

Walking With God
by: Karl D. Coke, Ph. D.

Walking with God has been God's purpose for His people from creation. This walk was lost at the fall of man (Genesis 3:8) and restored by our Messiah (Acts 3:21). Walking with God is not an addendum to Christianity or Judaism, but is superior to both. It is so superior that the call to walk with Jesus (Matthew 4:18-20) was an opportunity so promising that the disciples instantly made a radical change in their lives.

Among the main scriptures that refer to the life of a Believer "as a walk," Micah 6:8 (KJV) is pivotal: "*He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*" To walk with God requires the balance of the two principles of justice and mercy. This implies that because all who desire to walk with God will be at different levels of obedience, those having reached higher levels must be merciful to those behind while holding themselves to a higher justice. In walking with God, mercy is essential even though mercy is difficult to distinguish from compromise. The recognition of differences in each Believer's walk with God is contrary to modern Church life which requires the "uniform observance" of pet doctrines.

The walk of Jesus "with" the two on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35) brings out two important principles. What they experienced in this brief fellowship with the Lord should be expected in everyone's walk with the Lord. Firstly, as He was with them, He has promised to be with all (Hebrews 13:5). Secondly, as with them, all should expect Him to open their minds to the Scriptures (Luke 24:45).

Halacha is not being legalistic, nor is it correct to see it as adding a little Jewishness to Church life. Since there is an identity crisis in the Church and the Synagogue, we must see that we are fundamentally neither Christian nor Jew. Those who walk with God are people of the Covenant in which they are being "observant." Who are those who walk with God and what are they to be called? The appropriate answer is: "We are disciples [students] of the LORD Jesus the Messiah [Yeshua HaMashiach]. God, in His mercy, has taken the initiative to bring us back into a walk with Him. As disciples, whether from Jewish or Gentile backgrounds, irrespective of tradition, we are members of the one community gathered through all history according to God's Covenant with Abraham.

It is the LORD Himself who takes the initiative in our walk. Comparisons can be made about this walk with the husband and wife relationship (Ephesians 5:22-33). Times of passion and extreme intimacy with one's spouse can parallel times Believers spend in worshipping the LORD. Many of the other daily, practical items can also be compared including daily communication. Other comparisons can be drawn from Abraham who is an important model for us, displaying faith, obedience and a willingness to learn. In Genesis 26:5 it says of Abraham, "*Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.*"

Amos 3:3 says, "*Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*" This is a most important principle. Coming into agreement with God to walk with Him requires a willingness to study all that pleases Him in order to obey Him. Disciples of the LORD Jesus the Messiah are to study, observe and teach while, at the same time, love justice and mercy. The desire for holiness and purity are benchmarks of walking with God. The overriding principle of walking with God is that those walking with God should teach others how to be observant, that is to walk with God for themselves. This authority to make halachik rulings is vested in local congregations as led by God's Word, and it's author, The Holy Spirit, rather than an international board or in a "messianic" pope. Finally, a teacher of principles connected to walking with God is called (in Hebrew) "*moreh*" rather than "*rabbi*" since "*moreh*" is found in Torah as well as the New Testament. One of the greatest things a teacher of God's Word can do is to teach others to hear God themselves. The first thing they will hear is God inviting them for a walk!

The beginning of Jacob's walk with God is described in Genesis 28:10-22. Here, God makes seven pledges to Jacob regarding their future walk together. These are God's covenant terms with all who would walk with Him. It is interesting that these seven pledges are the clear covenantal terms fully developed in the New Covenant (Testament).

God's "covenant-walking" terms with Jacob are: **1)** I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac (verse 13); **2)** I will give you and your descendants the land in which you are lying (verse 13); **3)** Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth (verse 14); **4)** All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring (verse 14); **5)** I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go (verse 15); **6)** I will bring you back to this land (verse 15); and, **7)** I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you (verse 15).

Jacob responds to God's "covenant-walking" terms positively with three vows. They are: **1)** The LORD will be my

God (verse 21); **2**) This stone (altar) that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house (verse 22); and, **3**) Of all that you give me I will give you a tenth (verse 22).

Jacob's walk with God included at least six distinct places where the walk was so personal to Jacob that he named each of the six places with special names. The first is where they met, mentioned in Genesis 28:16-19. It says, *When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the LORD is in the place, and I was not aware of it." He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven." Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. He called that place Bethel.*¹ "Bethel" is spelled בית־אל in Hebrew and means "house of God."

The second and third meeting places are found in Genesis 31:45-49. It says, *So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar. He said to his relatives, "Gather some stones." So they took stones and piled them in a heap, and they ate there by the heap. Laban called it Jegar Sahadutha (Aramaic), and Jacob called it Galeed*² (Hebrew). *Laban said, "This heap is a witness between you and me today." That is why it was called Galeed. It was also called Mizpah,*³ *because he said, "May the LORD keep watch (watchtower) between you and me when we are away from each other."* "Galeed" is spelled גלעד in Hebrew and means "hard, stony, to throw in a heap together." "Mizpah" is spelled מצפה in Hebrew and means "a high and lofty place."

The fourth meeting place is found in Genesis 32:1-2. It says, *Jacob also went on his way, and the angels of God met him. When Jacob saw them, he said, "This is the camp of God!" So he named that place Mahanaim.*⁴ "Mahanaim" is spelled מחנים in Hebrew and means "encampments." Apparently, Jacob was impressed that God would send angels in His place in order to be with Jacob.

The fifth meeting place is found in Genesis 32:28-30. It says, *Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome." Jacob said, "What is your name?" But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there. So Jacob called the place Peniel,*⁵ *saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."* "Peniel" is spelled פניאל in Hebrew and means, "the face of God."

The sixth meeting place is found in Genesis 33:16-17. It says, *So that day Esau started on his way back to Seir. Jacob, however, went to Succoth, where he built a place for himself and made shelters for his livestock. That is why the place is called Succoth.*⁶ "Succoth" is spelled סכות in Hebrew and means, "booths."

While these "meeting places" with God are in a sequential order in Genesis, one should not "read-into" this order some expected order of meetings with God in one's personal walk with God. One should, however, in their walk with God expect similar "meeting places" or "encounters" with the Living God.

When two walk together in covenant intimacy, affectionate and personal names soon replace formal names used at the first meeting. The longer two walk together, the more the "heart-felt" names replace the formal names. This is especially true with God and Jacob in their covenant walk.

God chose two intimate names for Him to call Jacob. The first is "Jeshurun." Deuteronomy 33:26 and Isaiah 44:1-5 call Jacob "Jeshurun." "Jeshurun" is spelled ישורון in Hebrew and is a lovable, diminutive form of the Hebrew word ישראל (Israel). **Jeshurun** (Isaiah 44:1-5) comes from the Hebrew root verb ישר (*yab-sbar*) which primarily means "TO BE STRAIGHT" (p. 375, *Gesenius Hebrew Chaldee Lexicon*) and "(2) to be even, level, metaphorically used of an even mind, i.e. tranquil or composed, opp. to inflated and proud."

God's second, and more known, name for Jacob is "Israel." **Israel** (Genesis 32:28) comes from two Hebrew root words. The first is שרה (*sab-rah*) which has three meanings "(1) TO PLACE IN A ROW, TO SET IN ORDER; (2) to be a leader, commander, prince ... from setting in order, arranging soldiers; and (3) to fight (prop. to wage war) with any one" (p. 794 *Ibid.*). The second is אל (*El*) which means "(1) strong, mighty, a mighty one, hero; (2) might, strength; prop. that which is strong; (3) God" (p. 45 *Ibid.*).

Because God is the superior in His walk with Jacob (or anyone), God gives Jacob names He would prefer. God gave at least five intimate names for Jacob's use. They are: **1) God of Jacob** (Psalm 46:7) Hebrew אל (*El*) see (3) above. **2) Pride of Jacob** (Psalm 47:4; Amos 8:7) Hebrew גבון (*Gab-on*) from the Hebrew root verb גבה (*Gab-ah*) "a poetical word. (1) TO LIFT ONESELF UP, TO INCREASE, used of water rising up, Ezekiel. 47:5; of a plant growing, Job 8:11, ... (2) Metaphorically. to be exalted, magnificent, of God, Ex. 15:1, 21. ... (3) to honour" (p. 150, *Ibid.*). **3) Mighty One of Jacob** (Genesis 49:24; Psalm 132:2) Hebrew אביר (*Ab-veer*) strong one, mighty one, only found in the phrase "the mighty one of Israel, of Jacob" (p. 6, *Ibid.*). **4) The Shepherd** (Genesis 49:24) Hebrew רעה (*Rah-ab*) "(1) TO FEED a flock, TO PASTURE, TO TEND. ... figuratively to guard, to care for, to rule. ... (3) to delight in any person" (p. 773, *ibid.*). **5) The Rock of Israel** (Genesis 49:24) Hebrew אבן (*Eb-vehn*) "(1) a stone of any kind, ... (4) rock" (p. 8. *Ibid.*).

What one takes from this personal, intimate name calling, is that the closer two walk, the more affectionate and expressive are the names used. It is common that husbands and wives use “honey” and “sweetheart” as names in daily discussions. These “pet” names express the heart’s desire to be engaged in their walk.

Moses, Isaiah and John reveal God’s knowledge of our names in our walk with Him. Exodus 33:12 & 17 says, *Moses said to the LORD, "You have been telling me, 'Lead these people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, '**I know you by name** and you have found favor with me.'" And the LORD said to Moses, "I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and **I know you by name.**"*

Isaiah 45:3 says, *I will give you the treasures of darkness, riches stored in secret places, so that you may know that I am the LORD, the God of Israel, **who summons you by name.***

John 10:1-4 says, *I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in some other way, is a thief and a robber. The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen for his voice. **He calls his own sheep by name** and leads them out.*

Yes, walking with God is superior to Judaism and Christianity. Yes, walking with God will have many, meaningful meetings alone with the Mighty One of Israel. Yes, walking with God will be so personal, so intense that you and you alone can express its meaning. But, a warning is in order. Your walk with God may cause fellow believers discomfort. Push through the fear of offending fellow believers. Walk with God at all costs. A walk with God is worth it all!

Micah 6:8 says it all, *“He has showed you, O man, what is good, and what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”* The LORD, God Himself, has invited you for an eternal walk. Will you join Him today?