



The Sanctified Role Of Messianic Women

By Ro'eh Yochanan (John) Popp

Adherents of the Messianic Movement desire to see the Torah of our forefathers restored to its rightful place and to wait for the restoration of all things for the appointed time of Yeshua's return. However, part of this restoration is for men and women to appropriately affirm and seize their God-ordained roles for the work of His Kingdom. But today, Messianic women are silently frustrated; despairing lost about their roles and feel emotionally trapped inside a spiritual box. On one side of the wall, you may be one of those who came out of the Christian Church who had different teachings and definitions – they don't include head coverings, lighting candles, modest dress, to name a few. On the other side of the wall, you may have been the spiritual teacher, the bread winner, the controller, the decision maker – am I suppose to change over to have my husband lead now? On the other side of the wall, you may be the quiet passive type bewildered about speaking up, but afraid of appearing controlling, a feminist or a Jezebel. Regardless of the walls that surround Messianic women, it is time to exit this box of indecision and build up the correct foundational walls to build the house that HaShem wants you to reside in. Messianic women all need to understand, embrace and be empowered to walk in their God-given design for the sake of His Kingdom and promised restoration. Today, it is my desire to bring practical teachings and guidelines, stability and inspiration to free our women to minister in their calling.

Truthfully, godly women have an unwavering commitment to godliness. But is it not a troublesome challenge for Torah-observant women to compete with the secular and religious world in their role as women? Your beliefs promise no instant gratification but long term blessings, no instant easy highs but steadfast contentment, and no guaranteed emotional or financial outcomes – just your submission and that He will provide all your needs. One of the major challenges that face Messianic women is how to feel good and secure about yourselves while being surrounded by secular, Christian and Jewish influence that are at odds with your Messianic values and principles. The world around you primarily values you according to how visible you are, how much money or possessions you possess, what work or profession you hold and how many educational degrees you've earned.

In general, whether secular or Christian values are at times at odds with Messianic ones, you choose to place your values internal not external. You value humility and submission, while the world around you considers you weak and pathetic. You value modesty, while the world wants you to express your independency and self-esteem in provocative attire. I feel it is no small thing to teach the women about appropriate dress. Sometimes it is necessary for women to teach other women, who are called by His

Name to keep other women accountable – as the saying goes: “That if you are not selling, don’t be advertising.” Modesty is one of the best gifts a woman of godly character can offer to any man, rather to your husband or husband to be. Lastly, you value family development and spiritual nurturing over material acquisitions and self –control more than showiness. Indeed, you are different, sanctified by your internal godly values and traditions – you are the Sanctified Chosen Messianic Woman. I find it true, that many of the extraordinary women in the history of Messianic Judaism and Christianity have suffered from feelings of inferiority living in the prejudices of arrogant, dominant and unspiritual men. Men wrongfully blamed women for all the ills of society. However, today this scenario brought the pendulum to swing towards the opposite extreme, whereas the men have suffered from feelings of inferiority in a world of independent women who have now experience the same dominance and spiritual disengagement like men. Women blame men for not standing up for their responsibilities. But now, the answer and solution is not in affixing blame, but discovering the original Divine design and intent for our interactions. Therefore, it is only through rightly dividing the whole counsel of Torah that will provide for all of us a solid foundation for equipping humanity to every good work.of HaShem Today I wish to first address Yeshua’s relationship with women in comparison with the Oral law of His day, which is recorded in both Talmuds and Mishnah. Though women were highly applauded in their roles of family and home in the Talmud, they were also described as lazy, vain, have a tendency for the occult and inferior to man. On some level, she was on the same level as a Gentile slave.

Nevertheless, Yeshua strongly stood alone in his views on women, even amidst of His own talmidim/disciples. We learn from Mark 14:9, Yeshua praised the work of Mary. In Luke’s account, we see Yeshua displaying His own feelings for a woman in grief in Chapter 7:13, while considering a woman’s worth greater than the Pharisaic laws of the Shabbat in Chapter 8:3. Lastly, we understand in John’s account that Yeshua treated the woman in adultery as an equal person to those accusing her and later in John 20:17, entrusting to a woman the greatest testimony of His resurrection. In sum, Yeshua treated all women, regardless of being single or married, sinful or righteous, with great value, esteem and worth. It was clear that women could follow Him on an equal plane with men and have a personal responsibility and privilege to serve the Master.

Nevertheless, the function or role does not in anyway determine personal worth or value. The one who serves is not below the one served. Yeshua Himself displayed this example and has given us the teaching that the greatest in the Kingdom is the one who serves. (Matt.23:11). The man is the “head” of the wife, meaning the “source” or “sustainer” for his wife, in contrast to the Greco-Roman culture in “lording over the woman. Being head means it is his duty to lay down his life for her (Eph.5:25) such as being the first into battle. It is his duty to sustain his wife as of highest value to himself. Thus, the woman’s and man’s role in a marriage does not in anyway determine any unvalued or unworthy, but instead focuses on the premise that both are equally valued and worthy.

In contrast of the Mishnah which never gives authority to the woman in the relationship, we acknowledge there is mutual submission and authority in Shual’s teaching of the marriage bond in 1 Corinthinians 7:2-5. The husband belongs to the wife in the same way that the wife belongs to the husband. Both have God-given responsibilities. The wife is to fulfill the needs of her husband, while her husband is to fulfill her needs – both are moving towards the mutual goal of sanctification in their relationship. It is the husband’s desire to see his wife purified and Messiah-like, holy and blameless. Both are submitted to God-given authority, not as inferior to superior, but rather yielding to experience the true love sensation with admiration and awe.

Besides the man and women’s roles mentioned in the Mishnah and Brit Hadashah, we do need to acknowledge the roles in which women have supported the Kingdom. We know that women have

served with Yeshua and his emissaries, and have judged, prophesied, preached and prayed as effectively as any man, suffered for Yeshua more than many men, sacrificed and invested as much as any man for B'sorah (Good News). Miraim, Devorah, Huldah the wife of Shallum and Anna the daughter of Phanuel were all prophetesses. Shual (Paul) admonishes every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying (1 Cor. 11:5) while it is recorded that Phillip had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses (Acts 21:9). Hence, it is clear that Hashem did not limit his prophetic word only to men but extended it also to women as one function or role in the greater body of Messiah.

Though, we clearly locate references for prophetesses, there is no scriptural evidence that there were any female elders in Yisrael. When there is any description of Elders it is always "Ish": or "men" in the Tanach and Brit Hadahshah. Though many women were faithful to Yeshua and gifted to teach in general, still, we find no women appointed to any congregational leadership in the biblical record. Women were to teach Torah in the specifics in which they were responsible at home and family. All instruction assumes that men are to be overseers. All positive instruction for Elders is addressed to men. When we include the character issues of an overseer, the list in 1Timothy 3:2 includes, "the husband of one wife." Though men and women have equal spiritual status before God, God is a God of order. Order involves submission to someone. We all have to submit to His order for the common good of the whole Body of Messiah. In short, the woman is not to replace or overrun the man, but instead partner with him in submission.

Furthermore, Paul's teaching in 1Timothy 2:8-15 make it clear what men and women's role concerning prayer, and teaching. First, women should pray or worship like men with sanctified hearts and lives. This is best displayed by the way women adorn themselves and put on Yeshua and make no provision for the flesh. Second, women are to be taught for spiritual and personal growth and to equip them to fulfill their ministries in Messiah's Kehilah. But as like any student, they must learn in quietness and submission. Thirdly, women who are taught under her husbands will gain the gifted abilities to communicate to others appropriately within their own families and younger women.

Proverbs 6:20 reminds the son to "observe the commandment of your father and do not forsake the Torah of your mother." The father teaches Torah to his the wife, the wife teaches Torah to the children. This also will display the correct pattern set within the Messianic assembly by Messiah, her Head. Otherwise, to put a woman in the place of authority over a man in the assembly runs the risk of confusing the illustration that marriage gives of Messiah and His kehilah. The illustration of marriage displays the message that two become one, but where the husband functions as head of the wife. For this reason women are to function in other teaching positions, but not in the official authoritative position as a teacher over men in the messianic assembly, particularly in the office of elder, bishop or pastor.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that it is recorded by the Jewish Historian Josephus and the Mishnah that women of royal household did acquire the skill of reading and writing and daughters, along with the sons were learning Torah. But a ruling in the Mishnah is noted that "a woman may not be a teacher of scribes due to sexual temptations (mQuidd.4:13). It is also noted that opposition of Torah-study by women arose based on the woman's neglect of her traditional obligations in the house and kitchen. We see a touch of this in the role of Mariam and Martha in Luke 10:40-42. Lastly, women attended assemblies where Torah was studied, but the women attended only as listeners, whereas men came to study.

But what are the Messianic women do today? One thing is certain. It is time for the restoration of Messianic women to take hold of their callings once again. Perhaps our Messianic past would help us.

What did the spiritual journey look like in the early walk of Messianic women? Evidence suggests that within Paganism, Judaism, and Christianity in the Greco-Roman world women were active in many levels within their social and religious communities. However, their influence was not always identified by leadership titles, nor did their gender permanently determine their level of participation.

Reflecting back to the early Kehilot of believers, women were a clear majority in the congregations as early as the third century. It was recorded when the congregation in a North African town of Cirta was seized during a persecution, they found only 16 men's tunics, but found 82 ladies tunics. Persecution and wars left many women widowed which allowed them to inherit a proportion of their husband's property. Messianic women became the bankers who supplied money to the evangelistic work of the early evangelists and apostles as recorded in the scriptures and early history records. Many women were of high status, influencing governors in the pagan world. High-ranking Christian women took care of Origen while he was a priest and theologian in Alexandria, Egypt. Regardless of the few rights women had during this time period, historical records proved that the Messianic women had the right to buy, sell, and own property and were critical in financing, promoting and maintaining Yeshua's Kingdom.

Furthermore, there is a common misconception that women in Yeshua's day were just staying home taking care of children. The truth is recorded that they did not just remain home but some had occupations throughout the community which played a great role in the spreading of the Good News. Though most of the women worked inside the home, there existed certain skills that allowed an income-producing profession. The Mishnah discusses the case of the woman who prepares dough for sale in the market. Elsewhere rulings were made regarding women who sell wool garments. We hear that women became the shopkeeper who would sell olives for their husbands in the family store. They also provided hotel services in their home and were responsible for inn-keeping. As a result, they were prepared to having people assembling together as we read in scriptures the phrases such as "the house of Mary" Acts 12:12; give greetings to Nympha and the assembly which meets in her house. Even Yeshua was welcomed into the house of Marta as recorded in Luke 10:38.

Moreover, other important professions included a hair-dresser, in which the Babylonian Talmud interprets the name Mary Magdalene to mean that she was a hair-dresser. There is the mid-wife who was known as a wise woman. There is the natural-path physician who had medical knowledge and experience with plants and herbs for treatment of illnesses. Lastly, women assisted families who lost loved one and accompanied people to their graves as professional mourners, singing lamentations and wailing. In the Gospels, women were the ones who wailed and prepared Yeshua's body for burial (Mark 16:1, Luke 23:5). Therefore, we can conclude that it was common for women to work in professions to support their husbands and be a godly influence within their community.

With this being said, then what are the other roles or functions that messianic women are to consider? Paul addresses some of the instructions for women in his epistle to Titus, chapter 2:3-5. The older women are admonished first in regard to their own spiritual behavior, which in turn would qualify them with a platform of instruction to be received by the younger women. Tim Hegg in his article on the Role of Women in the Messianic Assembly noted that Paul points out instructions to encourage the younger women in 7 areas of life.

1. To love their husbands
2. To love their children
3. To be sensible, meaning having proper attitudes and actions that flow out of a disciplined life in Messiah.

4. To be pure and consistent, even when it is difficult. Inconsistencies speaks louder than words
5. To be workers at home as mothers, which is a very high calling, for the mothers are to teach Torah to their children (Prv. 1:8-9, 6:20-22). Workers at home is in the domestic sphere of one's family, which can include the family trade or business
6. To be kind, open-hearted, share unselfishly
7. To be subject to their own husbands in obedience and submission respect Furthermore, after Paul addressed the men to love their wives, he then addresses the wife to respect her husband in his epistle to the Ephesians, chapter 5, verse 33. In the Amplified Bible it states it this way: "Let the wife see that she respects and reverences her husband and then it expands on those terms in saying, "that she notices him, regards him, honors him, prefers him, venerates and esteems him and that she defers to him, praises him, loves and admires him exceedingly." (That is no small order)

In a survey given out on relationships, the men were shown that for women, the highest need in general is to feel loved and cherished. But the highest need for a man is to feel his wife's respect, trust, admiration and honor. Funny, nothing has changed. Shaunti Feldman, in her book *For Women Only*, commented that sometimes women can go overboard trying to show how much they love their husbands, but miss out in showing respect to them by criticizing them in public or questioning their decisions all the time. As a result, the men feel disrespected and do not feel loved. She noted that as a culture of women, a critical and condescending spirit has invaded the family. She was quoted as saying, "It sometimes has become a matter of focus, and if we're focusing on what we don't like, what we think is not worthy of respect, then that's what consumes us." As a result, she put out a 30-day challenge to women on the Revive Our Hearts radio station. The challenge is - for 30 days, you can't say anything negative about your husband – to him, or to anyone else about him.

Instead, find something that you appreciate or admire about your husband. Say it to him, and say it to someone else about him. Perhaps, this is one way to help fulfill a mitzvot in reference to Paul's instruction in Ephesians 5:33. Along with Ephesians 5:33 and all of these 7 areas in which the older women are able to encourage the younger women, it is clear to say that the goal for all women in relationship to men is really to be a suitable companion or helper. B'resheet (Genesis) 2:18 states that it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an ezer k'negdo, meaning a helper corresponding to him in kind or a helper against him. Neged means in front or before your face, in your view, straight forward. This word is rooted in nagad, which means, stand boldly opposite, to manifest, predict and praise.

Considering these descriptions for a woman as a helper is surely not an inferior status. The word ezer carries no implication of female subordination. It implies a submitted role as one who chooses to come alongside to help, particularly as in completion in carrying out the plan of God. Dr. Frank Seekins writes that the Hebrew letters in the word, 'ezer' clearly describes a military ally as the one who sees the enemy.

Among other things, women are the perfect ally to announce the truth as they see it, expose anything that might hinder their husbands. When a woman understands her calling and role is to be a mighty warrior and a perfect ally, she will remember that the men in her life are not the enemy; her weapons are not meant to be used against them. Their weapons of strength and power are to be used against their enemies. Moreover, in some respect the woman has an amazing God-given ability to bring protection or disarmament, shame or respect and praise or dishonor to her husband. They have a built in radar system that give off warning signals of impending danger. At the same time, women can be intuitive, but they also can be deceived and they are best served when their intuitive gleanings are sifted through the filter that is man's logic and reason. Therefore, a wife would do well to determine in her heart that

she will use her position and influence with her mate to bring glory to him. She is the diamond of the wedding ring that embellishes the gold of her husband.

Women !!!! One of the most important function or role as Messianic women I have discovered is not found in the heated debates in being a Rabbi or a Roeh (Shepherd/Pastor). It is found within your godly influence to help in your relationships with men. It's all about influence. Whether it be in your relationship with your brother, your father, your son, your husband, your supervisor at work, or a widower you have been confidently designed by the Master Creator to be an effective influence to help any man to achieve what our Father wills in heaven. In short, you can have no influence and be of no help, a little help with some influence or a lot of help with great influence for the men in your life to prosper their spiritual prospects. Through your attitudes, your words and your behavior, you have the power to bless and build the lives around you. We can win the war for our families and HaShem's values, if men and women of Adonai become allies and mighty warriors together.

May I remind you of Proverbs 14:1 – “Every wise woman builds up her home, but a foolish one tears it down with her own hands.” This proverb alone speaks of the influence and role that you have in the Kingdom of God. If you build the men in your home with confrontation of pursuing truth, build the men with protection through prayer and advice, and build the men with praise, submission, forgiveness and thanksgiving, you will be considered wise and your home will stand.

However, if you tear your men down in your home with shame, guilt, deception, unforgiveness, subjugation, dishonor and disrespect, you will be considered foolish who tears her house with her own hands. You can be no help, a little help or a lot of help for all the men in your life to prosper their spiritual prospects. Choice Regardless of professions, generations and time, we still find the steadfast tradition by every husband on Erev Shabat reciting from Proverbs 31 to his wife. Whether in Idaho or Florida, in Israel or Hungary, whether in the 2nd Century or the 20th Century, he declares her as “a-shet chayil, which actually means a woman of valor, strength, might, and power – not necessarily virtuous. How could the translator change the meaning of “Chayil” so drastically? Well, they didn't! The original English meaning of “virtue” is actually strong, a mighty work and mighty. Unfortunately, our concept of ‘virtue’ has changed in the English language during the last 500 years. Still, the use of chayil in all of the other biblical references mean powerful and mighty, specifically used with power, wealth and an army. For instance, it is used in Exodus 14:9 with Pharaoh's army as well as mighty men in the book of Joshua. Therefore, let's make it clear that “a-shet chayil” actually means a “mighty warrior”.

Still, what else can we say about the Sanctified Messianic women? What does she look like? She needs not to be necessarily beautiful, for “grace is deceitful and beauty is vain.” Rather, she serves sacrificially her family and her husband safely trusts in her. Motherhood is of quite important, teaching her children Torah and her children rise up and call her blessed. She has charge over the domestic and she looks well to the ways of her husband. Virtue and industry, rather than elegance or charm define her, strength and dignity are her clothing. Above all, she works willingly, opens her mouth in skillful and godly wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness. Knitted here, in Proverbs 31, holds the fabric of the roles of a Messianic woman.

In conclusion, Messianic women today are privileged in continuing the legacy past on from the early messianic women of faith. Their demonstrated love have been displayed in prophesizing in their congregations, opening their homes for assembly, financing work for His kingdom, teaching their children the Torah, protecting their men and families in prayer, fasting and other godly actions. All of you women today have joined the mighty warriors before you who have kept the Messianic flame alive. In ways that none one could have imagined or predicted, Messianic Judaism changed the resume

of women as free, partners in the spread of the Be'sorah (Good News), no longer outcasts but equal human beings endowed with the gifts of the Spirit and a holy purpose. Through centuries of dedication, hardship and sacrifice, those before you and now those present are reshaping Judaism into the true Judaism that reflects the living words of our Beloved Yeshua. John Angell James once said, "A community is not likely to be overthrown where woman fulfills her mission, for by the power of her noble heart over the hearts of others, she will raise it from its ruins, and restore it again to prosperity and joy." You are now part of the whole of the body of Messiah to raise Messianic Judaism from its ruins and restore it again to prosperity and joy.