HaMazon) as a biblical commandment ordained in Deuteronomy 8:10: "When you have eaten your fill, give thanks to*

*the Lord your G-d for the good land which He has given you.” The recitation of blessings before eating was a secondary derivation from this primary commandment: “If one says a blessing when one is full, how much more should one do so when one is hungry?” (b. Berachot 35a). Nevertheless, among Jews today blessings before eating are common practice, whereas blessings after eating are exceptional. Our basic practice thus follows common custom rather than strict halakhic priority. Hopefully, over time Birkat HaMazon will also become a normal part of our life.*

## 6.9 Mezuzah

Our *basic practice* involves affixing a kosher mezuzah to the doorpost of the main entryway to one's home, according to traditional practice. Our *expanded practice* is to affix a mezuzah to every doorpost of every entry door in the house except bathrooms. This would include bedrooms, garage entries, family rooms and back doors.

The scroll used inside the Mezuzah should be a certified kosher scroll, written by a sefer on parchment.

*“The mezuzah on the door is a reminder each time we pass the portals that we are entering not just a house where people eat and sleep but a sanctuary where G-d may be worship in the ordinary deeds of ordinary people.” Judaism: the way of sanctification, Dresner and Sherwin, page 216*

*The mezuzah contains the two first paragraphs of the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21). Both of these paragraphs include the commandment to “inscribe them [these words] on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” The affixing of a mezuzah thus fulfills this Torah commandment in a literal way, just as the recitation of the evening and morning Shema (“when you lie down and when you get up”) fulfills literally another part of the same text.*

*In the Mishnah the mezuzah is associated with the Shema, tefillin, the Amidah, and Birkat Hamazon (m. Berachot 3:3). They are all statutory verbal expressions of Israel's faithful devotion to Hashem.*

## 6.10 Tallit

Our *basic practice* includes wearing a tallit during one's daily Shacharit prayer.

*Before performing any mitzvah we recite a blessing that begins with a common formula. This “formula” is the following: Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, Who has sanctified us (kidshanu) with Your commandments and commanded us to...). The word kidshanu can also mean “Who betroths us to himself.” This blessing reminds us that the covenant must be understood through a double perspective: law and love, righteousness and faithfulness.<sup>28</sup>*

<sup>28</sup> See Judaism: the Way of Sanctification pg. 121

*The third paragraph of the Shema (Numbers 15:37-41) states: "Speak to the Israelite people and instruct them to make for themselves fringes (tzitzit) on the corners of their garments throughout the ages... look at it and recall all the commandments of the Lord and observe them." In ancient times it was customary to wear four-cornered garments in daily life, and Israel is here commanded to attach tzitzit to such garments as a symbol of the mitzvot. Once people no longer wore such garments, it became common to wear a special four-cornered shawl with tzitzit when praying the morning service. In this way the tzitzit are worn, handled, and looked upon daily, and - like the mezuzah and tefillin - represent symbolically the divine Words that govern Jewish life and give it meaning, direction, and purpose.*

### 6.11 Tefillin

As an *expanded practice*, we commend laying tefillin daily (with the exception of Shabbat and holidays).

*Tefillin are two black leather boxes, each containing four passages of the Torah: Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 11:13-21 (the first two paragraphs of the Shema, also found in the mezuzah), and Exodus 13:1-10 and 11-16. Each of these passages speaks of having "a sign on your hand and a symbol/reminder on your forehead." Jewish tradition sees this as a reference to the tefillin, which are bound on the arm and the forehead.*

*Tefillin are closely linked to the recitation of the Shema. Ideally, according to the sages, one should wear tefillin while reciting the morning Shema (b. Berachot 14b). In reciting the words of the Shema and in literally wearing the words on our body, we take upon ourselves the yoke of the kingdom of heaven (we accept G-d's sovereignty in our lives). "R. Yohanan also said: If one desires to accept upon himself the yoke of the kingdom of heaven in the most complete manner, [upon waking in the morning] one should consult nature [relieve oneself] and wash one's hands and put on tefillin and recite the Shema' and say the tefillah [the Amidah]: this is the complete acknowledgment of the kingdom of heaven." (b. Berachot 14b-15a).*

*Tefillin, like the tzitzit, are worn by all Jews and converts to Judaism, as they express our commitment to G-d's covenant with Israel as embodied in the mitzvot. Tefillin are not worn on Shabbat or holidays, as these are also spoken of as "signs," and would thus make the tefillin redundant.*

### 6.12 Kippah

The wearing of a *kippah* is encouraged at Sar Shalom Shabbat services. The *kippah* should be worn by men only. Some men may choose to wear a *kippah* at all times each and every day of the week. We endorse such practice so long as the wearer is committed to a Torah observant lifestyle, a message that the *kippah* is intended, in part, to communicate to the world.

*“For Aaron and his sons, they made tunics of fine linen, the work of a weaver, and the turban of fine linen, the linen headbands and the undergarments of finely twisted linen.” Exodus 39:27-27*

*The Priests and the Levites were commanded to wear head coverings when they ministered before the Lord. In Judaism there is a long standing tradition of wearing a small headcovering called a kippah (Kee-pah). The custom of wearing a kippah (or Yarmulke) in a synagogue stems from this commandment. Orthodox Jews will wear a kippah at all times because they recognize that the Divine presence is always over them. To the Jew, the wearing of the kippah is a reminder that they have a divine share in the priesthood (Exodus 19:6). In fact, the Catholic priests wear the kippah today because they believe that they have inherited the Aaronic priesthood.*

*There is not a direct Torah commandment to wear a head covering. While this is true, the scriptures are replete with G-dly men who covered their head when in the presence of HaShem. These include Moses, Joshua, King David and Elijah. Moreover, the head covering is explicitly mentioned as part of our spiritual garments in several Tanakh passages. Never-the-less, there is debate, even in the Jewish community, as to when, if ever, to wear a kippah. Most Jews will cover their heads when praying, in a synagogue service or on special feast days. This is done because most of Israel understood that when one, such as a Levite, comes to minister before the Lord, he was to have his head covered. In fact, the Torah states that when Aaron was to come into the Shekhinah glory of G-d on Yom Kippur he was to wear only the linen tunic, the linen undergarment, his linen sash and the turban (Leviticus 16:4). In HaShem’s presence, His ministers were to cover their heads.*

*Wearing a head covering is meant to remind the wearer that he is always under the presence of the Lord. In ancient times a slave wore a head covering and free men did not. The Jews continued to keep their heads covered as a testimony that they were slaves to the Living G-d. As believers we were once slaves to sin but now we have become slaves to righteousness (Yeshua). In his book *The Tabernacle, Its Priests and Its Services* William Brown comments on the symbolism of the turban:*

*“The head as well as the rest of the body of the priest being clothed in white, may have been intended to teach him that in exercising his office, he should have aimed at the entire consecration of his body, as well as the faculties of his mind, of which the head is the temple. The white bonnet should ever have been reminding him that it was necessary to the due execution of the duties of his office, that he exercise the mind with holy thoughts, and thus effectually guard against the entrance of evil thoughts. May it be ours so to exercise our minds.”*

*Whereas in Hebraic culture it is customary to wear a head covering during worship, in Christian culture it is the exact opposite. Christians often object to head coverings based on one passage of scripture in 1 Corinthians 11:1-16. This passage is understood traditionally to forbid the wearing of a head covering while praying or prophesying. However, it seems unlikely that this is what Paul was talking about for a number of reasons. The analysis of this passage is beyond the scope of this writing. For more details on this subject the reader is encourage to explore the*

*article Something Off the Top of My Head by D. Thomas Lancaster found in First Fruits of Zion Messiah Journal Publication spring 2009. It will just be noted here that if believers insist that the traditional interpretation is correct then we must comply with Paul's other command in this passage, namely that women should have their heads covered in worship (1 Corinthians 11:13).*

*Jewish men wear hats. The wearing of the small skull cap called a Kippah is a tradition that identifies a Jewish man as loyal to G-d, Torah and the Jewish community. Another name for this head covering is the Yarmulke (τεκνυρκη). It is a Yiddish word based on the Hebrew words for fear (yareh, פּרֵה) of the king (melech, λην), because the wearing of the covering is intended to remind the wearer of HaShem's omnipresence. The traditional Kippah dates back to the sixteenth century however, numerous historical resources from the Targum Onkelos, the Talmud and the Midrash Rabbah make it clear that covering ones head while in prayer was a common practice in the first century. In the movie "The Book of Matthew", which is a word for word account using the NIV translation, Yeshua is often depicted as pulling His tallit (ψηκς,) over His head before He prays.*

*Any hat can fulfill the tradition of men keeping their head covered. An orthodox man will cover his head even before taking three steps based on the following entry from the Talmud:*

*"Rav Chuna son of Rav Yeshoshua would not walk four cubits bareheaded. He explained, "The Presence of G-d is above my head." (b.Kiddushin 31a)*

*The Talmud did not make it incumbent on men to always cover their heads. However, it was expected that women would do so all of the time. In Judaism a women's hair is her greatest source of beauty. As a result, it has become a custom for married women to cover their heads at all times in public. Some ultra-orthodox women will even wear a type of wig. All of this is done for the sake of modesty.*

*"A man goes out bareheaded while a woman goes out with her head covered." (Genesis Rabbah 17:8)*

### 6.13 Tallit Katan Tzitzit

As a basic practice we commend men to wear tzitzit at all times, either tucked into their pants or exposed. It is **not** kosher to wear tzitzit on one's belt loops. This practice, although common in the "Hebrew Roots" movement, is not appropriate. The mitzvot of wearing tzitzit should be fulfilled with a kosher tallit katan only.

As an expanded practice we commend the inclusion of kosher tachelet blue thread in the tzitzit. **No other blue, aside from the kosher techelet blue, is permitted nor does alternative "blue" colors fulfill the mitzvah.** White should be worn if one is unable to acquire a tallit katan with techelet.

*The commandment in the Torah is to wear tzitzit with “tachelet” which is often translated “blue” giving many the impression that any “blue” color will suffice to fulfill the mitzvah. However, it is important to note this is a specific color, explicitly used in the garments of the High Priest and the Tabernacle. The ancient Rabbis refer in particular concerning the fulfillment of this mitzvah. Being that the Torah commanded a very specific color to be worn; the Rabbis refused to substitute it with “just any color of blue”. The Talmud records the method for rendering the specific kind necessarily for making the tzitzit and the garments of the priesthood. However, the sea creature necessary for the formula has been missing for nearly 2000 years. In the late 1980’s a dynamic fulfillment of prophecy began as a group of researchers and Rabbis rediscovered the ancient method of making the dye necessary for these tassels. As a result, it is now possible to order a tallit katan from Israel with actual “tachelet” thread. The High Priest’s robe of the Ephod sits in Jerusalem, ready for the next High Priest, having been dyed using this ancient receipt. The tachelet we wear is the same color as that garment and true fulfillment of the mitzvah*

### **Why Do Some Orthodox Jews wear only White Tzitzit?**

There are a few Torah observant believers (from a non-Jewish background) who wonder, given the fact that the bible commands that the tzitzit (sacred fringes) contain a thread of blue, why some Orthodox wear only white? It has even been believed that these Jewish men are intentionally breaking the Torah – heaven forbid! But is that really the case? Let’s explore the reasons from a Jewish perspective.

First, as discovered above, the “blue” thread required in the Torah (Num. 15:38) is a specific color. It is not, contrary to popular belief, just any shade of blue. It is the Hebrew word תְּכֵלֶת (techeilet). One Jewish publication translates this word as turquoise. According to the sages of the Talmud, the color resembled that of the sea and the sky, the Throne of Glory. The point to be understood is that the mitzvah commands techeilet specifically which happens to be the same color used to make the fabric of the Tabernacle and the Robe of the Ephod for the High Priest. Thus the presumption by Orthodox authorities is that using “any shade of blue” does not fulfill the mitzvah. Furthermore, to use something other than techeilet would be to violate a specific commandment.

There is an ancient formula in the Talmud for making the techeilet dye. This is the very same formula used, for centuries (including the age of Messiah and the Apostles) to make this color. The problem is (or was until recently) that the sea creature used to make the dye had gone missing for nearly 2,000 years. From an orthodox point of view the color required and commanded does not exist. About a decade or so ago, this ancient “fish” was found and the process of making techeilet began again. This brings us back to the original issue. Jews use only white precisely because they are precise, meaning that they understand the Torah to require techeilet and, therefore, they will only use that specific color. The modern Messianic Christian may accuse them of “breaking the Torah” claiming that they should “just use any blue”. However, the Observant Jew might respond that the modern Messianic is “breaking the Torah” by not using what the Torah says specifically to use, namely, techeilet. On the one hand the believer is being particular about using blue and on the other hand being dismissive about the specific

color being commanded. The bottom line is, right or wrong, Jews are very, very precise in keeping the mitzvot.

What is the answer to this problem? Order techeleit from Israel and wear it. Why is it that some orthodox Jew still don't wear it even though it is available? Well, some are skeptical about the discovery but more and more are starting to make the change. In any case, this is why some Jews choose to wear white. It is a matter of fidelity not apathy, rebellion of abrogation in favor of tradition.

## 6.14 Customs for Women

**6.14.1** Our *basic practices* in the area of prayer apply both to men and women. Men, however, have a greater duty to prayer and thus, they alone, shall be counted for the minyan.

**6.14.2** Though women are not forbidden from wearing tefillin, being that this has been a male "garment" or "accessory" for thousands of years, and, whereas women in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple period did not wear tefillin, we feel it proper to encourage women not to do so.

**6.14.3** Women may wear a tallit so long as it has a feminine design so has not to violate the Torah prohibition of a woman wearing men's clothing and visa versa.

**6.14.4** Married women are encouraged to wear a head covering during Sar Shalom Sabbath services. Female head coverings can be a scarf, shawl, head band or a hat. Women should not wear kippot (a kippah) as this is a distinctively male head dress.

*The Talmud exempts women from performing time-bound mitzvot: "every positive commandment whose observance is time dependent - men are obligated and women are exempt; but when a mitzvah is not time-dependent, men and women are equally obligated" (m. Kiddushin 1:7). Thus, women have been exempt from reciting the Shema and donning tefillin (time-bound mitzvot), but obligated to pray the Amidah and Birkat Hamazon (m. Berachot 3:3).*

*At the same time, nowhere in the Talmud are women forbidden to perform mitzvot from which they are exempt, including the wearing of tallit and tefillin. A tradition is reported that "Michal the daughter of King Saul used to wear tefillin, and the sages did not protest" (b. Eruvin 96a). Maimonides and Rashi rule that women are permitted to perform mitzvot from which they are exempt, but should not recite the mitzvah blessing, since "who has commanded us" does not apply to them. Other sages even permitted the recitation of the mitzvah blessing.*

*The obvious reason for the exemption from time-bound mitzvot is a woman's need for flexibility in order to fulfill her traditional duties, especially those related to the care and rearing of children. In a society with large families, lower life-expectancy (and thus fewer non-childrearing years for women), and strictly demarcated gender roles, this exemption makes sense. In the developed world of the twenty-first century, the exemption is anachronistic (except, perhaps, in*

*ultra-orthodox enclaves). Thus, rather than sitting in judgment on the tradition, we are concluding that the reasons for the traditional rulings no longer apply.*

## **6.15 Tevilat Moshiach**

**6.15.1** Tevilat Moshiach ( water baptism) is a mitzvah, a commandment of the Messiah. It is not a rite reserved for the most dedicated followers of Yeshua or a mark of special piety. Rather it is a basic practice that marks faithful reception of the good news and entry into the community of the disciples of Yeshua.

**6.15.2** To be eligible for Tevilah, one should have received basic instruction in the message of the good news and its implications for Torah observant life and in the meaning and significance of Tevilah and should have expressed in words and deeds a commitment to Yeshua and his mitzvot and to the responsibilities of membership in the community of Yeshua's disciples. See section 2.4 Conversions,

**6.15.3** Ideally, Tevilat Moshiach should be administered in a body of water that meets the traditional requirements for a mikvah. However, if such a body of water is not available, Tevilat Moshiach may be administered in any body of water that is large enough to permit full body immersion.

**6.15.4** While tevilah is primarily the action of G-d through Yeshua by the Spirit, it is also a mitzvah that calls for a human response of obedience. Tevilah's character as a mitzvah should be expressed through recitation of the mitzvah berachah by the one being immersed immediately before the immersion.

## Family Purity

### What does the Torah say concerning sexuality?

There is nothing more personal than sexuality. Despite the oversexed cultural norms we face, people still tend to shy away from the topic of sexual intimacy, particularly in religious settings. Historically, Christianity has viewed sex as, more or less, a necessary evil. Celibacy has been viewed as a higher level of piety to the extent that Catholic priest remain single all of their lives. Though the Protestant churches disavowed this practice, sex was still viewed as something carnal and vulgar. Living a single (and therefore celibate) life has historically been viewed as a higher act of piety reserved for those who are extraordinarily devoted. Ultimately, this attitude toward sexuality has its roots in Gnosticism and Essenism rather than Judaism.

The Jewish view is that sexual intimacy is beautiful, natural, necessary and holy so long as it is expressed within the covenant of marriage between one man and one woman. Sex, according to the Rabbis, was seen as a gift from G-d. Marriage (and with it sexual intimacy) has been viewed not only as permissible but as absolutely essential. Conjugal rights are expressly stated in the Torah as one of the three essential duties of a husband. The Talmud declares that a man without a wife is incomplete. Celibacy is not only discouraged in Judaism, it is viewed as a perversion of the natural order. This order is that HaShem created man and woman to become one flesh, to be intimate and to be fruitful.

Sex is a Divine gift to man. HaShem created it and therefore He has the right to regulate its expression. This doesn't go down well in our generation. Not only is our culture oversexed and over stimulated, the entire domain of sexuality has become a matter of individual rights and preferences. Once the issues are thus described, any input from G-d can only be viewed as "another opinion." Clearly not acceptable.

The Torah's "rules" of sexuality are fairly simple and straight forward. A man should marry a woman and the two should join together as one. This woman should not be a close relative. Same sex marriage or any other union, is strictly forbidden. Moreover, when a woman is in her season of menstruation, her husband is not to approach her for intimacy. In Hebrew this woman is referred to as niddah. This sums up the Torah's "rules" for sexuality.

Two errors must be avoided in seeking to honor G-d in matters of niddah. First, the "impurity" (tamei) that attaches to a menstruate woman, or to a man who has ejaculated for that matter, has nothing to do with "dirtiness." In the days of our ancestors, this impurity indicated that such a person was temporarily separated from normal access to the Tabernacle or Temple. This is generally interpreted to mean that when a woman menstruates or a man ejaculates, we draw near to the mystery of the creation of life itself - and this is so special, that such an encounter immediately puts the persons involved into a temporary special category. They are set aside, not as discarded or rejected, but in respect for the holiness of what has just occurred.

Niddah is all about respect for sexuality, for procreation, for the mystery of life and our privilege to have such an intimate connection to its creation.

The second error is to view niddah as a form of deprivation. In reality, it is a matter of protection. The constraints of niddah protect the sanctity of sexual relations, elevating our awareness that sex is a gift to be enjoyed, and never taken for granted.

Our call is to follow the Will of HaShem in every area of life. This includes the area in which He ordained the pro-creation of life! Following HaShem's rightful boundaries, marital joy remains. G-d's word about sex therefore is a familiar one: Enjoy! But the only way this can happen is to respect the limits G-d has set, ever mindful that sexual union is a gift, not a personal right. The laws of the niddah are from G-d, given that we might enjoy marital sex, mindful that it too is a gift for our very own good.

## 7.1 Niddah

**7.1.1** Sexual relationships are only permitted between a man and a woman who are married. Homosexual (same sex) relationships are strictly forbidden.

**7.1.2** According to our basic practice, all sexual relations should be avoided for a full seven days from the onset of the woman's monthly menstrual period, or until the menstrual period has ended, whichever is longer.

**7.1.3** A woman who has a discharge during a time other than her monthly niddah will be considered zavah. All sexual relations should be avoided during this time.

**7.1.4** As an expanded practice we commend the tradition of couples avoiding all physical contact during the time of niddah, even to the extent of sharing separate beds if possible.

*This custom is admittedly strange for our culture, however, its practice has produced much fruit for Jewish marriages. There is a saying that "absence makes the heart grow fonder" and how true that is for this customs. Couples report that the separation prepares them for a reunion in 7 days that is much like a monthly honeymoon. It is worth noting that a Christian study determined that observant Jews have a 96% less likely chance of getting a divorce than the average Christian couple. Perhaps this has something to do with that statistic!*

**7.1.5** It is traditional for a woman to have a mikvah (baptism) at the conclusion of her niddah and then reunite with her husband. As an expanded practice we commend woman to keep this custom.

*The Torah explicitly forbids all sexual relations during a woman's menstrual period (Leviticus 18:19; 20:18). It also determines that a menstruant is to be considered ritually impure (and thus sexually inactive) for seven days from the onset of menstruation (Leviticus 15:19). Thus, our basic practice adheres to the straightforward meaning (peshat) of the biblical text.*

*After dealing with the normal menstrual period (Leviticus 15:19-24), the Torah proceeds to discuss the woman with an extended abnormal discharge (Leviticus 15:25-30). In such cases, the purification process requires seven days from the time the discharge ends (Leviticus 15:28). Jewish tradition combined this latter ruling with the previous unit concerning menstruation, and determined that a normal menstruant must wait seven full days after the cessation of her period (or after five days from the onset of menstruation, if her period lasted less than five days), and then immerse herself in a mikvah. She may then resume having sexual relations with her husband.*

*We view this traditional practice as a commendable fence around the Torah, to be treated with respect. Nevertheless, our basic practice is limited to the requirements contained in the peshat of the biblical law.*

## **7.2 Circumcision**

Circumcision is a Divine commandment and it is an outward sign of covenant. We commend the practice of circumcision for male children on the eighth day according to the commandment.

For non-Jews who are converting to Observant Jewish faith in Yeshua, we strongly commend circumcision in cases where the procedure has not hereunto been performed. This is predicated, without any ambivalence, on the clear understanding that the man has placed his hope for salvation in the Name and work of Yeshua alone. The act of circumcision is therefore a response in obedience to that living faith.