

Yeshua (Jesus) and His disciples were Jewish and immersed in the study of the Tenakh (the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings). Therefore, it is valuable to learn the Hebraic context, meanings, and idioms of the New Testament writings, so we can rightly apply the truth to our lives.



His Yoke

An Invitation to Rest

January 31, 2023

Come to Me, all you who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.
Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.
Yeshua, Matthew 11:28-30

I lay awake at 2:00 a.m. [in January 2023]. Thoughts about this verse came to mind. I asked, “Lord, what did You mean when You said, ‘Take My yoke upon you? A yoke is binding, but You set me free.’” The next morning, I began to write this devotional and prayer.

Before I share, it is important to clarify that the *Torah* is *the Law* (the first five books of the Bible) or *God’s 613 Instructions for life*. Learning and following Torah was an arduous task and was called *the yoke of Torah*.

Originally, God gave these ancient instructions to Moses about 3,400 years ago as a covenant gift. They were tailored for His people who had been miraculously delivered from 430 years of bondage. He led them out of their slavery into the wilderness to teach them how to live in freedom, how to eat, rest, live, love, and depend on Him.

The lives of His newly-freed people were vastly different from their descendants, and so through the centuries, the Torah was interpreted by judges, prophets, kings, and rabbis to apply it to their times. 1,400 years later in first-century Judea (Yeshua’s day), rabbis still studied and interpreted Torah in different schools of thought, some strict and others more lenient. If the Torah was interpreted as God intended, it was *fulfilled*.¹

Young Jewish men studied Torah from an early age (5-6). If a young man showed great promise in study, he would often be chosen by a rabbi to further his study before becoming a rabbi himself. As a disciple, he would *take on the yoke of learning* his rabbi’s interpretation of Torah as they lived side-by-side within the context of daily life. The disciple was expected to be totally obedient and dedicated to his rabbi.

Rabbi Yeshua’s offer, *Come to Me*, was an invitation to take on *His* yoke of learning to live as God intends. It was an invitation into freedom and rest. Yeshua was (is) The Word of God made flesh (John 1:14), the Anointed One. He was (is) the perfect embodiment and expression of the beautiful Law. Every word from His lips and every smallest action of His life taught His disciples how to live in the heart of God’s purpose.

Within Yeshua’s yoke, they would no longer strive to learn but would follow by the Spirit. As Yeshua lived beside them, He walked out the words of the Prophet Jeremiah:

“This is what the Lord says: ‘Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; Then you will find a resting place for your souls.’” (Jeremiah 6:16a)

He fulfilled the Law as the Psalmist experienced it (Psalm 19:7-8):

The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul.
The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart.
The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

It's the same with us.

We come into His yoke, learn from Him, and find rest for our souls. Yes, the way may be difficult, fraught with obstacles, hardships, and persecution, but His presence is with us, His voice comforts and instructs us, and the Holy Spirit imbues us. Simply put, *taking on Jesus' yoke* means to learn from Him how to walk by the Spirit that reflects His pure instruction – His ways that bring life.

Yeshua's yoke is an intimate place where He instructs us in personal ways meant only for us. He is the Only One Who can interpret His Word to our unique situations and personalities. He knows us completely. We can trust His instruction. He is our Wonderful Counselor! (Isaiah 9:6)

We live in the protective shelter of His yoke. As we take time to listen to Him and then do what He says, we *fulfill Torah*. We drink from the purest living water, and we embrace the greatest romance. Consider His words:

To His disciples:

"If you abide in My word, then you are truly My disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31-32)

To His Father on our behalf:

"The glory You have given Me I have given to them so that they may be one just as We are one; I in them and You in Me that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know You sent Me and loved them, even as You have loved Me." (John 17:22-23)

Are you striving in some way? Yeshua says, "Come to Me." As you see these three words, try putting the emphasis on the word *Come* and then on the word *Me*.

Let's pray

Oh Lord, our Teacher and the Lover of our souls, You miraculously delivered us from the bondage of our slavery to sin, selfishness, and waywardness. We were continually straying like sheep, but then we returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of our souls. (1 Peter 2:25) You gently guide us into rest and freedom. Teach us to eat Your word and rest in Your love. Thank you for paying our sin debt, for clothing us in Your righteousness, and for bringing us close to Your heart. We *nestle* in Your yoke, *listen* for Your instruction, *walk* in your ways by the Holy Spirit Whom You sent, and *share* Your invitation of light with the world!

Let's sing – Near to the heart of God (by Cleland B. McAfee, 1903)

There is a place of quiet rest, Near to the heart of God, A place where sin cannot molest, Near to the heart of God.	There is a place of comfort sweet, Near to the heart of God, A place where we our Savior meet, Near to the heart of God.
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O Jesus, blest Redeemer, Sent from the heart of God, Hold us, who wait before Thee, Near to the heart of God.	There is a place of full release, Near to the heart of God, A place where all is joy and peace, Near to the heart of God.
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¹ For more on this subject, see my writing *In His Dust – Abolishing and Fulfilling*.