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MINISTRIES

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Rest for Your Souls

In Matthew 11, our Messiah instructed us to take on his yoke, to learn from him, and that we will find rest for our souls.

Matthew 11:28-30

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

According to Jesus, his Hebrew name being Yeshua, we are to learn from him, and when we learn from him, we are taking his yoke upon us.

Some questions might come to mind...

- What is the yoke?
- What is a light yoke?
- What is a heavy yoke?
- What is the rest that the Messiah referred to?

This instruction of taking on Yeshua’s yoke is a metaphor.

A yoke is a wooden crosspiece that is fastened over the necks of two animals and attached to the plow or cart that they are to pull.

The farmer of biblical times, when plowing his field with a team of oxen, had to ensure that the yoke fit well. The yoke had to fit comfortably on the necks of the animals pulling the plow. An improperly shaped and heavy yoke would irritate the oxen making the task of plowing difficult for both the animals and the operator, while a comfortable, well-fitting yoke made the task much easier.

So, a yoke is a means for the farmer and the farming animal to efficiently accomplish the work of producing a harvest.

The idea of a harvest is another metaphor used in some of Yeshua's parables, in the prophets, and in the book of Revelation.

Matthew 13:39

The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels.

Luke 10:2

And he said to them, "The **harvest** is plentiful, but the **laborers** are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the **harvest** to send out **laborers** into his **harvest**."

Matthew 13:39

The **harvest** is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels.

Revelation 14:15

And another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud, "Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the **harvest** of the earth is fully ripe."

We could go into much more depth pertaining to the nature and details of the different Biblical harvests, but for the purposes of this teaching, it should be understood that the harvest refers to people. These people grew from a seed. There is the bad or corrupt seed, and there is the good seed (Matthew 13).

The bad seed is against the word of God. The good seed *is* the word of God.

Luke 8:11

Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

So, when we take on Yeshua's yoke, we are to be sewing the word of God into the field, or really, the nations.

Let's read Matthew 11 again...

Matthew 11:28-30

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Yeshua was not inventing this metaphor of a yoke. This metaphor existed well before Yeshua, and a study of the Old Testament, also called the TANAKH, also demonstrates this.

For example:

1 Kings 12:4

"Your father made our yoke heavy. Now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke on us, and we will serve you."

Despite this, it appears that the original context for Yeshua's "Comfort for the Heavy-Laden" saying has been lost to modern understanding.

The apocryphal book of Ben Sira may help us better determine Yeshua's contextual intent. The Ben Sira texts indicate that Yeshua was speaking of the study and the interpretation of the Torah and the rigors of first-century discipleship.

One interesting quote comes from the apocrypha, about 200 years before Yeshua. It is talking about learning wisdom, and sounds a lot like Proverbs 2-4 that speaks about the value of seeking wisdom.

*Draw near to me, you unlearned, and lodge in the house of study. Why are you slow, and what do you say about these things, your souls being very thirsty? I opened my mouth and said, "Buy her [wisdom] for yourselves without money. **Put your neck under [her] yoke, and let your soul receive instruction.** She is to be found nearby. See with your eyes how, **with only a little labor, I have gotten much rest.**"*
(Ben Sira 51:23–27)¹

Here we see how attaching to a yoke is metaphorically associated with receiving instruction. This agrees with Yeshua saying:

Take my **yoke** upon you, and **learn** from me

...but, learn what?

Unfortunately, many have misunderstood what Messiah Yeshua was teaching in Matthew 11:28-30.

Many have come to believe that Yeshua was speaking against the Torah, as written by Moses. Many have come to believe that it was the Torah that Yeshua was labeling as heavy burdens. And then, when we abandon the Torah, we will find rest in Messiah Yeshua...or so it is taught.

However, it is YHWH's Torah that is indeed to be the good way, the ancient path that we are to walk in, and then we will find rest for our souls.

Jeremiah 6:16

Thus says the LORD: "Stand by the roads, and look, and **ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.** But they said, 'We will not walk in it.'

Israel was already given the ancient path, the way to walk, and it is called the Torah, the law of God. Of course, just like many of us today, Israel chose not to walk in it, despite that it would lead to rest for our souls.

The light yoke that is of Yeshua is the ancient path, the Torah, and through such instructions we will find rest for our souls.

Matthew 11:28-30

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

But, the Law of God is a burden, right? ...as so many say!

But, that is not what the Bible says.

1 John 5:1-3

Everyone who believes that Jesus (Yeshua) is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. **And his commandments are not burdensome.**

So, what is the heavy yoke? If it is not the Torah as written by Moses, then what is it?

It was the heavy burden of the system of works that the Pharisees laid on the backs of the people that Yeshua was offering to relieve.

Later on in Matthew, Yeshua will rebuke the Pharisees for laying heavy burdens on the shoulders of the people.

Matthew 23:4

They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger.

It was not Moses that gave a burden to us by giving us YHWH's Torah, it was the Pharisees.

But, didn't the Pharisees keep and teach the Torah? Not exactly...

Matthew 23:23-24

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, **and have neglected the weightier matters of the law:** justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!

Did Yeshua state that the Pharisees should not be practicing or teaching the law of God? No. The Pharisees neglected important aspects of the Torah.

Yeshua also said this, speaking to the Pharisees:

John 7:19

Has not Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law....”

The Pharisees invented all sorts of rules and traditions that were above and beyond the Torah. They expected others to keep their man-made rules that were supposedly based on the Torah. The Pharisees made simple Torah observance more complicated and difficult.

Yeshua details this problem to the Pharisees at length in Mark 7.

Mark 7:8-13

“**You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men.**” And He said to them: “**You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to**

observe your own traditions! For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.’ But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: ‘Whatever help you might otherwise have received of me is Corban’ (that is, a gift devoted to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. **Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that.”**

The “yoke of the Pharisees” is the burdensome yoke of self-righteousness and legalistic law-keeping. It has been said by biblical scholars that the Pharisees had added over 600 regulations just regarding what qualified as “working” on the Sabbath. That is a heavy burden!

So, the heavy yoke is the yoke of the Pharisees, or anything above and beyond the Torah. The light yoke of Yeshua, is the ancient path that leads to rest for our souls.

Matthew 11:28-30

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, **and you will find rest for your souls.** For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Jeremiah 6:16

Thus says the LORD: “Stand by the roads, and look, and **ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.** But they said, ‘We will not walk in it.’

Don’t be like ancient Israel and say “we will not walk in it.”

Immediately after Yeshua states that his light yoke leads to rest for our souls, an interesting interaction with the Pharisees takes place...seemingly proving Yeshua’s point about the heavy yoke the Pharisees place on those in the faith. Remember, this takes place immediately after Matthew 11:28-30.

Matthew 12:1-8

At that time Jesus (Yeshua) went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, **and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, “Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.”** He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. And if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.”

The commandments pertaining to the Sabbath are as follows:

- You do not work
- Your servants do not work (or cause someone to serve you)
- Your animals do not work

So, the Pharisees decided to invent hundreds of bullet point commandments under the Sabbath heading,

defining what it meant to break the Sabbath according to their own understanding. Today, this is known as the Talmud, or the oral law. It is a collection of interpretations of the Torah that the Pharisees made binding on the people.

Harvesting crops is indeed work. The Pharisees then decided to define harvesting as taking a piece of grain and rubbing it between one's fingers.

By referring to "plucking" the grain, Luke is offering us insight to the exact nature of the Pharisees' objections.

According to the Talmud, the disciples were breaking the Sabbath in quite a number of ways.

According to the Mishnah, "*He that reapeth corn on the Sabbath...is guilty; and plucking corn is reaping.*"

Rubbing the grain out was considered to be threshing—another violation.

"In case a woman rolls wheat to remove the husks, it is considered sifting; if she rubs the head of wheat, it is regarded as threshing; if she cleans off the side-adherences, it is sifting out fruit; if she throws them up in her hand, it is winnowing" [Jer. Shabbat 10a].⁴

This is exactly what Yeshua's disciples did in order to eat, because they were hungry.

So, Yeshua and his disciples intentionally violated an oral law of the Pharisees, right in front of them. Given the pattern of Yeshua and his disciples doing similar things in the presence of the Pharisees, it was likely not an accident (i.e. Mark 7).

Yeshua did not even argue with them whether that what they were doing was work or not. That was not the point that he wanted to make in this instance.

Yeshua wanted to make the point that sometimes weightier matters prevail. Does it make sense to let someone go hungry on the Sabbath if it is not necessary?

Yeshua's point, as evidenced by his defense, is no. For more on this, we would recommend our teaching titled [Weightier Matters](#).

It is Yeshua's interaction with the Pharisees in this instance and many others that caused Yeshua to say what he said to the Pharisees in Matthew 23:

Matthew 23:23-24

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!"

It is awesome and amazing that many are coming back into the Torah today... learning, practicing, and teaching the Torah...but let's also remember justice and mercy, faithfulness and love, kindness and good intent, lest we be like the Pharisees who forgot all of these things.

Following the Torah is about following YHWH, not about following man and man's ways. That is why the Torah is freedom (Psalm 119:44-45). The perfect Torah (Psalm 19:7) is simple and details how we should live our lives in the faith, in the literal, and in the intent behind each commandment.

In following Yeshua, we will indeed find rest for our souls. The Sabbath is all about rest, and our Messiah is the master over the Sabbath. The Sabbath was made for all man (Mark 2:27). It was made as a gift for man, not as a burden for man to serve the Sabbath.

Our Messiah represents the Sabbath rest, and through him, being our example on how to walk the ancient path, we learn how to walk the Torah. Not as the Pharisees with the heavy yoke of extra difficult rules that miss the point, but the light yoke that teaches that the Torah is a gift to mankind, detailing how to love God, love others, and is not a burden (1 John 5:2-3).

Our Messiah as the Sabbath rest, both metaphorically and prophetically is a fascinating subject. If you would like to learn more, we would recommend the following teachings:

- [Hebrews 4: In His Rest Now or Later?](#)
- [The 4th and 7th Day \(Parts 1 and 2\)](#)
- [The Sabbath Day](#)

We hope that this teaching has blessed you, and remember, continue to test everything...shalom.

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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