

# יתרו

## YITRO/JETHRO Shemot/Exodus 18:1-20:23

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This week the **Israelites** will pull up their tent pegs and **arrive at the mountain** in the **wilderness of Sinai**:

*Shemot 19:1* In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day, **they came to the Wilderness of Sinai.**<sup>2</sup> For they had **departed from Rephidim**, had come to the Wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness. **So Israel camped there before the mountain.**

The **Torah** tells us that the **children of Israel** have **left Rephidim** where they **fought Amalek** and have **arrived at a new location**...a place we assume they have **never been before**. **Or have they?** We know that **Moshe has been here** before. He was **shepherding the flock of Jethro** on **Mt. Horeb** when he had his **burning bush experience**:

*Shemot 3:1* Now **Moshe was tending the flock of Yitro (Jethro) his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of Elohim.**<sup>2</sup> And the Angel of **יהוה** appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the **bush was burning with fire**, but the bush was not consumed.<sup>3</sup> Then Moshe said, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn."<sup>4</sup> So when **יהוה** saw that he turned aside to look, **Elohim called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moshe, Moshe!" And he said, "Here I am."** ...<sup>10</sup> "Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."<sup>11</sup> But Moshe said to Elohim, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?"<sup>12</sup> So He said, "I will certainly be with you. And this shall be a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve Elohim on this mountain."

**Horeb** (means "dry" or "desolate") is an **alternative name for Mt. Sinai**:

*Devarim/Deuteronomy 4:10* "especially concerning the day you stood before **יהוה** your Elohim in Horeb, when **יהוה** said to me, 'Gather the people to Me, and I will let them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.'

Let's dig a little to find an interesting nugat. Last week we learned that **upon arrival at Rephidim**, the people were very **thirsty** and **cried out to Moshe**. **Moshe asked יהוה** what he should do, and he was **told to strike the rock with his staff**. **Where was that rock?** It **WASN'T** at **Rephidim**:

*Shemot 17:5* And **יהוה** said to Moshe, "Go on before the people, and take with you some of the **elders of Israel**. Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river, and go."<sup>6</sup> "Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink." And Moshe did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

Okay, so we have at least **Moshe** and "**some of the elders of Israel**" who have gone to the location of **Horeb (Mt. Sinai)**. Now this may explain another **detail from last week**. **When Moshe heard** that

**Amalek had come against Israel, he told Yehoshua (Joshua) to choose some men and begin fighting “tomorrow:”**

*Shemot 17:8 Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. <sup>9</sup> And Moshe said to Joshua, "Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of Elohim in my hand."*

**Why would they not engage in battle immediately?** According to what we have just learned, the **leaders and Moshe are at Mount Horeb/Sinai** and it would therefore take **Yehoshua a day to organize the troops and march them back towards Rephidim.** But the **hill that Moshe will stand on,** with his staff raised, is the **very mountain** that a few days later will be **smoking with the Presence of the Almighty!**

Now here's something else to think about. You may have wondered how if the **water producing rock** was at **Horeb/Sinai,** then **how did the children of Israel receive water?** The rabbis teach that the **gushing water from the rock** formed **several rivers and streams** that flowed to **Rephidim.** So...since **water symbolizes Torah,** יהוה had **intended** all along to **provide the nation's water needs from Sinai,** the place of the **giving of the Torah!** The **waters which save the children of Israel will flow from Sinai!**

The **Father** wanted to create a **yearning for Sinai** in the **hearts of His children.** The **presence of water** coming from the **Mount** was a kind of **forerunner** to the **revelation of Torah.** The **association of life with water** is **paralleled** with the **association of life with the Word of יהוה.** We also see that in the **future, living water will flow from Jerusalem:**

*Zechariah 14:8 And in that day it shall be that living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, Half of them toward the eastern sea And half of them toward the western sea; In both summer and winter it shall occur.*

The **Almighty** claims to be the **“living water”:**

*Jeremiah 2:13 "For My people have committed two evils: **They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters,** And hewn themselves cisterns -- broken cisterns that can hold no water.*

**Yeshua** also pointed to **Himself** as the **source of “living water”** when He responded to the **woman at the well:**

*John 4:10 Yeshua answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of Elohim, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and **He would have given you living water.**"<sup>11</sup> The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water?"<sup>12</sup> "Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?"<sup>13</sup> **Yeshua** answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again,<sup>14</sup> **but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.**"*

On the **last day of Sukkot,** **Yeshua** stood up and made reference to the **“rivers of living water”:**

*John 7:37 On the last day, that great day of the feast, **Yeshua stood and cried out,** saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink."<sup>38</sup> **He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.**"*

Well we can't end here, because the book of **Revelation finishes off this picture** of “**living water**” as the **source of life for all eternity**:

*Revelation 22:1 And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of Yah and of the Lamb.<sup>2</sup> In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*

On **Mount Sinai**, the **Father** will reveal **Himself to His children** in a **physical way** as He **presents** them with **His Torah**. The **Torah** is of the **same essence** as the **Father**. **Yeshua** also came in a **physical way** as the **essence of the Torah** and of the **Father**. He is the **Word made flesh**. **None** of them can be **separated from each other**. They are **echad...one**.

The **magnitude** of the **revelation** on **Mount Sinai** removed **all doubt** that this was a **Divine occurrence**. **EVERY** person experienced **His Presence**. This **new nation** was being **shaped and molded** into the **antithesis** of what **they were in Egypt**. In **Egypt** they were a **bunch of unconnected slaves**. Now they would **cease to be individuals** and instead would become a **nation of citizens under the sovereignty of the Almighty** whose **written constitution** was the **Torah** and whose **mission** was to be a “**kingdom of priests and a holy nation**”:

*Shemot 19:5 'Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine.<sup>6</sup> 'And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."*

What was the **government** that **הנהל** was **about to set up for the people**? To help us understand the concept of a “**free society**,” I would like to quote from **Rabbi Jonathan Sacks** in his commentary on **Yitro** (emphasis mine):

“Even today, standard works on the **history of political thought** trace it back, through Marx, Rousseau and Hobbes to **Plato’s Republic, Aristotle’s Politics and the Greek city state (Athens in particular) of the fourth century BCE**. This is a **serious error**. To be sure, words like ‘**democracy**’ (rule by the people) are **Greek in origin**. The **Greeks** were **gifted at abstract nouns and systematic thought**. However, if we look at the ‘**birth of the modern**’ – at figures like **Milton, Hobbes, and Lock in England**, and the **founding fathers of America** – the **book** with which they were in dialogue was not Plato or Aristotle but the **Hebrew Bible**. **Hobbes quotes it 657 times** in *The Leviathan* alone. **Long before the Greek philosophers, and far more profoundly, at Mount Sinai the concept of a free society was born**.

**Three things** about that moment were to prove crucial. **The first** is that long before Israel entered the land and acquired their own system of government (first by judges, later by kings) **they had entered into an overarching covenant with G-d**. That covenant (*brit Sinai*) **set moral limits to the exercise of power**. The **code** we call **Torah** established for the first time the **primacy of right over might**. Any **king** who **behaved contrarily to Torah** could be **challenged**. This is the **single most important fact** about biblical politics.

**Democracy** on the **Greek model** always had **one fatal weakness**. Alexis de Tocqueville and John Stuart Mill called it “**the tyranny of the majority**”. J. L. Talmon called it “**totalitarian democracy**.” The **rule of the majority** contains **no guarantee of the rights of minorities**. As Lord Acton rightly noted, it was this that led to the **downfall of Athens**: “**There was no law superior to that of the state. The lawgiver was above the law.**” In **Judaism**, by contrast, **prophets** were mandated to **challenge the authority of the**

**king if he acted against the terms of the Torah. Individuals were empowered to disobey illegal or immoral orders.** For this alone, the **covenant at Sinai** deserves to be seen as the **single greatest step in the long road to a free society.**

The **second key element** lies in the **prologue to the covenant.** G-d tells Moses: ‘This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and tell the people of Israel. You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Me. Now, **if you obey Me fully and keep My covenant, you will be My treasured possession**, for the whole earth is Mine. You will be for Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation....’ Moses tells this to the **people, who reply:** ‘**We will do everything the Lord has said.**’

What is the **significance** of this **exchange?** It means that **until the people had signified their consent, the revelation could not proceed.** *There is no legitimate government without the consent of the governed, even if the governor is Creator of heaven and earth.* I know of few more radical ideas anywhere. To be sure, there were sages in the Talmudic period who questioned whether the acceptance of the covenant at Sinai was completely free. However, **at the heart of Judaism is the idea – way ahead of its time, and not always fully realized – that the free G-d desires the free worship of free human beings. G-d, said the rabbis, does not act tyrannically with His creatures.**” (end of quote)

It may be **difficult** for us who have been brought up with the **false notion that Torah is bondage and legalism** to think of that which יהוה was setting up at **Mount Sinai** was the **true politics of “freedom”.** Today in the **U.S.A., England, Israel,** and many other countries, we speak of our **“free” nations.** Our **leaders** attempt to offer us a **“new vision”** that will **give us hope.** **“Change”** has been the **rallying cry in the States,** though few of us have a clue what that really means or how it could possibly **take us where we want to go.**

Somewhere along the line, our **government ceased to deliver** what they **promised the nation as a whole.** The **individual then stepped forward and began to operate privately.** The **free market produced and distributed goods** and many **people benefitted from greater wealth** and the **freedom to spend as they chose.** But the **1990’s was riddled with problems.** **Health and welfare services outgrew our ability to fund them.** **Inner cities** continued to **expand with all the troubles associated with growth.** **Ethic tensions** became an **issue.**

There are now a few who are taking **another look at Biblical solutions.** The **answer** that many see is called....**community.** Now let’s **return to the Torah parasha** and see **how this all fits together.** As **Moshe is about to climb the Mountain** to receive the **Ten Commandments,** the **Israelites affirm their commitment to fulfilling His commandments...**even though **they have not even heard what they are!** They are **eager to make a commitment to obey:**

*Shemot 19:8 Then all the people answered together (yachdav - יהוה) and said, "All that יהוה has spoken we will do." So Moshe brought back the words of the people to יהוה.*

The **commandments** became the **Israelite’s mission statement.** This was a **unifying document** that gave them a **shared purpose.** And it is a **shared purpose that defines community.** **Couples, families, congregations, businesses, sports teams, all thrive when rallying around a shared purpose or a goal.** At **Mount Sinai,** the people have agreed to **do...shema, all that יהוה has spoken.** They are of **one heart** and they are **eager to enter into this covenant with the One who has delivered them.** **Shemot 19:8** says

that the **people answered “together.”** That Hebrew word is “**yachdav**” (יָחַדְוּ) and its **root** is “**yachad**” (יָחַד) which means “**united.**” These words are also related words to “**echad**” (אֶחָד) which means “**one.**”

The **Israelites** are already **leaning towards obedience** and **service** as a **united community**. Obviously, **putting this into action quickly eluded them**. But **unity** is the **perfect will** of the **Father**, and **we need to begin to work towards this vision**:

*Proverbs 29:18 Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the Torah, happy is he.*

The **first century believers** were very **community oriented** as they **shared life together**:

*Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. <sup>43</sup> Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. <sup>44</sup> Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, <sup>45</sup> and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. <sup>46</sup> So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, <sup>47</sup> praising Adonai and having favor with all the people. And Adonai added to the assembly daily those who were being saved.*

Again it is pointed out that the **people** were of **one heart and mind**:

*Acts 4:32 Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. <sup>33</sup> And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of Adonai Yeshua. And great grace was upon them all. <sup>34</sup> Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, <sup>35</sup> and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.*

**People congregated in homes** as evidenced by **Rav Sha'ul** (Paul) in his **personal greetings** at the end of **Romans**:

*Romans 16:3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Messiah Yeshua, <sup>4</sup> who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the assemblies of the Gentiles. <sup>5</sup> Likewise greet the assembly that is in their house.*

The **Gospel of Messiah Yeshua** thrived under these **conditions of community**. The people had a **common vision of spreading the good news of the resurrection and of being obedient to the Torah**. This is “**the conduct worthy of the Gospel of Messiah**”:

*Philippians 1:27 Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Messiah, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, <sup>28</sup> and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from Yah.*

Our **vision** should be **no different today**. Many of us **gather in small congregations, united around learning and putting into practice our Torah faith**. But let us not be **guilty of forgetting our “first love”**:

**Revelation 2:1** "To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, ' These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: <sup>2</sup> "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; <sup>3</sup> "and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. <sup>4</sup> "Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. <sup>5</sup> "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; **repent and do the first works**, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place -- unless you repent.

**Shemot 20** lists for us what we know as the “**Ten Commandments**”. It is worth noting that, although this is such a common and well known expression, **no where in the Hebrew Scriptures will you find these literal words**. Following are common **English translations**:

**Shemot 34:28** So he was there with **לְיָמֵי** forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And He wrote on the tablets **the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments**.

**Devarim 10:4** "And He wrote on the tablets according to the first writing, **the Ten Commandments**, which **לְיָמֵי** had spoken to you in the mountain from the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly; and **לְיָמֵי** gave them to me.

In the **Hebrew**, what you have is “**aseret hadevarim**” (**עֲשֶׂרֶת הַדְּבָרִים**) which **literally** translates as “**The Ten Words**”. What is the “**First Word**” and how are we to **understand it**?

**Shemot 20:1** And Elohim spoke all these words, saying: <sup>2</sup> " I am **אֲנִי** your Elohim, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Why does **אֲנִי** choose this particular description of Himself? Why does He not say, “**I am the Elohim who created the heavens and the earth?**” The **introduction** that **אֲנִי** made was intended to point to the **personal relationship He wanted with Israel**. Continually through the **confrontation** with the **Pharaoh, Moshe** had referred to Him as a **specific Elohim** - “**אֱלֹהֵינוּ** Elohim of the Hebrews”:

**Shemot 7:16** "And you shall say to him, **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** Elohim of the Hebrews has sent me to you, saying, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness"....

This Elohim is the **One who made covenant with Abraham**. In the **First Word**, He is telling them that **He desires for them to KNOW Him** as the **Elohim who has remembered** (acted on their behalf) **them** and **delivered them out of Egypt**. They must **not forget** that He has **redeemed them** from the **bondage of this world** so that they could **serve Him**. Now while **Jewish tradition** considers this “**Word**” the **first** of the ten, **Christianity** includes the next sentence as well, “**You shall have no other gods before Me**” (Shemot 20:3). How can we explain the **Jewish approach**?

The **Ramban** offers a profound answer using a **short parable**:

“Imagine a **king** who comes to a province and is **not recognized**. His courtiers urge him to **start giving orders**, since he is a king. Yet, the **king hesitates**. If they do **not accept my sovereignty**, he asks, why would they **obey my commandments**? **God faced the same question at Sinai**. If the **Israelites are unsure of my existence**, God wondered, why would they **obey My laws**? Therefore, **the**

**first commandment concerns not action, but apprehension. It addresses our internal sensibility, not our external behavior. It asks not for obedience, but for relationship, and relationship is the foundation of the Torah.”**

According to **Rashi**, the **entire Ten Words** were **revealed simultaneously**, in a manner that would have been **impossible to articulate**. What could be the **purpose** of a **communication** which could **not be cognitively understood**? If the Almighty spoke **all the Ten Words at once**, no one could possibly have even **understood one word!!** The sages note that perhaps the people did not **“hear”** at all!! The **verse immediately following** the Ten Words states:

*Shemot 20:18 And all the people are seeing the voices, and the flames, and the sound of the trumpet, and the mount smoking; and the people see, and move, and stand afar off,<sup>19</sup> and say unto Moshe, 'Speak thou with us, and we hear, and let not Elohim speak with us, lest we die.'*

I have used a more **literal translation** for you to understand my point. The **Torah** says that the people were **“seeing the voices.”** It does not say that the people **“heard”** the **words of Elohim**. The text says that they **“saw”** the **voices, the flames, the sound of the shofar and the Mount smoking**. These things **frightened** them, and they **asked Moshe to speak** that they might instead **“hear”** from **him**. **Moshe** answers:

*Shemot 20:20 And Moshe said to the people, "Do not fear; for Elohim has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin."<sup>21</sup> So the people stood afar off, but Moshe drew near the thick darkness where Elohim was.*

Again we see the concept that **the people “saw,”** as opposed to **“hearing” the sounds,** in the following verse:

*Shemot 20:22 Then הוה said to Moshe, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: 'You have seen that I have talked with you from heaven.'*

**Rashi** explains that when the Torah says that the people **“saw the sounds”**, they actually **“saw”** that which is usually **“heard”**. These were very unusual and **divine circumstances**. To **“see”** the **glory of the Word of Elohim with our own eyes...does this sound familiar?!!**

*John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

So in our parasha, on the Mountain, we have הוה **speaking** in a **miraculous way** in which the **people** could **“see”** what is **normally “heard”**. It was a completely **supernatural experience**. No one could **possibly doubt** that its **source was הוה!** As we talked about in last week’s commentary, after the **Red Sea experience**, they had **yearned for another personal encounter** with the **Almighty**. Yet **now**, they were **so frightened** that they **requested an intermediary** (20:19). That **request was granted** and **Moshe ascended** back up the Mountain to **receive the divine Words**. Today **Yeshua** is our **intermediary**:

*John 14:6 Yeshua said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*

Let’s return a moment to the concepts of **“seeing”** versus **“hearing.”** A person can **“see”** an **incredible amount of material at once**, but **how many sounds** can you **“hear”** at once? This helps us to

**understand the revelation at Mount Sinai.** יהוה allowed the Israelites to **see a bit of His awesomeness.** Did you ever wonder how our **Father can hear all of our voices at once?** He **allowed the Israelites a completely supernatural experience, a sort of reversal of the senses.** He **removed the boundaries between sight and hearing.** It could be an awesome **preview** into one aspect of what **eternity** might be like!

One of the most interesting pictures painted on the Mountain is that of the **Hebrew wedding.** If we look at **Israel** as the **bride** and יהוה as the **Bridegroom,** it turns the **Mosaic covenant** into the “**ketubah**” or the **wedding covenant.** Here are the steps:

- We have already read of the **intentions** made by the **Groom** in the “**I wills**”
  - *Shemot 6:6* "Therefore say to the children of Israel: 'I am יהוה'; **I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.**<sup>7</sup> **'I will take you as My people, and I will be your Elohim.** Then you shall know that I am יהוה your Elohim who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.
- The **bride** is **set apart** in order to **prepare for the wedding.** **Israel** was **set apart** as she was brought into the **wilderness** (Bemidbar – place of the word) where her **character** was **transformed.** This is also called **sanctification,** or the process of being made **holy.** For **Israel,** this was to happen during the period we know as the “**Counting of the Omer**”.
- The **formal proposal**
  - *Shemot 19:5* 'Now therefore, **if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine.**
- The **bride's answer** to the **proposal**
  - *Shemot 19:8* Then **all the people answered together and said, "All that יהוה has spoken we will do."** So Moshe brought back the words of the people to יהוה.
- **Preparation** for the special day
  - *Shemot 19:10* Then יהוה said to Moshe, "**Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes.**
- The **Groom comes down** and stands beneath the **wedding canopy** (chuppah)
  - *Shemot 19:16* Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were **thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the shofar was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled.**
- The **Groom presents the wedding proposal** through the **friend of the bridegroom** (Moshe)
  - *Shemot 19:17* And Moshe brought the people out of the camp to meet with Elohim, and they stood at the foot of the mountain.
- A **shofar blast** will **announce the special day**
  - *Shemot 19:19* And when the **blast of the shofar sounded long and became louder and louder, Moshe spoke, and Elohim answered him by voice.**

- The **marriage contract (ketubah) is given to the bride**. It includes all the **conditions of the marriage covenant**. These are the **Ten Words**. (Shemot 20)
- The **token of the covenant** symbolizing its **permanence**
  - *Shemot 31:16* *Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.*

Thus ended the **first stage of the marriage covenant** called the **etrothal**. During the **etrothal** you are **legally married** to your spouse, but you do **not yet physically dwell** with them. **Jeremiah** provides us with more insights into the **etrothal of Israel in the wilderness**:

*Jeremiah 2:1* *Moreover the word of יהוה came to me, saying, <sup>2</sup> "Go and cry in the hearing of Jerusalem, saying, 'Thus says יהוה: "I remember you, The kindness of your youth, **The love of your betrothal, When you went after Me in the wilderness, In a land not sown.** <sup>3</sup> **Israel was holiness to יהוה, the firstfruits of His increase. All that devour him will offend; Disaster will come upon them," says יהוה.' "***

We know that soon we will be reading of **trouble** in the **etrothal**. Almost immediately there was **unfaithfulness on the part of the bride with the golden calf**. We will read more of that in the weeks to come.

We are also in the **stage of betrothal with our Bridegroom** if we are in a **personal relationship** with our **Messiah Yeshua**. We are **legally married**, yet we do **not yet physically dwell with Him**. We have the **same marriage contract** as that **given to the Israelites** and the **same token of the covenant (Shabbat)**. In the book of **Revelation**, we read of the **future consummation of our marriage**, however, there are a few things that must happen first. **After the betrothal, the bride would go home and prepare her wedding dress**. The **Groom would go to His Father's house and prepare a dwelling for them**. Then they would be ready to **physically dwell together and consummate the marriage**.

Let's **define the bride**. The **Jews say it is them**. The **church insists that they are the bride**. Is יהוה/Yeshua a **polygamist**? Let's take a look at who the people were who **first entered into the betrothal**:

*Acts 7:37* *"This is that Moshe who said to the children of Israel, 'יהוה your Elohim will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear.'<sup>38</sup> "This is he who was **in the congregation (ecclesia - ἐκκλησία) in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us,***

“**Congregation**” is the **Greek ecclesia (ἐκκλησία)** which is **translated as “church”** nearly every other time it **appears in the Brit Chadasha**. The **congregation, Israel, the church...it's the same entity in Acts** as it was in **Shemot**. The “**church**” was **not a separate entity** that was “**born**” on **Shavuot/Pentecost** as pictured in the book of **Acts**. This **same assembly was present at Shavuot/Pentecost on Mt. Sinai**. And the “**Prophet like me**” becomes **identified in Acts 7:38 as Yeshua**. He was the **One who spoke to the children of Israel on the Mountain**. So the answer as to **who is the bride...it is all who “hear” the “prophet like Moshe”** and who “**receive the living oracles**” which was the **living Word of Elohim spoken on Mt. Sinai**.

The **bride must prepare her wedding dress** as described in **Ephesians 5**:

*Ephesians 5:26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,<sup>27</sup> that He might present her to Himself a glorious assembly, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.*

**Clothing** is a **description** of our **attitude and actions**. Those who **keep their wedding garment “unspotted and without wrinkle”** are **spiritually mature before their Bridegroom**. Consider these verses:

*Revelation 19:14 And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.*

*Revelation 16:15 "Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."*

We've also been told that our **Bridegroom** is **preparing a place for His bride**:

*John 14:3 "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."*

Much of what was **written** in the **Brit Chadasha** was to **exhort believers** to strive to **overcome the desires of the flesh, be obedient, and to seek to grow** in the **maturity** that would **clothe them** in the proper **wedding attire**. It is not unlike the **transformation process** that we've seen happening in **Shemot**.

Now consider Rav Sha'ul's words:

*2 Corinthians 11:2 For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Messiah.*

For this is the goal:

*Revelation 19:7 "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."<sup>8</sup> And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.*

And this is the **consummation** when **Yeshua will dwell for eternity with His bride**:

*Revelation 21:1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.<sup>2</sup> Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from Yah, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.<sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of Yah is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. Yah Himself will be with them and be their Yah.*

To summarize – the **goal** of a **believer** should not be to **just believe...**but to **move forward** into a **holy and set apart relationship** with **Yeshua, our Bridegroom** whom we are **in covenant with**. The **Torah** defines words like **holy, righteous, love, and set-apart** so that we will not be “**ashamed,**” but **properly clothed and ready for our Bridegroom when He returns!**

*2 Timothy 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to Yah, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

**Shabbat Shalom!**

**Ardelle**