

Discipleship

Becoming and Making Disciples of the Master

Moses received the Torah from Sinai and transmitted it to Joshua; Joshua to the elders; the elders to the prophets; and the prophets handed it down to the men of the Great Assembly. They said three things: Be deliberate in judgment, raise up many disciples, and make a fence around the Torah. —Avot 1:1

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. —Matthew 28:19-20

Yosi ben Yoezer of Tzeredah said: Let your house be a meetinghouse for the sages and sit amid the dust of their feet and drink in their words with thirst. —Avot 1:4

Bind up the testimony, seal the Torah among my disciples. —Isaiah 8:16

Avraham Avinu

*And Abram took his wife Sarai and Lot, his brother's son, and all their wealth that they had amassed, **and the souls they had made** in Haran, and they left to go to the land of Canaan, and they came to the land of Canaan. —Genesis 12:5*

"And the people that they made in Haran.' Rabbi Elazar ben Zimra said [the text should read] ..."these are the converts that they converted." And if it is that they converted them, why does it say "make"? Only to teach you that all those who bring a worshipper of stars [i.e. a pagan] close [to God] and converts him, it is as if [the one who converts the other] created [the one who converts]" (Genesis Rabbah 39:14).

- Abraham's example (Abraham has become our father-Romans 4:11):
- He was chosen because he would disciple his children and be faithful to that with which he was entrusted (Genesis 18:19)
- He was humble (Genesis 17:1—meaning that Hashem gave him a seemingly impossible task, yet he knew his strengths & weaknesses well enough to not argue with Hashem about fulfilling his mission. He was not filled with false humility.)
- He was hospitable (Genesis 18:1ff)
- Consistent in prayer & learning (Genesis 19:27, et al.)
- Helped those in need (Genesis 14)
- Compassionate (Genesis 18:16-33)
- Raised up disciples (Genesis 12:5, 14:14)

Yeshua HaMashiach

- Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

"Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.'

"Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:25-33)

- A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master (Matthew 10:24).
- A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher (Luke 6:40).
- Yeshua had **many** disciples, but only 12 whom he personally took under his wing, and only 3 who were his “star” pupils.

Paul

- Therefore I urge you to imitate me. (1 Corinthians 4:16)
- Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ. (1 Corinthians 11:1)
- Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. (Philippians 3:17)
- The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. (Philippians 4:9)
- You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 1:6)
- not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example. (2 Thessalonians 3:9)

Miscellaneous details

- The goal of the teacher is to make the disciple as close to a carbon copy of himself as possible.
- Witnessing / sharing your faith is not the same as discipleship. Discipleship requires fellowship, love and respect and most of all *time*.
- A disciple must have *yechidut* (intimate connection; one-on-one meetings) with his mentor.

- A disciple is always learning and always teaching.
- When one is searching for the lost property both of his father and of his teacher, his teacher's loss takes precedence over that of his father since his father brought him only into the life of this world, whereas his teacher, who taught him wisdom [i.e., Torah], has brought him into the life of the World to Come. But if his father is no less a scholar than his teacher, then his father's loss takes precedence...

If his father and his teacher are in captivity, he must first ransom his teacher, and only afterwards his father — unless his father is himself a scholar and then he must first ransom his father. (Bava Metzia 2:11)

- Another hardship a disciple could face was being away from his wife. Disciples commonly were single, but since marriage took place at a relatively early age (usually by eighteen according to Avot 5:21 in the Mishnah) many disciples had a wife and children. For example, the mother-in-law of one of Jesus' disciples is mentioned in Luke 4:38. If married, a man needed the permission of his wife to leave home for longer than thirty days to study with a sage (Mishnah, Ketubot 5:6).¹

Other Examples of / Thoughts on Discipleship

- Paul had Timothy
- Rebbe Nachman had Rabbi Nosson
- Rabbi Kramer left home at 9 years old to be discipled (see the book *Holy Woman*)
- Ohel Sarah (The Tent of Sarah)
- The "School of the Prophets" in 2 Kings 2:1-11
- Hillel used to say: He who aggrandizes his name, loses his name. He who does not increase his knowledge, decreases it. He who learns not, forfeits his life. He who makes unworthy use of the crown (of the Torah) shall pass away. (Avot 1:14)
- Shammai said: Make your study of the Torah a fixed habit. Say little and do much, and receive all men with a cheerful face. (Avot 1:15)
- Both Rabban Gamaliel and Joshua ben Perachyah said, "Provide for yourself a teacher." (Avot 1:6,16)

¹ <http://www.jerusalemerspective.com/Default.aspx?tabid=27&ArticleID=1448>