

Coach House Church BEACONS

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(I acknowledge the source of this article as Messianic Bibles for Israel.)

Do you feel free?

If you live in the Western world, you likely have a constitutional “inalienable right” to freedom! You may have freedom to practice religion, freedom to speak, freedom to travel, and the list goes on. Freedom is what we fight for as nations and as individuals.

This heart cry for liberty appears in the motto of Greece (“Freedom or Death”), the Uruguay national anthem (“Liberty, or with glory we die”), and it was the call of Patrick Henry in 1775 to “give me liberty or give me death!” that helped to convince the state’s convention to send troops to fight in America’s Revolutionary War. Millions have, indeed, died in their fight for liberty. Yet is the freedom they have valiantly fought for and died for the kind of freedom God wants us to live in?

We’ll explore that answer here.

What is freedom?

God’s Essence Is Embedded in Freedom

Living in freedom is vitally important to our Father and Creator.

Even though God considered Abraham His friend, He waited until the critical moment in Israel’s struggle for freedom to reveal His personal name — YHVH — to Moses. And He told Moses to reveal it to the enslaved Hebrew people. Why? So that in displaying His mighty power against Pharaoh, His “name may be proclaimed in all the earth.” (Exodus 9:16) God placed His whole nature, essence, and being in the centre of Israel’s fight for liberty. But there’s more to the story than that.

Their liberty came with a purpose. The heart cry of Israel’s Father was: “Let My people go, that they may serve Me.” (Exodus 7:16)

Whereas individual liberty is often considered the freedom to do whatever the heart desires, God's freedom is divinely connected to serving Him. Let's first take a look at the kind of freedom much of the world is longing for, and then we'll see what kind of freedom God wants you, Friend, to live in.

Freedom to Serve Self

Chofesh is probably one of the favourite words of Israeli children, as it has come to mean free time or holiday. It is also the word for something in a shop or market that is free. The happy-sounding ani chofshi! literally means, I am free! Like a goldfish who jumps out of its bowl into the vast waterless world! Chofesh is often used in Israel's history to describe a bond servant who had been set free from his service.

Early in Israel's freedom, God allowed the People to freely choose to place themselves in the care and provision of fellow Israelites as they, in turn, served their providers as bond servants. It is a picture of our free choice to serve God, who provides and cares for us. God limited this period of being a bond servant to seven years:

"When you buy a male Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years, but in the seventh he shall go out a free person, without debt. If he comes in single, he shall go out single; if he comes in married, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master gives him a wife and she bears him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master's and he shall go out alone." (Exodus 21:2-4) As a free man, he would need to provide for himself, his family, and make his own choices in daily life.

Yet, there were times that this bond servant did not want to be "free."

Instead, he freely chose to remain under the protection and provision of his "master," especially if the master cared for the servant better than the servant could care for himself, whether financially or otherwise.

"If [after being offered freedom] the servant, in fact, says, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children, and I won't go out a free man [chofshi],' then his master is to bring him before the judges, and he is to bring him to the door or to the doorpost. His master is to pierce his ear with an awl, and he is to serve him permanently." (Exodus 21:5-6; also Deuteronomy 15:12)

The servant stayed out of love for his master, who was good to him and for him.

True Believers in the God of Israel become His servants because He is good and He is Lord!

"O how abundant is your goodness that you have laid up for those who fear you, and accomplished for those who take refuge in you, in the sight of everyone!" (Psalm 31:19)

No one who truly says he believes, trusts in, and loves the Lord is exempt from bearing this title.

Moses, in fact, is called a "bond servant of God" (Joshua 22:5; Revelation 15:3). Even Messiah is called God's Servant (Isaiah 53:11).

Non-Believers, on the other hand, have made their choice not to bear this title.

In Hebrew, there is a word for the freedom to choose to serve God, which we'll look at next.

Unlike black slaves who were bought, sold, and traded across the Sahara, a bond servant in Israel freely chose to indenture themselves for seven-year periods of service in order to pay off a debt or provide for his family. The trans-Saharan slave trade developed in the 7th and 8th centuries as Muslim Arabs conquered most of North Africa and peaked in the mid-19th century.

Freedom to Serve God

In Hebrew, there is a freedom called cherut. We see this word in the Siddur (Jewish prayer book), which refers to Passover as z'man cheruteynu, the time of our freedom. When the People of Israel left the servitude of Pharaoh and crossed the Red Sea into freedom, God didn't let them wander the wilderness without boundaries, shouting, "Ani Chofshi! I am free!" At Mount Sinai, He gave Moses the Torah: instructions found in the first five books of the Bible. When Moses gave the Torah to the People, "all the People answered together and said, 'All that the LORD has spoken we will do!'" (Exodus 19:8). At this moment, the People became b'nei-chorin—free men—freely choosing to enter a binding covenant with the Creator of the Universe.

Cherut freedom is not about choosing which food to eat or clothes we like to wear. Those are merely responses to our bodily needs and desires. Making choices out of love for God and His Word elevates freedom of choice from our devotion to self-gratification up to a spiritual union with our Father. In this way, we see that what we choose is a direct result of who we align ourselves with. And those choices translate to action. If we use our free will to choose to follow God, imagine what we can accomplish for the kingdom!

Is Freedom a Cheap Grace Gospel?

Sadly, many in the Christian community proclaim, "Ani Chofshi—I am free!" believing they live in a perpetual state of grace that covers every sin they make

without consequences. [These would be nominal or “cultural Christians”.] And yet, Rabbi Shaul (the Apostle Paul) warned the Believers in Corinth: “Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.” (1 Corinthians 6:9–10)

Moreover, “if we choose to go on sinning after we have learned the full truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.” (Hebrews 10:26). But some Believers have experienced a true washing, a setting apart for service in holiness “in the name of the Lord Yeshua HaMashiach (Jesus the Christ) and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Corinthians 6:11)

That washing away of our sins through the blood of Messiah Yeshua, through our repentance, and through the infilling of the Spirit of God Himself is the supernatural gift that we receive for entering cherut-freedom. It’s a gift that brings true joy. This is the reason that Paul and Silas, when imprisoned and shackled, could sing praises to God! (Acts 16:25)

Freedom and Faith

A right understanding of our freedom in God is foundational to our faith in Him alone. The “free will” God gives each of us, is an invitation to choose whom we will serve and obey. All our actions and choices in life spring from that one decision. If we choose to follow God, then there are responsibilities and expectations that God established for us to follow. His rules lead to His protection, His blessings, and His love toward us.

Even though we have disobeyed God, Yeshua paid the price of our sins (penalty of death) so that our initial choice to serve sin would be paid. He gave us a “do over,” the opportunity to make a NEW choice — to choose to voluntarily submit to God’s rule.

What will you do with that opportunity?



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