

Wedding of the Messiah I

containing:

The Ancient Wedding God Marries Israel

by
Dean & Susan Wheelock

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.
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.
Revelation 19:7-8

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He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."
(I John 3:2)

~ Introduction ~

He who has the bride is the bridegroom;
But the friend of the bridegroom,
Who stands and hears him,

Rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice.
Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled.
John 3:29



There are a number of analogies that can be drawn from Scripture concerning the relationship of *Y'shua HaMashiach* (Jesus the Messiah), to the Believing community. For example: we are called *Y'shua's* brethren (Heb. 2:11), He is our High Priest (Heb. 2:17), He is the **"...author (captain) of our salvation..."** (Heb. 2:10), He is our soon coming King (Rev. 19:16), and He is our Lord (Rev. 19:16).

However to us, as Believers, one of the most compelling and meaningful relationships that we have with *Y'shua* is that of a Betrothed Bride, for we are already in the middle stage of a marriage relationship with Him, a relationship which will last throughout all eternity:

"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 Christ [Messiah]." (II Cor. 11:2)

This concept, of a marriage relationship with our Savior, is one that we will not be able to fully comprehend until the day comes when we stand "face to face" with our Husband, *Y'shua HaMashiach*, in the marriage chamber:

"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when

It is for that very day, the day of *Y'shua's* revealing, that all Believers await; just as a young betrothed bride awaits her wedding day, the day which begins the rest of her life with her husband.

Perhaps if we, as Believers, can catch the vision of who we are and how both the Father and the Son feel towards us, then we can begin to experience lives full of hope instead of fear, full of love instead of anger, full of peace instead of anxiety. Such a vision can bring into focus what our function is to be at this time; how we should be conducting our individual lives and how we should be treating one another, especially our brethren who are also a part of the Bride of Messiah.

It is for these reasons that we begin this study of *The Wedding of the Messiah*. We pray that it will bring as much hope, love and anticipation to each one of you as it has brought (and continues to bring) to us, on a daily basis.

We hope you will find this booklet a blessing in your spiritual walk.

Shalom!

Dean & Susan Wheelock

Beit Shalom,
August, 2012

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~ The Ancient Wedding ~

And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,
So shall your God rejoice over you.
Isaiah 62:5



Weddings were much different in ancient Israel and Judah than they are in modern America. The entire attitude of how mates were selected, how the arrangements were made, what the engagement period was like, and how the actual marriage took place, were far different from today's customs. In addition, the roles which the individual parents of the Bride and Bridegroom played in the wedding were also much different. For example, in today's wedding the most important person in the wedding party, outside of the Bride and Groom, is the mother of the Bride. Often times she is more in control of the actual wedding than is the Bride herself. However, in the ancient wedding, it was the father of the Bridegroom who played the most important role.

The Ancient Wedding was divided into three major stages: the Match, the Betrothal and the Consummation. However, there are a number of subsections within these stages that need to be considered if one is to fully understand how the Ancient Wedding was put together and how it relates to our relationship with *Y'shua*. Each part of the wedding had a very important function and could not be skipped without damaging the entire process and thereby possibly placing the marriage relationship on an infirm foundation.

~ The Match ~

~ Finding a Suitable Mate ~

It stands to reason that no marriage can take place without there being the matching of a man and a woman. In today's world this usually means that a man and woman choose each other through a process called courtship. There is an old saying that was made into a 1950's popular song which says: "*A man chases a girl until she catches him.*" This may have been true for many generations, but it does not necessarily hold true today. While it usually is the man who first initiates the dating relationship that may eventually lead to marriage, in modern society this is no longer always the case -- women too sometimes initiate and even pursue men in the dating game. However, the bottom line is that today the choice of who one is to marry usually resides entirely within the power of the two getting married.

Such was not the case in the ancient world, for in those days marriages were arranged. This custom is still practiced in some societies today, especially in the world of strict Moslems and Orthodox Jews.

Anciently, the Match (called a *Shidduch* שידוך [shee-dookh] in Hebrew) was usually arranged by the respective fathers of the Bridegroom and the Bride. However,

sometimes it was made by a third party called a *Shadcan* שדכן (shawd'-cahn). The famous 'Matchmaker' in the musical and movie *Fiddler on the Roof*, was a *Shadcan*.

The purpose of matching two people for marriage was so the couple could avoid the trauma that sometimes comes from a marriage that is based more on physical attractiveness and hormones than on good sense. Of course, there was no guarantee that an arranged marriage would be any happier, especially if the fathers were more interested in making a match for their son or daughter that was based on meeting their own needs or desires rather than on those of their offspring. There have probably been thousands of marriages that have been arranged because of the economic or social status objectives of the parents. We sometimes see similar objectives played out today when a member of royalty selects a mate.

There is a saying in the Middle East concerning the difference between an arranged marriage and that of mutual selection, which goes something like this: "Western marriages are like pouring hot soup onto a cold plate. It causes the soup to gradually cool. Eastern (arranged) marriages are like putting cold soup on a fire. It causes the soup to gradually warm."

In other words, because of the passionate heat that often goes along with the Western engagement (or even dating) period, once marriage arrives many couples have already experienced the peak of physical and sexual excitement. Therefore, everything that follows within such a marriage is downhill, for now the couple must go through the difficult task of learning to live together in harmony without having the freshness of physical lovemaking to help draw them back together when the inevitable disagreements appear. In the Ancient Wedding process, when a couple was matched, all of that excitement lay yet ahead of them in a marriage covenant relationship that could not be broken by the slightest whim of one of the partners.

In the ancient Hebrew world it was possible that a match could be made for a son or daughter even prior to birth. For example, if two families were close friends and possibly in the same fellowship, the parents might covenant with one another that if their yet unborn children turned out to be of the opposite sex, they would commit them to marriage when they became of marriageable age.

There was one escape clause to the arranged *Shidduch* (Match) -- both parties (the potential Bridegroom and the Bride) had the right of refusal. They did not have to marry the person that had been selected for them, although they could have been under extreme pressure to do so.

~ The First Match ~

It is important to remember that the concept of matching a man and woman did not originate with man, for the very first man and woman who ever lived on earth had their mates chosen for them by their Creator. *Adam* אָדָם (*Ah-dahm*) and *Chava* חַוָּה (Hah-vah = Eve) were created explicitly for each other, and therefore were perfectly matched from the beginning:

"And the LORD [YHVH] God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.' ...

"And the LORD [YHVH] God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD [YHVH] God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.

"And Adam said:

**'This is now bone of my bones
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman,
Because she was taken out of Man.'**

(Gen. 2:18, 21-23)

According to Jewish tradition the matching of a couple in marriage is done by God Himself, so the husband and wife can be brought into a unique oneness. Therefore, no two marriages are exactly the same, however all marriages are to function in a manner in which each party complements the other.

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

(Gen. 2:24)

Genesis 2:18 and 20 speak of the woman being **"...a helper comparable to him."** In the original King James Version it was translated as "...an help meet for him."

Other translations include:

- ◆ "...a helper correspondent to himself." (Septuagint).
- ◆ "...a fitting helper for him." (Tanakh).
- ◆ "...a companion suitable for helping him." (Complete Jewish Bible).
- ◆ "...a helper corresponding to him." (The Five Books of Moses).
- ◆ "...suitable helper, completing him." (The Modern Language Bible).
- ◆ "...a helpmate opposite him." (Translation from *The Midrash Says*).

There are two key words that are in question here: the first is *ezer* עֵזֶר (eh-zehr' - Strong's #5828), and it means 'aid' or 'help.' However, the word can also mean 'power' or 'strength.' The second word, *neged* נֶגֶד (neh-ghed' - #5048) is defined as: "...a front, i.e. part opposite; spec. a counterpart, or mate; usually ... over against or before..." *Neged* can be used to mean either "before," "over against," or "opposite." In the

Midrash, *neged* is sometimes rendered as 'equal.' Because of these different definitions, these two words have caused a number of conflicting teachings to be put forth concerning the intended relationship of a husband and his wife. It is this anomaly that has caused Jewish teaching on this subject to say:

"Why does the Torah describe the wife as a helpmate 'opposite' man? This term denotes that if he

is worthy, she will be a help to him, but if he is unworthy, she will become his opponent." (from *The Midrash Says*, by Rabbi Moshe Weissman, page 34.)

According to Scripture, it is evident that husbands and wives have different but equally important roles to play in the marriage relationship. This relationship, while difficult enough when both parties are striving to follow the instruction book of God (the *Torah*), is even more difficult when sin is brought into it by one or both parties. The concept that husband and wife are equal before God, but fulfilling different roles in a marriage is also evident from the writings of Peter:

"...as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered." (I Peter 3:7b)

~ The Benefits of Proper Matching ~

It is difficult for modern Americans to understand how a young couple could possibly benefit by having their marriage arranged for them. However, the records of the divorce courts stand as a living testimony to the failure of matching couples using the current standards of society. The problem is that today people marry for an elusive feeling which they call 'love.' But in the ancient Hebrew world, love was understood to be something that grew and developed over time, not a 'feeling' that just overtook a person. Thus, love was the commitment that two people made to each other. Love was how they nurtured that commitment and how they cared for each other. Love was not a warm fuzzy 'feeling.' Yes, in a truly good marriage, the 'warm fuzzies' will come from time to time. However, true love is expressed during those times when the going is rough and the 'warm fuzzies' are far, far away, but when the commitment to lovingly resolve the issues is foremost. The correct concept of 'love' is probably summed up best by a line from a contemporary Christian song: "*Love is not a feeling, it's an act of your will.*"

One of the advantages derived by having the parents arrange a marriage, is when they take special care to consider the 'family background' of the prospective partner. In Jewish teaching this aspect is called *yichus* יִיחֻס (yee-khus' = pedigree) and is extremely important. High on the list of family character traits to consider would be the understanding and dedication the prospective partner and his/her family show to the Holy Scriptures.

While it is not customary in our modern culture for marriages to be arranged by the respective fathers, it is still desirable for young people contemplating marriage to seek both the counsel of their parents and the wisdom of God before committing to a lifetime relationship. No matter how a couple is brought together, there cannot be a marriage without there first being a match, and who a person becomes matched with is one of the most important decisions in life, as it is written:

"Above all else, guard your affections.

For they influence everything else in your life."

(Prov. 4:23 LB)

~ The Betrothal ~

The Betrothal stage is divided into three segments: the Negotiation, the Ceremony and the Waiting Period.

~ The Negotiation ~

Anciently, when a couple became of marriageable age it was time for the Negotiation to commence. Traditionally this would take place when the *Hatan* חתן (Hah-tahn = Bridegroom) paid a visit to the father of the *Kallah* כלה (kahl-lah' = Bride) for the specific purpose of negotiating a marriage contract with him. This contract was called, in Hebrew, a *Ketuvah* (keh-too'-vah), and this document still plays an important role in the modern Jewish wedding. The *Ketuvah* spelled out all of the terms and conditions of the forthcoming marriage. It was primarily a document written to protect the wife should the husband decide at some future time that he wished to divorce her, for it was the *Ketuvah* that guaranteed the wife a suitable settlement if such a situation should develop.

Today it is generally true that when a divorce takes place it is the wife who is most likely to suffer loss of income and, consequently, a lower standard of living. However, that is not always the case in our modern society, for today women are accepted into the work force and may, in some cases, command larger salaries than do their husbands. However, in the ancient world this was simply not the case. In those days a divorced woman had a very difficult time earning a living if she were left destitute by her husband. For this reason it was important for her father to see that adequate protection were written into her *Ketuvah*, so that if her husband were to divorce her, he would be required to pay a sum of money so that she would have sufficient means on which to live. In addition, the *Ketuvah* would spell out the dowry that the *Kallah* (Bride) would bring to her husband in marriage.

The modern prenuptial contract is, in some ways, similar to the *Ketuvah*. One difference is that anciently the negotiations took place between the *Hatan* (Bridegroom) and the father of the *Kallah* (Bride) and not with the *Kallah* herself. Also, no attorneys were present for consultation or negotiation. It is easy to see how a shrewd father of the Bride might well take advantage of a young Bridegroom. This would be especially true if this was the father's third or fourth daughter to be married and he already had experience negotiating with young men who really wanted to get married.

~ The Bride Price ~

Included in the *Ketuvah* would be the Bride Price; the amount which the *Hatan* (Bridegroom) would pay to the father of the *Kallah* (Bride) for allowing her to marry him. Sometimes, if the *Hatan* was very poor, the Bride Price would not be paid up front, but would be added to the divorce amount should he ever leave her.

While the Bride Price was usually money, it could also consist of other valuables or even labor. We find both of these examples in the marriage negotiations of the Patriarchs. In the first example, the father of the Bridegroom sent a servant to negotiate both the match and the Bride Price, since he was too

old to make the journey himself. This, of course, is the story of the marriage of *Yitzchak* יצחק (Yeetz' hahk = Isaac) to *Rivkah* רבקה (Reev'-kah = Rebecca).

In Genesis 24 we read that *Avraham* אברהם (Ahv'-rah-hahm = Abraham) sent his servant to the land of his kindred, to the house of his nephew, *Bethuel* בְּתוּאֵל (Beh-too-ehl'). There the servant met the young *Rivkah* and, through a series of tests, determined that she was the young woman that God had chosen to be a wife to *Yitzchak*. In this case the one making the *Shidduch* (Match) was actually God; *Avraham* and *Bethuel* did not have a say in the matter, although *Bethuel* could have refused the offer.

The servant of *Avraham* gave *Rivkah*:

"...a golden nose ring weighing half a shekel, and two bracelets for her wrists weighing ten shekels of gold..."

(Gen. 24:22)

The servant then revealed that *Avraham* had been greatly blessed by God and was the possessor of much wealth:

"The LORD YHVH] has blessed my master greatly, and he has become great; and He has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female servants, and camels and donkeys."

(Gen. 24:35)

The fact that *Avraham* was now rich got the attention of *Bethuel* and his son *Lavan* לָבָן (Lah-van' = Laban, *Rivkah's* brother). This, plus the signs that the servant had obtained concerning *Rivkah*, were instrumental in getting them to agree to the marriage:

"Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, 'The thing comes from the LORD [YHVH]; we cannot speak to you either bad or good. Here is Rebekah before you; take her and go, and let her be your master's son's wife, as the LORD [YHVH] has spoken'"

(Gen. 24:50-51)

At this point the Bride Price was paid:

"Then the servant brought out jewelry of silver, jewelry of gold, and clothing, and gave them to Rebekah. He also gave precious things to her brother and to her mother."

(Gen. 24:53)

However, *Rivkah* still had the right of refusal:

"Then they called Rebekah and said to her, 'Will you go with this man?' And she said, 'I will go.'" (Gen. 24:58)

In this particular marriage, the Match, Negotiation and Betrothal Ceremony were all accomplished within a very short period of time by a servant who represented the father of the Bridegroom.

Another one of the Patriarchs went back to the same household many years later to find a suitable, God matched, Bride for himself. That Patriarch was none other than *Yitzchak's* son, *Ya'akov* יַעֲקֹב (Yah' ah'-kohv = Jacob). This time the Bridegroom personally went to negotiate the Match and the Bride Price.

Ya'akov also found a young maiden by a well. Perhaps it was the very same well where the servant of *Avraham* found *Rivkah*, his mother. This time it was the daughter of *Lavan*,

(*Rivkah's* brother) who came forth to water the flock. Her name was *Rachel* רָחֵל (Rah-kehl' in Hebrew). *Ya'akov* was so taken by *Rachel* that he offered a Bride Price that *Lavan* could not refuse:

"Now Jacob loved Rachel; and he said, 'I will serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter.'"
(Gen. 29:18)

What followed should be a lesson to any prospective Bridegroom, for not every father of the Bride can be trusted. After the seven years of labor had been completed *Ya'akov* asked *Lavan* for his wife. What he received was a surprise:

"And Laban gathered together all the men of the place and made a feast. Now it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter and brought her to Jacob; and he went in to her. ... So it came to pass in the morning, that behold, it was Leah. And he said to Laban, 'What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served you? Why then have you deceived me?'"
(Gen. 29:22-23, 25)

In the end *Ya'akov* did get the woman he desired, but he also obtained *Leah* לֵאָה (Lay'-ah = Leah) plus *Bilhah* בִּלְהָה (Bill'-hah) and *Zilpah* זִלְפָּה (Zill'-pah) two maid servants who became his concubines (wives of lower status).

In the Ancient Wedding, once the *Shidduch* (Match) had been made and the Negotiations were completed, it became time for the next step in the wedding process.

~ The Betrothal Ceremony ~

Everything was now in order for the actual Betrothal Ceremony to take place. In Hebrew this ceremony is called the *Erusim* אֵירוּסִים (Eh-roo-seem'). The prospective *Kallah* (Bride) was called into the room. The *Hatan* (Bridegroom) had already made known his intentions to go through with the marriage by successfully negotiating the *Ketuvah* with the father of the Bride. Now it was her turn to say yes or no.

As the daughter appeared before her Father and prospective *Hatan* (Bridegroom), her mind must have been filled with both anticipation and fear. She needed to have complete trust that her father had selected a suitable mate and that he had negotiated a favorable *Ketuvah* (marriage contract) for her. She was probably quite young, as brides of age thirteen and fourteen were quite common. The *Hatan* (Bridegroom) was usually a little older, as eighteen was considered to be about the right age for a young man to take on the responsibilities of marriage.

After the daughter entered the room, and was presented to the prospective *Hatan*, he would pour a glass of wine and hold it out to her. If she accepted the cup and drank of it, they were, at that very moment in time, legally married, for she had accepted the 'Cup of the Covenant.' They were then considered to be husband and wife, and could not abandon the union without a written bill of divorcement, called a *Get* גֵּט in Hebrew.

This 'Cup of the Covenant,' from which they drank, is called the *Kiddish* קִדְּשׁ (Kid'-desh) cup in Hebrew. *Kiddish*

comes from the Hebrew word *Kadosh* קָדוֹשׁ (Kah-dohsh') which means 'holy' or 'set apart.' The symbolic significance of partaking of this cup of wine is that the young couple were now 'set apart' for each other, and must forsake any thoughts or actions that might mar the holiness of their union.

* Joseph and Mary *

This was the very situation that *Yoseif* יוֹסֵף (Yoh'-safe = Joseph) and *Miriam* מִרְיָם (Meer'-ree-ahm = Mary) found themselves in when *Miriam* became with child through the power of the Holy Spirit. *Yoseif* and *Miriam* had already been betrothed; therefore they were legally husband and wife. Any outside sexual encounter on the part of *Miriam* would be classified as adultery even though they, as husband and wife, had not yet consummated the marriage:

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ [Y'shua HaMashiach] was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly." (Matt. 1:18-19)

Once *Miriam's* pregnancy became known, it would have been legal for *Yoseif* to state publicly that he was not the father of the child and write her a *Get* (bill of divorcement). The local *Beit Din* בֵּית דִּין (Bait Deen = House of Judgment) could then have brought charges against *Miriam* and even rendered a decision for the death penalty by stoning, although (at that time) such a decision would have needed to be referred to the *Sanhedrin* for confirmation:

"If a young woman who is a virgin is betrothed to a husband, and a man finds her in the city and lies with her, then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones, the young woman because she did not cry out in the city, and the man because he humbled his neighbor's wife; so you shall put away the evil person from among you." (Lev. 22:23-24)

Even though *Yoseif* believed (prior to the visit from the angel) that *Miriam* had lain with another man, he wished to put her away 'privately' so that she would not have to suffer the shame of adultery or, even worse, the possibility of a death sentence. Since the pregnancy had occurred after they were betrothed, *Yoseif* would have been able to take responsibility for the child without falling under the *mitzvah* (meets-vah' = commandment) which said that he could never divorce his wife:

"If a man finds a young woman who is a virgin, who is not betrothed, and he seizes her and lies with her, and they are found out, then the man who lay with her shall give to the young woman's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife because he has humbled her; he shall not be permitted to divorce her all his days." (Lev. 22:28-29)

Yoseif had every legal right to publicly divorce *Miriam*, thus clearing his own name, and leave her in the hands of the *Beit Din* of the local synagogue to do with as they saw fit.

However, *Yoseif* is called in Scripture a 'just man.' The Greek word for 'just' is *diakios* (deek-ah-yos #1342). According to Thayer's *Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament* this word means: "*observant of, righteous, observing divine and human laws.*" The equivalent word in Hebrew is *tzadik* צַדִּיק (tzah-deek' - #6662). The first *tzadik* mentioned in Scripture is *Noah* נֹחַ (Noh'-akh = Noah):

"...Noah was a just (*tzadik*) man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God." (Gen. 6:9)

Yoseif was more than just a "carpenter," he was a student of the *Torah*, a 'righteous man' who walked in the ways of God. In fact, designating *Yoseif* as a *tzadik* is the same as calling him a 'Rabbi' or 'Teacher.' (See box.)

Because he was a *tzadik*, *Yoseif* did not want to speak *Lashon Hara* לִשְׁוֹן הָרָע (Lah-shone' Hah-rah' = the Evil Tongue) against *Miriam* even though, in his mind, she had committed adultery and he had every right to do so. Instead, *Yoseif* was willing to claim the child as his own, even though it meant sacrificing his own righteous character in the eyes of the public. Then, once the child had been born, *Yoseif* could have her 'put away' for some other reason. It was not as though divorce did not come fairly easy, for at that time the Pharisaic School of Hillel was very liberal in granting divorces.

By taking responsibility upon himself, even though he was guiltless, *Yoseif* has set us a righteous example on how the principles of *Lashon Hara* should be applied, for he was willing to suffer personal shame in order to protect *Miriam*. (See the booklet *Guarding the Tongue* for detailed information on the principles of *Lashon Hara*.) The fact that there was some public knowledge of these circumstances is evident from the *Lashon Hara* that was spoken against *Y'shua* after He became an adult:"

"...Then they said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father -- God."" (John 8:41)

** The Betrothal Promise **

Before leaving the Betrothal ceremony, the *Hatan* (Bridegroom) traditionally gave a little speech which was meant to comfort his *Kallah* (Bride). It would go something like this: "Because we have both partaken of the cup of the covenant, we are now legally married. However, we cannot yet live together as husband and wife. I must return to my father's house and prepare the *Chuppah* חֻפָּה (Who'-pah = the Wedding Chamber) for you. Because I go to do that, you can be assured that I will return for you as soon as my Father gives his permission. Then I will bring you to the *Chuppah* for our honeymoon. After that, we will be together for the rest of our lives, and wherever I live that is also where you will live. In the meantime, you must stay here in your father's house until I come for you."

With that farewell, the *Hatan* took leave of his *Kallah* and returned to the house of his father. From this point on, the *Kallah* was required to veil herself whenever she went out in public, so that everyone would know she was Betrothed, but no one would know her actual identity. Thus began:

~ The Waiting Period ~

The young couple then entered the most trying time of the Betrothal stage; the Waiting Period. The Bridegroom returned to his father's house to prepare the *Chuppah*, while the Bride continued living in her father's house and began preparing for the final stage of the wedding. During this time the Bridegroom and the Bride did not see each other. The Waiting Period usually lasted about one year if the Bride had not been

~ Joseph the Carpenter ~

The following excerpt from the book *Jesus the Jew*, by Geza Vermes (a Jewish historian) sheds a different light upon the lives of both *Yoseif* (Joseph) and *Y'shua* (Jesus) prior to *Y'shua's* ministry.

Jesus the Carpenter

His secular profession remains uncertain. Tradition has it that he was a carpenter and learned his trade from his father, but this on the fragile evidence that after his first and last sermon in the synagogue of Nazareth, the townsfolk could not understand how 'the carpenter', or 'the carpenter's son', could have acquired such great wisdom. Was he a carpenter himself, or was he only the son of a carpenter? The confused state of the Greek text of the Gospels usually indicates either (a) a doctrinal difficulty thought by some to demand rewording; or (b) the existence of a linguistic problem in the expression in Hellenistic terms of something typically Jewish. Here the second alternative applies. The congregation in the synagogue voices astonishment.

'Where does he get it from?' 'What is this...?'

'Is not this the carpenter/ the son of the carpenter...?'

(Mark 6:2-3)

Now those familiar with the language spoken by Jesus are acquainted with a metaphorical use of 'carpenter' and 'carpenter's son' in ancient Jewish writings. In Talmudic sayings the Aramaic noun denoting carpenter or craftsman (*naggar*) stands for a 'scholar' or 'learned man.'

"This is something that no carpenter, son of carpenters, can explain." (*Jerusalem Talmud: Yebamoth 9b; Kiddushin 66a.*)

"There is no carpenter, nor a carpenter's son to explain it." (*Babylonian Talmud: Abodah Zarah 50b.*)

Thus, although no one can be absolutely sure that the sayings cited in the Talmud were current already in first-century AD Galilee, proverbs such as these are likely to be age-old. If so, it is possible that the charming picture of 'Jesus the carpenter' may have to be buried and forgotten.

(pp 21-22)

previously married. If she had been married before, a much shorter period was traditional (usually about one month).

** The Chuppah **

The Bridegroom was now extremely busy. He was responsible for preparing a *Chuppah* (the Wedding Chamber) that would satisfy his beautiful Bride; one that was sufficiently stocked so they could live in it for a full seven days without coming out. That meant he had to make provision for adequate food, water, and the necessary sanitary facilities. Scripture confirms that the number of days in the *Chuppah* were seven, for this is the time that *Ya'akov* spent with *Leah* before he was allowed to have *Rachel*:

"So it came to pass in the morning, that behold, it was Leah. And he said to Laban, 'What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served you? Why then have you deceived me?'"

"And Laban said, 'It must not be done so in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn. Fulfill her week, and we will give you this one also for the service which you will serve with me still another seven years.'

"Then Jacob did so and fulfilled her week. So he gave him his daughter Rachel as wife also." (Gen. 29:25-28)

The expression "fulfill her week" means that *Ya'akov* was to remain in the *Chuppah* with *Leah* for the one week period that was required. At the end of those seven days *Lavan* gave *Ya'akov* his younger daughter *Rachel* and he spent yet another seven days in the *Chuppah* with her.

If the father of the Bridegroom was rich, the *Chuppah* might have been a private house on the father's estate. If they were very poor it would probably have been the Bridegroom's own room in which he had lived during his childhood.

In addition to the passage just cited, the tradition of the *Chuppah* (Strong's #2646) has its foundation in other Scriptures as well. For example, in the book of Isaiah, the prophet speaks of a glorious time when God will cover Jerusalem (also called Mount Zion) with a covering that is called a *Chuppah*:

"In that day the Branch of the LORD [YHVH] shall be beautiful and glorious;

And the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and appealing

For those of Israel who have escaped.

"And it shall come to pass that he who is left in Zion and he who remains in Jerusalem will be called holy -- everyone who is recorded among the living in Jerusalem. When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purged the blood of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning, then the LORD [YHVH] will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night. For over all the glory there will be a covering [Chuppah]." (Isa. 4:3-5)

In Psalm 19 the joy that a Bridegroom feels when he finally emerges from the *Chuppah*, after spending seven full

days in deep intimacy with his bride, is compared to the shining of the full sun in the heavens:

**"The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament shows His handiwork. ...
"In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun,
Which is like a bridegroom coming out of his
chamber [Chuppah],
And rejoices like a strong man to run a race."**

(Psalm 19:1, 4b-5)

The Bride is also described, in Scripture, as coming out of the *Chuppah*, even though the setting in this passage speaks of sorrow not triumph:

**"Blow the trumpet in Zion,
Consecrate a fast,
Call a sacred assembly;
Gather the people,
Sanctify the congregation,
Assemble the elders,
Gather the children and nursing babes;
Let the bridegroom go out from his chamber,
And the bride from her dressing room [Chuppah]." (Joel 2:15-16)**

** The Father's Responsibilities **

Whether it was a mansion or a small room, the *Hatan* (Bridegroom) was not allowed to return for his *Kallah* (Bride) until his father approved the *Chuppah*. Regular examinations would have been conducted during which the father would have made suggestions as to how it could be improved. But, undoubtedly, there was something else going on at the same time. The father of the Bridegroom was probably more concerned about the condition of his son than he was about the condition of the *Chuppah*. Was his son sufficiently mature to take on the responsibility of marriage and the rearing of the children that would come along shortly thereafter? Did he have a good enough job so that he could support a wife and children? Or was he still more interested in spending time with his friends? In a strong Jewish home there was also the most important question of all; did the Bridegroom have an insatiable love for the Word of God, for the *Torah*, the *Prophets* and the *Writings*? If not, then he was definitely not ready to take on the responsibilities of marriage and family, for he would not have the resolve to teach his children the things of God:

"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart; you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up."

(Deut. 6:6-7)

Not only did the father of the Bridegroom have a responsibility to see that his son was adequately prepared for marriage, he also had to be aware of the condition of his son's Bride. Was she ready to take on the responsibilities of being a wife and mother? Or was she still a giddy teenager? Had she appeared in public unveiled, thereby attracting the attention of

other unmarried young men? The father of the Bridegroom had to keep his eyes and ears open, lest this new marriage begin on the wrong footing.

The responsibility of the father of the Bridegroom was very great. He was the one individual who had total control over when the final stage of the wedding would take place. Unlike the father of the Bridegroom today (who is the least important family member at the wedding and is only expected to show up and behave himself), in the Ancient Wedding he was the one who called all of the shots.

* *The Bride's Preparations* *

While the *Hatan* (Bridegroom) prepared himself and the *Chuppah* for the forthcoming Consummation, the *Kallah* (Bride) too was busy. She had to learn how to be a good wife to her betrothed husband. Thus, the Bride began a year long training program, under the supervision of her mother. She learned how to prepare tasty and nourishing food. She learned how to keep a clean house under the strict laws of *kashrut* (כַּשְׁרוּת (kash-root' = food preparation laws). She also learned how to make herself attractive to her husband through the use of cosmetics, jewelry and clothing. A glimpse of this process is given in the book of Esther, where the young Jewish girl, Esther, was selected to be one of the candidates to replace the fallen Queen Vashti:

"Each young woman's turn came to go in to King Ahasuerus after she had completed twelve months' preparation, according to the regulations for the women, for thus were the days of their preparation apportioned: six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with perfumes and preparations for beautifying the women."

(Esther 2:12)

Granted, Ahasuerus was a Gentile King, but the principle was the same in Ancient Israel. The Bride was expected to learn how to be both beautiful and attractive to her husband, in addition to learning how to properly run her home. Please remember that during this time, the Bride was veiled whenever she went out in public, so the beautifying preparations would not be visible to anyone outside of the immediate household.

The Bride was also expected to gather together a trousseau of items that she needed to set up a separate household. Again, she would have to rely upon her mother to teach her what she would need in order to run the household properly. Once again, the book of Esther gives us a glimpse of this principle:

"Thus prepared, each young woman went to the king, and she was given whatever she desired to take with her from the women's quarters to the king's palace."

(Esther 2:13)

It is unlikely that Esther took cooking utensils with her into the king's palace, but that could very well be a portion of the items a young *Kallah* (Bride) would bring to her marriage home. In addition, it is very likely the *Kallah* would acquire those items necessary to properly observe the family rituals that went along with the Jewish customs of the day. For example, special candlesticks used for welcoming the Sabbath and Festivals, and a *Kiddish* cup for partaking of the Sabbath and

Festival wine would be appropriate items to bring to a new home.

If the Bride's family was too poor to acquire all that she would need to run an effective Jewish home, it was the obligation of her friends and other members of the community to help fill in the gaps.

~ The Consummation ~

The final stage of the wedding process consisted of The Consummation. This was when the betrothed husband and wife first had conjugal relations and began living together. To properly facilitate this final stage there were yet other preparations that had to be made. The first of these was the selecting of the attendants.

* *The Bridesmaids* *

The *Kallah* (Bride) would select a number of Bridesmaids who would assist her with her wedding preparations. The actual number is unknown but in the Gospel of Matthew the number ten is mentioned:

"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom."

(Matt. 25:10)

Whether this was a traditional number or not is unknown. The purpose of the number ten in this parable is to signify completeness. E.W. Bullinger, in his book *Number In Scripture* says the following about the number ten:

"...ten is one of the perfect numbers, and signifies *the perfection of Divine order* ... Completeness of order, marking the entire round of anything, is, therefore, the ever-present signification of the number *ten*. It implies that nothing is wanting; that the number and order are perfect; that the whole cycle is complete." (page 243).

In Jewish teaching, ten is the number of *Tzadachim* (tzah-dah-keem = righteous men who know the *Torah*) that are needed to form a new synagogue. Such a group of men is referred to as a *minion*. This number is alluded to in the book of Zechariah where it indicates that at some point in the future the Gentile people will form themselves into synagogues and seek a *Torah* observant Jew to teach them the ways of God:

"Thus says the LORD [YHVH] of hosts: "In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve (*kanaph* = kah-nahf) of a Jewish man, saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'"

(Zech. 8:23)

The *kanaph* כַּנָּף (kah-naph' - Strong's #3671) is defined as: an *edge* or *extremity*; spec. ... a *wing*." It is on the edge, extremity or wing of a garment on which the *tzit-tzit* צִיַּת (tzeet-tzeet = fringes) are tied (Num. 15:37-41). How would the ten Gentiles know that a man was Jewish? Because he wore *tzit-tzit* on the corners of his garment.

* *The Male Attendants* *

Existing records of the Ancient Wedding do not make a big issue out of the Bridesmaids. However, there is more information about the male attendants, which were two in number, and were sometimes referred to as the 'two witnesses.'

One of these witnesses is said to have represented *Moshe* מֹשֶׁה (Mow'-shay = Moses) and the other *Eliyahu* אֵלִיָּהוּ (El-lee-yah'-hoo = Elijah). *Moshe* was the attendant for the *Kallah* (Bride), while *Eliyahu* was the attendant for the *Hatan* (Bridegroom). In Jewish teaching, the children of Israel were considered to be the Bride of *YHVH* (having been married at Mount Sinai) and they were attended to by *Moshe*. Therefore, the *Moshe* attendant was the one responsible to see that the *Kallah* was ready for the arrival of the *Hatan*, and he would be the one to escort her out to meet him. In the case of the children of Israel, they actually requested that *Moshe* take over this responsibility of being their mediator, even after the full marriage had taken place:

"Then they said to Moses, 'You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.'"

(Ex. 20:19)

When *Moshe* reached the end of his days, he gave this command to the children of Israel, who were finally ready to take up permanent residence in the promised land with *YHVH* as their Husband:

"I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the LORD *YHVH* your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD *YHVH* swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."

(Deut. 30:19-20)

Meanwhile the *Eliyahu* attendant was designated to announce to the entire community that the *Hatan* (Bridegroom) was on his way:

**"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet
Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of
the LORD *YHVH*."**

And he will turn

The hearts of the fathers to the children,

And the hearts of the children to their fathers,

Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse."

(Mal. 4:5-6)

All of these attendants (the Bridesmaids plus *Moshe* and *Eliyahu*) had to be carefully selected, for they all played significant roles in preparation for the Consummation Ceremony.

** The Mikvah **

Another important aspect of the Ancient Wedding was the immersion of the *Kallah* (Bride) in a *Mikvah* מִקְוֶה (meek'-vah) or immersion pool just prior to the actual Consummation Ceremony. In the modern Jewish wedding the Bride's immersion takes place the evening before the actual wedding.

Immersion (called baptism in the New Testament) is an ancient custom in Jewish culture. It is believed that the very first immersion took place when the children of Israel passed through the Red Sea on their way to Mount Sinai, although a strong case could also be made for Noah and his family coming through the Flood. The Red Sea event constituted a 'corporate' immersion of all of the children of Israel, along with the mixed multitude that came out of Egypt with them. However, another immersion, which required that each individual take personal responsibility, occurred once they arrived at Mount Sinai:

"Then the LORD *YHVH* said to Moses, 'Go to the people and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes.' ...

"Then Moses went down from the mountain to the people and sanctified the people, and they washed their clothes."
(Ex. 19:10, 14)

In Jewish teaching it is understood that the phrase "wash their clothes" also implies that the people were to ritually immerse themselves in water. Ritual immersion, in Jewish teaching, is performed anytime a person changes their status. For example, it was necessary for the High Priest to be immersed five times on *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement) in the process of his performance of that day's special rituals. Every time he changed status, whether it was coming on duty in the Temple or being readied to enter the Holy of Holies, he had to be immersed. Likewise, the *Kallah* must be immersed just prior to the Consummation of her wedding, because she is changing status from being betrothed to being fully married. The ritual immersion also provided her with the ritual cleanliness that she needed so that she would not bring uncleanness to her marriage bed. It is important to note here that the purpose of the immersion is not to cleanse the body, for the individual being immersed is expected to be fully bathed prior to the immersion. The purpose is to establish ritual purity through the waters of immersion.

~ The Coming of the Bridegroom ~

Everything would now be ready for the *Hatan* (Bridegroom) to go and fetch his *Kallah* (Bride). His father would have checked the *Chuppah* for one last time and approved it as being in proper order. He would also have deemed that his son too was prepared to begin full married life. Likewise, the reports the father would have received concerning the Bride also would have been favorable. All was ready. The father would then say to his son, "Go and fetch your *Kallah*."

At that point feverish activity would begin to take place. The *Hatan* would call his two attendants. The one representing *Moshe* would have already been in contact with the Bride's family to make sure that everything on that end was properly prepared. At this point it was time for *Moshe* to really swing into action. He would go on ahead, to warn the Bride that her husband was on his way and that she needed to make her last minute preparations.

In the Ancient Wedding practice, the Bride would have had sufficient time to perform a ritual immersion between the time she was warned of the impending arrival of her Husband

and the actual time that he arrived to take her to the *Chuppah*. This would be possible because every observant Jew of that day lived within a 'Sabbath days journey' (2000 cubits, or a little over one-half mile) from the synagogue.*

The *Kallah* would call for her Bridesmaids, and then go to the synagogue to perform her ritual immersion. Upon returning home she would dress in her wedding gown, clean and white. She would then apply her makeup and put on her jewelry. At that point the *Kallah* was radiant, she was beautiful, and she was so excited that she could hardly contain herself.

Meanwhile the *Hatan* would also be preparing himself. Whether he too went through a ritual immersion is unclear, but that is quite possible. After all, he also was experiencing a change of status; from being a betrothed husband to a fully married one.

At last all was ready. The *Hatan* would then set out for the *Kallah's* house with his *Eliyahu* attendant, plus some other friends. By that time it would have been night, so they would take lamps full of oil to light the way. They also would take the *shofar* שֹׁפָר (show'-fahr = ram's horn trumpet) with them to blow as they proceeded through the village streets. It was a very noisy event and all the town would be awakened by the sounds of the *shofarim* and the shouts of joy from the *Hatan's* entourage. The townspeople would get out of bed to look and see who was going to fetch a *Kallah*. Once they had identified him, they would be expected to dress and hurry over to the home of the father of the Bridegroom so they could be there when the happy couple arrived.

~ Stealing the Bride ~

When the *Hatan* arrived at the door of the *Kallah's* home he would enter to find a fully dressed, fully veiled and ritually clean *Kallah*, along with 'Moshe' and all of the assembled Bridesmaids. Also present would be the parents, and the younger brothers and sisters of the Bride. While the father of the Bride looked the 'other way,' the Bridegroom would escort his Bride out of the house. This was known as 'stealing the Bride.'

If the *Hatan* could afford it, he would have brought along a wedding liter (called an *apiryon* אִפְרִיּוֹן [ah-peer'-ree-ohn]), or carriage, for his *Kallah* to ride in to her wedding. It would be carried by means of poles set on the shoulders of strong men, all friends of the *Hatan*:

**"Who is she that comes up from the desert
Like columns of smoke,
In clouds of myrrh and frankincense,
Of all the powders of the merchant?**

**There is Solomon's couch,
[a part of the wedding liter]
Encircled by sixty warriors
Of the warriors of Israel,
All of them trained in warfare,
Skilled in battle,
Each with sword on thigh**

* All Synagogues were required to have a *Mikvah* (Meek-vah) or immersion pool.

Because of terror by night.

**King Solomon made him a palanquin [*apiryon*]
Of wood from Lebanon.
He made its posts of silver,
Its back of gold,
Its seat of purple wool.
Within, it is decked with love
By the maidens of Jerusalem.
O maidens of Zion, go forth
And gaze upon King Solomon
Wearing the crown that his mother
Gave him on his wedding day,
On his day of bliss."**

(Song of Songs: 3:6-11 TNK)

This passage is a poetic expression of the wedding procession of King Solomon. Here we can see how the *Kallah* rides within the Wedding Liter, while King Solomon rides alongside where everyone can see him. Also mentioned are the Bridesmaids, called here *The Maidens of Jerusalem*.

Of course, the parents of the Bride would also follow along to the Consummation Ceremony. Even though they were not as important to the wedding as was the father of the Bridegroom, they did yet have an important role to play.

~ The Ceremony ~

It is not known exactly how the actual Consummation Ceremony was performed. Apparently, a priest or rabbi was not required to be present. Most likely, the *Ketuvah* (marriage contract) would have been publicly read and witnessed by the attendants. Also included in this ceremony would have been the sharing of a cup of wine by the *Hatan* (Bridegroom) and the *Kallah* (Bride). This cup is also called the *Kiddish* cup ('holy' or 'set apart'), and it signifies that the couple was committing to set apart their marriage as a holy union. The sharing of the cup of wine also signified that the *Hatan* and *Kallah* were about to become *echad* אֶחָד (eh-khad' = one) or 'one flesh.'

**"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother
and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one [*echad*]
flesh."**
(Gen. 2:24)

Perhaps the respective fathers would have made short speeches accepting the *Kallah* and *Hatan* into their respective families.

However, the most important part of the ceremony was when the *Hatan* escorted his *Kallah* into the *Chuppah* or Wedding Chamber. Once they closed the door they were not to be seen for seven full days. It was expected that during this time the couple would come together in conjugal relations for the very first time. It was this event which actually sealed the marriage, not the signing of any documents or the reading of the *Ketuvah*. If the marriage was not consummated, then no marriage took place, and a bill of divorcement could be written to dissolve the Betrothal relationship.

Meanwhile, on the outside, some other things were taking place. The *Eliyahu* attendant would station himself at the door of the *Chuppah*. After the marriage had been consummated, the *Hatan* would come to the door of the *Chuppah* and tell the

attendant (who was known as "the friend of the Bridegroom") that the marriage had been fully consummated:

"He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled." (John 3:29)

Eliyahu, the "friend of the bridegroom," would then announce, to all the people assembled that a marriage had taken place in Israel and all of the people who had followed along would begin a celebration that was to last until the couple came out of the *Chuppah* seven days after they had entered it. At this time the *Ishshah* **אִשָּׁה** (Eesh-shah' = wife) might well have recited to her *Ish* **אִש** (Eesh = husband) the most famous phrase of marital love from all of Scriptures:

"My beloved is mine, and I am his."

(Song of Songs 2:16)

When the *Hatan* came to the door of the *Chuppah* he would open the door and hand the "friend of the bridegroom" the bloody marriage bed sheets. These sheets had special significance. Not only did they prove the virginity of the Betrothed Bride, they also represented the fact that marriage is a Blood Covenant, and that blood had been shed in order to confirm that covenant. The marriage of *YHVH* to the children of Israel also demanded that blood be used in the confirmation ceremony:

"So Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD [YHVH] and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, 'All the words which the LORD [YHVH] has said we will do.' ...

"Then he sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD [YHVH]. And Moses took half the blood and put it in basins, and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, 'All that the LORD [YHVH] has said we will do, and be obedient.'

"And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, 'Behold, the blood of the covenant which the LORD [YHVH] has made with you according to all these words.'" (Ex. 24:3, 5-8)

Thus we see, that at Mount Sinai the *Ketuvah* was read, and blood was shed.

After the consummation of the marriage, the bloody sheets were then given to the parents of the Bride as proof that their daughter had been a virgin. This was important in case the husband ever decided he wanted to divorce his wife under the pretext that she was not a virgin when he married her:

"If any man takes a wife, and goes in to her, and detests her, and charges her with shameful conduct, and brings a bad name on her, and says, 'I took this woman, and when I came to her I found she was not a virgin,' then the father and mother of the young woman shall take and bring out the evidence of the young woman's virginity to the elders of the city at the gate.

"And the young woman's father shall say to the elders, 'I gave my daughter to this man as wife and he detests her; now he has charged her with shameful conduct, saying, 'I found your daughter was not a virgin,' and yet these are the evidences of my daughter's virginity.'" And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city.

"Then the elders of that city shall take that man and punish him; and they shall fine him one hundred *shekels* of silver and give them to the father of the young woman, because he has brought a bad name on a virgin of Israel. And she shall be his wife; he cannot divorce her all his days.

"But if the thing is true, and evidences of virginity are not found for the young woman, then they shall bring out the young woman to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death with stones, because she has done a disgraceful thing in Israel, to play the harlot in her father's house; so you shall put away the evil person from among you." (Lev. 22:13-21)

It is apparent from this Scripture, plus other passages, that God takes marriage very seriously. He does not want any sort of defilement to come upon the marriage bed, for human marriage is a physical type of His relationship with the children of Israel. Therefore we, as Believers, must also be sure that we do not bring any type of defilement into our marriage relationship with *Y'shua*.

~ The Wedding Supper ~

Even though the guests had been celebrating from the time the consummation was announced until the couple emerged from the *Chuppah*, there was yet another celebration that was to take place. This was the official Wedding Supper, and it began shortly after the *Ish* (husband) and *Ishshah* (wife) came out into public following their seven day stay in the *Chuppah*. From that time forward the *Ishshah* (wife) appeared unveiled in public so that everyone would know who she was.

Every married guest at the Wedding Supper was to appear dressed in their own personal wedding garment. Anyone who came improperly dressed would be asked to leave. However, there is some indication that, in the case of royalty, the king himself would supply the wedding garments for the guests:

"And Jesus [Y'shua] answered and spoke to them again by parables and said: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. Again, he sent out other servants saying, 'Tell those who are invited, 'See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.'"

"But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them.

"But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not

worthy. Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding."

"So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless.

"Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

"For many are called, but few are chosen."

(Matt. 22:1-14)

~ A New Home ~

After the seven day Wedding Supper was complete and all the festivities had quieted down, the husband and wife were then ready to settle down in their new home. If they were of sufficient means, they would procure a home of their own in which to dwell. If they were poor, they might go to live with the parents of the Bride or with other relatives:

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

(Gen. 2:24)

Before their first year of marriage had been completed, they would probably have been blessed by a little one. Then others would come along, and in fifteen or so years the entire process would begin all over again.

~ Conclusion ~

The Ancient Wedding has profound implications for Believers, for we are in a marriage relationship with *Y'shua HaMashiach*. Undoubtedly each of you reading this booklet have already begun sketching out in your own mind how your spiritual life fits into the pattern of the Ancient Wedding.

All of us have been Matched to *Y'shua*; we have accepted the 'Cup of the Covenant' and thereby become Betrothed to Him. Now we are in the Waiting Stage, waiting for *Y'shua* to return to claim us as His very own.

"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 Christ [*Messiah*]." (II Cor. 11:2)

Therefore, we must continue to follow the instructions of our Husband:

"...A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. And he called his ten servants, delivered to them ten pounds, and said to them, 'Occupy till I come.'" (Luke 19:12-13 KJV)

How should we 'occupy' ourselves? By preparing ourselves as the Bride of Messiah, so that He will be pleased with us when He comes to 'steal' us away to the wedding chamber:

"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. 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." (Rev. 19:7-8)

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

~ God Marries Israel ~

For your Maker is your husband,
The LORD of hosts is His name;
And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel;
He is called the God of the whole earth.
Isaiah 54:5

~ ~ ~

~ Early Types ~

Then Isaac brought her
Into his mother Sarah's tent;
And he took Rebekah
And she became his wife,
And he loved her.
Genesis 24:67



Marriage first began in the quiet peace of עֵדֶן (Gahn Ah-den' = The Garden of Eden) when God decided it was not good that Adam אָדָם (Ah-dahm') should live alone. So He created Chava חַוָּה (Chah-vah' = Eve) that the two might bring each other companionship and love:

"And the LORD [YHVH] God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.' ...

"And the LORD [YHVH] God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD [YHVH] God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said:

**'This is now bone of my bones
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman (*ishah*)
Because she was taken out of Man (*ish*).'**

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed." (Gen. 2:18-25)

From the beginning marriage was created as a divine institution ordained of God and it is to be honored among all peoples, because Adam and Chava are the parents of all living.

~ Ancient Weddings ~

Chapter one of this booklet was devoted to examining the various components of the Ancient Wedding as it existed in the first century during the time when our Savior, Y'shua HaMashiach (Jesus the Messiah), walked the earth. However

elements of the Ancient Wedding can be found much earlier, even going back almost another two thousand years to the marriages of the Patriarchs. We begin with an examination of two early weddings; the marriages of Rivkah רִבְקָה (Reev'-kah = Rebecca) to Yitzchak יִצְחָק (Yeetz'-chahk = Isaac), and Ya'akov יַעֲקֹב (Yah' ah'-cove = Jacob) to Rachel רָחֵל (Rah-kehl'). These weddings will serve to show the pattern which was followed by HaShem (Hah-Shem = The Name or YHVH) when the time came for Him to select and marry the children of Israel.

~ Rivkah and Yitzchak ~

Both the Match and the Betrothal portion of this marriage took place when Avraham אַבְרָהָם (Avh'-rah-hahm = Abraham) sent his chief servant to find a bride for his son Yitzchak from among his own kin back in the city of Nachor נָחוֹר (Nah-khor'* = Nahor), for Avraham did not want Yitzchak to marry one of the Canaanite women, because of their idolatrous practices.

The servant's charge was threefold: to make a Match for Yitzchak among the relatives of Avraham, to initiate a Betrothal, and to bring the young woman back to Canaan so that she and Yitzchak could be fully married:

"So Abraham said to the oldest servant of his house, who ruled over all that he had, 'Please, put your hand under my thigh, and I will make you swear by the LORD [YHVH], the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell; but you shall go to my country and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac.'" (Gen. 24:2-4)

Avraham agreed that if the woman selected chose not to come to Canaan, the servant would be released from this obligation. So, the servant devised a plan whereby he enlisted HaShem's help in making the correct Match.

The servant, upon arriving in the city of Nachor, went to the well where the women came in the evening to draw water for their homes. There he prayed to God for guidance:

"Then he said, 'O LORD [YHVH] God of my master Abraham, please give me success this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham. Behold, I stand here by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. Now let it be that the young woman to whom I say, "Please let down your pitcher that I may drink," and she says, "Drink, and I will also give your camels a drink" -- let her be the one whom You have appointed for Your servant Isaac. And by this I will know that You have shown kindness to my master.'

"And it happened, before he had finished speaking, that behold, Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, came out with her pitcher on her shoulder. Now the young woman

* The city of Nachor was originally called Haran (Hah-rah-n'). It was named after the older brother of Avraham and Nahor who had died while they were still in Ur of the Chaldees. Here it is called Nahor because that is where Nahor was living.

was very beautiful to behold, a virgin; no man had known her. And she went down to the well, filled her pitcher, and came up." (Gen. 24:12-16)

The young woman turned out to be *Rivkah* (Rebekah), the daughter of Bethuel בְּתוּעַל (Bh-too-el'), a nephew of *Avraham*. And lo and behold, she did everything that the servant had asked that she do in his prayer to God:

"So it was, when the camels had finished drinking, that the man took a golden nose ring weighing half a shekel, and two bracelets for her wrists weighing ten *shekels* of gold, and said, 'Whose daughter *are* you? Tell me, please, is there room *in* your father's house for us to lodge?'"

"So she said to him, 'I *am* the daughter of Bethuel, Milcah's son, whom she bore to Nahor.'" (Gen. 24:22-24)

Through the help of *HaShem*, the servant of *Avraham* had found the Bride that God had chosen for *Yitzchak*. The next question was; would both her family and the young woman herself be willing to accept a long-distance Betrothal, sight unseen? This aspect of the Wedding was also blessed by God, for the betrothal was speedily arranged between the servant of *Avraham* and *Rivkah's* father and brother, *Bethuel* and *Lavan* לָבָן (Lah-vahn' = Laban). Notice how the story unfolds:

"Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, 'The thing comes from the LORD [YHVH]; we cannot speak to you either bad or good. Here *is* Rebekah before you; take her and go, and let her be your master's son's wife, as the LORD [YHVH] has spoken.'" (Gen. 24:50-51)

Every Betrothal required that a Brideprice either be paid in full, or by a promise to pay a certain amount if the husband should precede the wife in death, or ever divorce her:

"Then the servant brought out jewelry of silver, jewelry of gold, and clothing, and gave *them* to Rebekah. He also gave precious things to her brother and to her mother." (Gen. 24:53)

However, *Rivkah* had the right to refuse the offer, but she chose to go ahead with the betrothal, thereby committing herself to be the wife of *Yitzchak*:

"And he and the men who *were* with him ate and drank and stayed all night. Then they arose in the morning, and he said, 'Send me away to my master.'"

"But her brother and her mother said, 'Let the young woman stay with us *a few* days, at least ten; after that she may go.'"

"And he said to them, 'Do not hinder me, since the LORD [YHVH] has prospered my way; send me away so that I may go to my master.'"

"So they said, 'We will call the young woman and ask her personally.'"

"Then they called Rebekah and said to her, 'Will you go with this man?' And she said, 'I will go.'"

"So they sent away Rebekah their sister and her nurse, and Abraham's servant and his men." (Gen. 24:54-59)

After a long journey by camel train they came to Beersheva in southern Canaan. Here their marriage was

consummated when *Rivkah* came to *Yitzchak* and they went into *Sarah's* tent, which became a *Chuppah* חֻפָּה (Hoop-pah = wedding chamber) to them:

"And Isaac went out to meditate in the field in the evening; and he lifted his eyes and looked, and there, the camels *were* coming. Then Rebekah lifted her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she dismounted from her camel; for she had said to the servant, 'Who *is* this man walking in the field to meet us?'"

"And the servant said, 'It *is* my master.' So she took a veil and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done."

"Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent; and he took Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's *death*."

(Gen. 24:63-67)

Thus were *Yitzchak* and *Rivkah* married according to the traditions of the Ancient Wedding.

~ *Ya'acov* and *Rachel* ~

Elements of the Ancient Wedding are also apparent in the marriage of *Ya'acov* (Yah' ah'-cove = Jacob) to *Rachel* (Rah-kehl'). This time it is *Ya'acov's* mother, *Rivkah*, who understood that he must not marry a woman from the land of Canaan, the way his elder brother *Aisav* אִשָּׂו (Eye-sahv' = Esau) had done:

"And Rebekah said to Isaac, 'I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth, like these *who are* the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?'" (Gen. 27:46)

Tradition tells us that a match had been made years before when it was agreed that *Aisav* (the oldest son of *Yitzchak* and *Rivkah*) would marry *Leah* לֵאָה (Lay'-ah = the oldest daughter of *Lavan*, *Rivkah's* brother) and that *Ya'acov* would marry *Rachel* (both being the second born of their parents). However, when *Leah* learned that *Aisav* was not an honorable man, she cried out to God in prayer, asking Him to allow her to marry someone righteous. Thus she was spared from marrying *Aisav*.

The confirmation of the match, between *Ya'akov* and *Rachel*, was made when they met at the well:

"Now while he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess. And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother."

"Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice and wept. And Jacob told Rachel that he *was* her father's relative and that he *was* Rebekah's son. So she ran and told her father." (Gen. 29:9-12)

Their Betrothal took place a month later, after *Ya'akov* had been introduced to *Lavan* and they had an opportunity to get to know each other:

"Then it came to pass, when Laban heard the report about Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him and kissed him, and brought him to his house. So he told Laban all these things. And Laban said to him, 'Surely you *are* my bone and my flesh.' And he stayed with him for a month.

"Then Laban said to Jacob, 'Because you *are* my relative, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what *should* your wages be?' Now Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder *was* Leah, and the name of the younger *was* Rachel. Leah's eyes *were* delicate, but Rachel was beautiful of form and appearance. Now Jacob loved Rachel; and he said, 'I will serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter.'

"And Laban said, '*It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to another man. Stay with me.*'" (Gen. 29:13-19)

Thus did *Ya'akov* become formally Betrothed to *Rachel*. However, rather than having a one year waiting period (which became the norm in later times) they went through a seven year waiting period before the marriage consummation took place. During these seven years *Ya'akov* paid *Lavan* the Brideprice through his labors.

But there was another problem. *Lavan's* oldest daughter *Leah* had refused the match to *Aisav* because of his bad reputation. This made her eligible to marry someone else, but there were no takers. A possible explanation for her lack of suitors may be discovered by the meaning of her name. Many bibles have a note in the margin by *Leah's* name which indicates that it means she had 'weak eyes.' However, according to tradition, what the name *Leah* really means is that to look upon her caused the viewer's eyes to become 'weak.' In other words, *Leah* was a homely woman, who did not have the charm or good looks of her beautiful younger sister *Rachel*. (Actually, tradition also teaches that *Leah* and *Rachel* were twins, with *Leah* being the firstborn.)

Lavan may have figured that *Leah* would have been married by the time the seven year betrothal of *Ya'akov* and *Rachel* had passed. Apparently, when no takers came along for her, *Lavan* decided that if *Leah* was ever going to have a family, he would have to trick *Ya'akov* into marrying both of them. Not only was he able to marry off his eldest daughter, but he figured out a way to retain the services of *Ya'akov* in the process. He accomplished his deception on what was supposed to be the wedding night of *Ya'akov* and *Rachel*:

"So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed *but a few days to him because of the love he had for her*. Then Jacob said to Laban, 'Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in to her.'

"And Laban gathered together all the men of the place and made a feast. Now it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter and brought her to Jacob; and he went in to her. And Laban gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid.

"So it came to pass in the morning, that behold, it *was* Leah. And he said to Laban, 'What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served you? Why then have you deceived me?'

"And Laban said, 'It must not be done so in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn. Fulfill her week, and we will give you this one also for the service which you will serve with me still another seven years.'

"Then Jacob did so and fulfilled her week. So he gave him his daughter Rachel as wife also. And Laban gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as a maid. Then Jacob also went in to Rachel, and he also loved Rachel more than Leah. And he served with Laban still another seven years." (Gen. 29:20-30)

The expression "fulfill her week" means that *Ya'akov* spent seven days in the *Chuppah* with *Leah*. At the end of that seven days, he was given *Rachel* and he then spent the very next seven days in the *Chuppah* with her. Because *Ya'akov* agreed to accept *Rachel* into the *Chuppah* for the second week, he thereby obligated himself to serve *Lavan* for the additional seven years.

Many wonder how *Ya'akov* could have been deceived into believing that he was with *Rachel* when he was actually with *Leah*. A number of explanations have been put forth, each of which represent a piece of the puzzle. First of all, the bride would have been veiled so that *Ya'akov* could not have seen her face. This example has already been shown when *Rivkah* covered her face before meeting *Yitzchak*. (Gen. 24:65). Also, it would have been dark when they entered the *Chuppah* (probably a tent) so that when she removed her veil *Ya'akov* would not have been able to see her face. But there is one other aspect about this deception that comes to us from Jewish tradition; which is that *Rachel* was in on the plan.

According to this tradition, *Rachel* knew of the plot and did not want *Leah* to suffer any shame, especially the shame of having her younger sister marry before she did. Therefore, *Rachel* revealed a series of secret signs which she and *Ya'akov* had developed over the years. Thus, *Leah* was able to give *Ya'akov* these signs, so that he thought he was with *Rachel*. In addition, *Rachel* is said to have hidden in the *Chuppah* and every time *Ya'akov* asked a question it was *Rachel* who answered.

After the wedding it is said that *Ya'akov* asked *Leah* how she could have pretended to be *Rachel* and deceive him in such a manner. She told him that all she was doing was imitating him; for he too had pretended to be his brother *Aisav* when he had gone to his father *Yitzchak* to receive the blessing of the firstborn.

So, God answered *Leah's* prayer for a righteous husband by allowing this double marriage of sisters to *Ya'akov*. Even as God had allowed *Ya'akov* to receive both the birthright and the blessing of the firstborn instead of *Aisav*, so too did He prevent a marriage between *Leah* and *Aisav*:

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Nor are your ways My ways,' says the LORD [YHVH].
'For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways,
And My thoughts than your thoughts.'" (Isa. 55:8-9)

~ The Wedding Analogy ~

By studying the above examples we can see that the reality of any given marriage procedure does not always follow exactly the outline of the classic Ancient Wedding. For example, *Yitzhak* did not negotiate the Brideprice with Bethuel, the father of *Rivkah*. Instead it was done by a servant of *Yitzhak's* father *Avraham*. Also, the waiting period for *Ya'acov* and *Rachel* was not just one year, but seven. This is an important principle to remember, for there are often deviations from the classic model.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

~ The Match ~

For you are a holy people
To the LORD your God;
The LORD your God has chosen you
To be a people for Himself,
A special treasure above all the peoples
On the face of the earth.
Deuteronomy 7:6



Tradition states, and Scripture confirms, that the One who created all things* was Matched, Betrothed, and became Married to the children of Israel:

"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD [YHVH], when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah -- not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD [YHVH]." (Jer. 31:31-32)

"Return, O backsliding children," says the LORD [YHVH]; "for I am married to you. ..." (Jer. 3:14a)

**"For your Maker is your husband,
The LORD [YHVH] of hosts is His name;
And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel;
He is called the God of the whole earth."** (Isa. 54:5)

God picked *Avraham* to be the progenitor of His Bride. He then continued that promise through *Avraham's* son and grandson. When the time was right, He Betrothed and Married their descendants. Thus begins the story of the 'Chosen People of God,' the children of *Israel*, the Bride of *HaShem*.

~ God Seeks A Bride ~

As the story of mankind unfolds in Scripture, it becomes apparent that the real purpose for mankind's creation was so that the One, through whom all things were made, could have a Bride for marriage:

* It is our opinion that the One through whom the world was created, was the Word who became flesh (John 1:1-5, 14).

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence." (Col. 1:15-18)

It is not possible to know how the first marriage would have developed had *Adam* and *Chava* not sinned in *Gan Eden*. Perhaps God would have married each and every person descended from that first human union. But since *Adam* and *Chava* did commit sin, those sins brought forth a number of consequences (see Gen. 3):

- ◆ *Adam* and *Chava* acquired the knowledge of good and evil.
- ◆ *Adam* and *Chava* became susceptible to death.
- ◆ They understood they were naked and needed to be clothed.**
- ◆ *Adam* was consigned to till the ground in order to obtain food.
- ◆ *Chava* was to bear children in sorrow and pain.
- ◆ The serpent became the most cursed creature on earth.
- ◆ Enmity was placed between the seed of the serpent and the seed of *Chava*.

The remainder of Scripture contains the story, in both historical and prophetic form, of the Match, Betrothal, and Marriage of the Creator God to the people whom He chose to be His Bride, in both a physical and spiritual sense.

~ The Match Begins ~

All marriages must begin with a man and woman being matched to each other. Today this is usually accomplished through a stylized procedure called dating and courtship in which a man and woman choose each other to be their partner. As we saw in chapter one, anciently this was not the way marriages were arranged. Instead, the ancient matching process took place primarily through the efforts of the father of the Bridegroom and the father of the Bride.

In the marriage of God to Israel, the match was accomplished by *HaShem* matching a particular family of people to Himself. This matching process took place over a period of many years and included a number of people. It all began when God called a man named *Avram* אַבְרָם (Ahv-rahm' = Abram) to move out of the land where he was living and into a land which God would show him:

**"Now the LORD [YHVH] had said to Abram:
'Get out of your country,
From your kindred**

** Tradition states that originally *Adam* and *Chava* were clothed with the Radiance of God. Once they had sinned, that spiritual radiance was removed and they became naked in the flesh.

And from your father's house,
To a land that I will show you.
I will make you a great nation;
I will bless you
And make your name great;
And you shall be a blessing.
I will bless those who bless you,
And I will curse him who curses you;
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'

"So Abram departed as the LORD [YHVH] had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan." (Gen. 12:1-5)

Avram was descended from *Shem* שֵׁם (Shehm) who was one of the three sons of *Noach* נֹחַ (Noh-akh' = Noah). *Avram's* father was *Terach* תֵּרַח (Teh-rakh' = Teh-rah):

"Now Terah lived seventy years, and begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

"This is the genealogy of Terah: Terah begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Haran begot Lot. And Haran died before his father Terah in his native land, in Ur of the Chaldeans. Then Abram and Nahor took wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran the father of Milcah and the father of Iscah. But Sarai was barren; she had no child.

"And Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife, and they went out with them from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran and dwelt there. So the days of Terah were two hundred and five years, and Terah died in Haran."

(Gen. 11:26-32)

Tradition teaches that *Iscah* יִסְכָּה (Ees'-cah) and *Sarai* שָׂרַי (Sah-rye') are one and the same person. This would make *Sarai* the daughter of *Terach's* son *Haran* חָרָן (Khah-rah'n'). Thus the other two sons of *Terach*; *Avram* and *Nachor*, married their nieces, *Milcah* מִלְכָּה (Meel'-cah) and *Sarai* (or *Iscah*). This is confirmed for us a little later on when *Avram* told *Abimelech* אֲבִימֶלֶךְ (Ah-vee-meh'-lekh = Abimelech) that *Sarai* was his 'sister':

"But indeed she is truly my sister. She is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife." (Gen. 20:12)

In the ancient world, grandchildren were often referred to as one's 'children.' Thus *Sarai* was the 'daughter' (granddaughter in modern terms) of *Terach*, *Avram's* father.

~ The Matching Ceremony ~

After dwelling in the land of Canaan for a period of time, *Avram* had another direct encounter with the Creator God. It was during this encounter that the actual Match took place between God and the yet unborn descendants of *Avram*:

"After these things the word of the LORD [YHVH] came to Abram in a vision, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.'

"But Abram said, 'Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?' Then Abram said, 'Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!'"

(Gen. 15:1-3)

Avram was reacting to the fact that God had promised him enough descendants to make up a "great nation" (Gen. 12:2), yet here he was with no descendants and no prospects of having any. At this particular point in time *Avram* had doubts. But God continued to communicate with *Avram*, and because of that communication *Avram* came to believe, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that what God had told him would come to pass:

"And behold, the word of the LORD [YHVH] came to him, saying, 'This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.' Then He brought him outside and said, 'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.' And he believed in the LORD [YHVH], and He accounted it to him for righteousness.

"Then He said to him, 'I am the LORD [YHVH], who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it.'" (Gen. 15:4-7)

It was at this point that *Avram* became a true man of faith, and thereby qualified to be called the father of the faithful. This is also where the 'Match' first took place. However, *Avram* still wanted a firm confirmation of God's promise to him, so he asked for a sign:

"And he said, 'Lord GOD, how shall I know that I will inherit it?' So He said to him, 'Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.'

"Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. And when the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away."

(Gen. 15:8-11)

What was taking place here was an ancient covenant ritual. Since *Avram* was still flesh and blood, and therefore susceptible to the doubts of the flesh, God decided to use a familiar covenant ritual in order to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that what He had promised was going to come to pass.

This particular type of covenant is called a *Covenant Between the Parts*. The animals mentioned were all sacrificed and their carcasses divided in half. Then the halves were placed on either side of a path. The individuals making the covenant were required to walk between the divided animal carcasses. This ritual signified that each one of the covenant people was publicly stating that if they ever broke the covenant,

their bodies should be cut asunder just like the animals that had been sacrificed for this ritual. Since this type of covenant included animal sacrifice, it was also a 'Blood Covenant.'

After *Avram* properly prepared the animals, God then revealed what was to happen to his descendants over the next four hundred years:

"Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him. Then He said to Abram: 'Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.'" (Gen. 15:12-16)

By revealing to *Avram* some information about what was to happen to his descendants, God was confirming once again that *Avram* would have many descendants, and they too would eventually be brought into a covenant relationship with Him.

Then a most remarkable thing happened. Instead of *Avram* walking between the parts with God, he remained in the deep sleep that God had placed upon him, so that two manifestations of God alone walked between the parts, thus making this covenant with *Avram* and his descendants totally by Himself:

"And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there was a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces." (Gen. 15:17)

The reason for this strange confirmation of the covenant was because God knew that while *Avram* would be faithful to keep the covenant himself, his descendants could not be counted on to do the same. And since this covenant was to be with his descendants, and not just with *Avram*, it was imperative that it be done in such a way that would absolutely insure that the covenant could never be broken, because of the weakness of men.

Because of this momentous event, the promise God made to *Avram* is still in effect to this very day, and those who are the children of *Avraham* have become heirs according to the promise:

"For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, 'Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.' And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us."

"This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus

[Y'shua], having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." (Heb. 6:13-20)

Because God Himself walked alone between the covenant animals, the *Covenant Between the Parts* became an unconditional covenant. It did not depend upon any action on the part of *Avram* or his descendants, but only upon the express promise of God to complete what He had promised. That promise consists of the following:

"On the same day the LORD [YHVH] made a covenant with Abram, saying: 'To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates -- [the land of] the Kenites, the Kenezites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites." (Gen. 15:18-21)

Historically Israel reached its greatest size during the reign of King Solomon. While the full extent of his empire is not known, it is generally accepted by most scholars that the children of Israel have yet to possess all of the land from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates as was promised. Therefore, the final fulfillment of this promise is yet future.

~ The Match Is Confirmed ~

Because God was dealing with human beings, who sometimes tend to doubt His word, God saw fit to confirm this covenant promise which He made with *Avram*, on a number of different occasions and with several different people. The first confirmation went to *Avram* himself:

"When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD [YHVH] appeared to Abram and said to him, 'I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.'

"Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: 'As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham [Heb: *Avraham*]; for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." (Gen. 17:1-8)

This was not a different covenant. It was still the *Covenant Between the Parts*. However, now it was being expanded to include all of *Avraham's* descendants in their own generations. The covenant was still unconditional, and it applied to all who are descended from him through the proper lineage. However, there was one additional requirement for the children of *Avraham*; they were to carry a physical sign that

indicated they are indeed his descendants and members of the Covenant People:

"And God said to Abraham: 'As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.'" (Gen. 17:9-14)

The covenant had now been modified so that the children of *Avraham* would carry the sign of that covenant in their flesh. This sign was to be a physical reminder of who they were, and of the fact that God had voluntarily taken them into a covenant relationship with Himself. But circumcision was to be more than just a physical sign indicating they were in a covenant with God, and therefore eligible to inherit the promises of the land. It was also to be a physical representation of a spiritual manifestation yet to come:

"Then the LORD [YHVH] your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. And the LORD [YHVH] your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD [YHVH] your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live. ... And you will again obey the voice of the LORD [YHVH] and do all His commandments which I command you today." (Deut. 30:5-6, 8)

There is yet to be a restoration of the descendants of *Avraham* to the covenant land which God promised, and when that occurs it will include those of a circumcised heart.

~ The Covenant Belongs to the Descendants of Sarah ~

Even though *Avraham* had an older son by *Hagar* הָגָר (Hah-gahr' = Hagar) the handmaid of *Sarah*, God's covenant promise was not to pass to her son *Ishmael* יִשְׁמָעֵאל (Ish'-may-el), but rather belonged to *Sarah's* only son, *Yitzchak*:

"Then God said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her.'

"Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, 'Shall a child be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years

old, bear a child?' And Abraham said to God, 'Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!'

"Then God said: 'No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac [laughter]; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him. ... My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year.'" (Gen. 17:15-19, 21)

"And the LORD [YHVH] visited Sarah as He had said, and the LORD [YHVH] did for Sarah as He had spoken. For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. And Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him -- whom Sarah bore to him -- Isaac. Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him." (Gen. 21:1-4)

~ Another Confirmation ~

There was yet one more test for *Avraham*. This one was the toughest yet, for it required the sacrifice of his one and only son, *Yitzchak*, through whom the marriage promise was to come. This test was to see if *Avraham* would obey whatever God put before him. In complete faith, *Avraham* passed the test and was spared the need to sacrifice *Yitzchak* on the altar of burnt offering.

"Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

"But the Angel of the LORD [YHVH] called to him from heaven and said, 'Abraham, Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.'

"And He said, 'Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son from Me.'" (Gen. 22:9-12)

Then came a confirmation of the *Covenant of Promise* to *Avraham*, along with some additions to the original promises:

- ♦ *Avraham's* descendants would possess the 'gates' of their enemies,
- ♦ They would be numbered as the sand on the seashore, and
- ♦ From *Avraham's* seed all the nations of the world would be blessed.

It is important to recognize how critical was the element of obedience which now came into play. The additional promises were given because *Avraham* not only believed God (and it was counted for righteousness) he was willing to obey God as well.

"Then the Angel of the LORD [YHVH] called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: 'By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD [YHVH], because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son, blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will

multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice." (Gen. 22:15-18)

~ The Match Is Confirmed Through Rivkah ~

The next confirmation of the marriage Match goes not to *Yitzhak* but to his future wife, *Rivkah*. This occurred at *Haran* when the servant of *Avraham* was about ready to take her back to *Yitzhak* in the land of Canaan, when *Rivkah's* mother, and her brother *Lavan*, pronounced the following blessing upon her:

"And they blessed Rebekah and said to her:

'Our sister, may you become

The mother of thousands of ten thousands;

And may your descendants possess

The gates of those who hate them." (Gen. 24:60)

This blessing was a second confirmation that the *Covenant Promise* would flow through *Yitzhak*, because *Rivkah* was about to become his wife.

~ The Covenant Is Confirmed in Yitzhak ~

Even though *Yitzhak* had an older half-brother named *Ishmael*, it was through *Yitzhak* that the promised marriage Match to God was to come:

"And the LORD [YHVH] appeared to him [Yitzhak] the same night and said, 'I am the God of your father Abraham; do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you and multiply your descendants for My servant Abraham's sake.'" (Gen. 26:24)

~ God's Choice ~

Rivkah did not bear a child to *Yitzhak* until twenty years after they were married. After supplications to God she gave birth to twin sons, *Aisav* (Esau) being the firstborn and *Ya'acov* (Jacob) the younger. The children struggled even before they were born, causing great discomfort to *Rivkah*:

"... the children struggled together within her; and she said, 'If all is well, why am I this way?' So she went to inquire of the LORD [YHVH]. And the LORD [YHVH] said to her:

'Two nations are in your womb,

Two peoples shall be separated from your body;

One people shall be stronger than the other,

And the older shall serve the younger."

(Gen. 25:22-23)

It was God's will that the younger son, *Ya'acov*, should be the one through whom the *Covenant Promise* would flow. However, since both *Ya'acov* and *Aisav* had the same parents, the custom of the time was for the firstborn to receive both the birthright and a special blessing from his father.

But *Aisav* did not care about the birthright; in fact he despised it. One day he came in from the field very tired and hungry. *Ya'acov* had prepared a pot of lentil stew because

(according to tradition) *Avraham* had just died and lentils were the customary mourner's food in that society:

"Now Jacob cooked a stew; and Esau came in from the field, and he was weary. And Esau said to Jacob, 'Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary.' Therefore his name was called Edom [red].

"But Jacob said, 'Sell me your birthright as of this day.' And Esau said, 'Look, I am about to die; so what profit shall this birthright be to me?'

"Then Jacob said, 'Swear to me as of this day.' So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright." (Gen. 25:29-34)

Ya'acov now possessed the birthright, but before his father died he also needed to obtain the covenant blessing so that the marriage Match could take place with his descendants instead of *Aisav's*. This required some manipulation on the part of *Rivkah*, for unlike her husband, she preferred *Ya'acov* over her older son, *Aisav*.

Yitzhak had become old and was blind. He believed that he was near death, so he asked his favorite son *Aisav* to go hunting and kill some game and prepare a special dish for him. In exchange for this favor, *Yitzhak* promised to give *Aisav* the blessing of the firstborn.

This development caused *Rivkah* to see an opportunity to obtain the firstborn blessing for *Ya'acov*:

"Now Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt game and to bring it.

"So Rebekah spoke to Jacob her son, saying, 'Indeed I heard your father speak to Esau your brother, saying, 'Bring me game and make savory food for me that I may eat it and bless you in the presence of the LORD [YHVH] before my death.' Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to what I command you. Go now to the flock and bring me from there two choice kids of the goats, and I will make savory food from them for your father, such as he loves. Then you shall take it to your father, that he may eat it, and that he may bless you before his death.'

"And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, 'Look, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth-skinned man. Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be a deceiver to him; and I shall bring a curse on myself and not a blessing.'

"But his mother said to him, 'Let your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, get them for me.'"

(Gen. 27:5-13)

So, *Rivkah* prepared the special dish for *Yitzhak*. *Ya'acov* took the food into his father wearing a disguise of goat skins on the backs of his hands so his flesh would seem, to his blind father, to be the hairy hands of *Aisav*. The trick worked and *Ya'acov* received the blessing of the firstborn in addition to the birthright that he had already purchased with the lentil stew:

"And he [Ya'acov] came near and kissed him; and he [Yitzhak] smelled the smell of his clothing, and blessed him and said:

'Surely, the smell of my son
 Is like the smell of a field
 Which the LORD [YHVH] has blessed.
 Therefore may God give you
 Of the dew of heaven,
 Of the fatness of the earth,
 And plenty of grain and wine.
 Let peoples serve you,
 And nations bow down to you.
 Be master over your brethren,
 And let your mother's sons bow down to you.
 Cursed *be* everyone who curses you,
 And blessed *be* those who bless you!'" (Gen. 27:27-29)

Now *Ya'acov* possessed both the birthright and the blessing, even though he was the youngest rather than the eldest. However, it still remained for him to receive *HaShem's* Covenant Promise. This would absolutely guarantee that his descendants would become the Matched Bride of God. This happened just before *Ya'acov* was sent away to *Padan Aram* פְּדָן אֲרָם (Pah-dahn' Ah-rahm') to find a wife from among the relatives of his mother *Rivkah*:

"Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, and said to him: 'You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Padan Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and take yourself a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother.

'May God Almighty bless you,
 And make you fruitful and multiply you,
 That you may be an assembly of peoples;
And give you the blessing of Abraham,
 To you and your descendants with you,
 That you may inherit the land
 In which you are a stranger,
 Which God gave to Abraham.'" (Gen. 28:1-4)

Now *Ya'acov* had everything he needed to become the one through whom the Covenant of Promise could flow. Unlike his brother *Aisav*, *Ya'acov* did not despise the birthright or the blessings, rather he desired and cherished them. As a result, he is considered to be one of the three Patriarchs of the children of Israel, and he will receive his portion in the *Olam Haba* עוֹלָם הַבָּא (Oh-lahm Hah-bah), the World to Come.

~ *Ya'acov* Encounters God ~

Ya'acov was to have several encounters with *HaShem* before he went to his grave. The first of these took place on the way to *Padan Aram*. Although Scripture does not say exactly where this encounter occurred, tradition holds that it was on Mount Moriah, where his father *Yitzchak* had been offered up to God by *Avraham* and where, one day, the Temple would stand:

"Now Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran. So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep. Then he dreamed, and behold,

a ladder *was* set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

"And behold, the LORD [YHVH] stood above it and said: 'I *am* the LORD [YHVH] God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Behold, I *am* with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.'" (Gen. 28:10-15)

Ya'acov's next encounter occurred twenty years later, upon his return to the land of Canaan with his four wives, eleven sons, and one daughter. He had heard that his brother *Aisav* was coming to meet him with an army of four hundred men. *Ya'acov* was very concerned and made plans about how he might placate this brother who had vowed to kill him if he ever laid eyes on *Ya'acov* again.

During the night *Ya'acov* encountered a Divine Being and wrestled with Him:

"Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him.

"And He said, 'Let Me go, for the day breaks.' But he said, 'I will not let You go unless You bless me!' So He said to him, 'What *is* your name?' He said, 'Jacob.'

"And He said, 'Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.' Then Jacob asked, saying, 'Tell *me* Your name, I pray.' And He said, 'Why *is it that* you ask about My name?' And He blessed him there.

"And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: 'For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.'" (Gen. 32:24-30)

Ya'acov had one last encounter with *HaShem*, before his death, in which the Covenant of Promise was again confirmed:

"Then God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Padan Aram, and blessed him. And God said to him, 'Your name *is* Jacob; your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel shall be your name.' So He called his name Israel.

"Also God said to him: 'I *am* God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body. The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I give this land.'" (Gen. 35:9-12)

~ The Match Is Complete ~

This final blessing upon *Ya'acov* completed the selection of the children of Israel to be the Bride of the Creator God.

The Scriptures have made it very clear that the matching process (which began when God called *Avraham* out of the land of his father into the land of Canaan) had been passed through *Yitzhak* and *Rivkah*, and then to their youngest son *Ya'acov*. The final confirmation came when God changed *Ya'acov's* name to *Yisrael* יִשְׂרָאֵל (Yees-rah-ehl = Israel). This name change indicated that *Israel* had now become righteous in God's sight, for the name *Ya'acov* means "heel-catcher or supplanter," while the name *Israel* means; "he will rule as God."

Ya'acov's transformation from a 'supplanter' to a 'Godly ruler' was now complete. *Israel* would have a total of twelve sons, all of whom were destined to receive a portion of the Covenant of Promise that God originally made with their father *Avraham*. Now it was only a matter of time until the Matched Bride would mature to marriageable age. This would be accomplished when the children of *Israel* became a large number of people, for God's plan was to marry a nation of people, not just a handful of individuals.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

~ The Preeminent Tribes ~

Gilead is Mine,
And Manasseh is Mine;
Ephraim also is the helmet for My head;
Judah is My lawgiver.
Psalm 60:7



As their descendants multiplied, each of the twelve sons of *Israel* became progenitors of a tribe within the nation of Israel. However, two of the twelve tribes were given preeminence over the other ten. Those two were the tribes of *Yoseif* יוֹסֵף (Yoh-safe' = Joseph) and *Y'hudah* יְהוּדָה (Yeh-who'-dah = Judah).

Originally, the birthright promise should have gone to *Re'uven* רְאוּבֵן (Reh-oo'-ven = Reuben), the eldest son of *Leah*, the firstborn of *Israel*. However, after the death of *Rachel*, *Re'uven* had sexual relations with *Bilhah* בִּלְהָה (Bill'-hah) *Rachel's* handmaid, who was also *Ya'acov's* wife (in the lesser status of a concubine). For this reason *Re'uven* lost the birthright and it went to *Yoseif* who was the firstborn of *Rachel*, *Ya'acov's* other full wife:

"Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel -- he was indeed the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph, the son of Israel, so that the genealogy is not listed according to the birthright; yet Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came a ruler, although the birthright was Joseph's -- ..."

(I Chron. 5:1-2)

So *Yoseif* received the birthright which gave his descendants a double portion of the inheritance.

"If a man has two wives, one loved and the other unloved, and they have borne him children, both the loved and the unloved, and if the firstborn son is of her who is unloved, then it shall be, on the day he bequeaths his possessions to his sons, that he must not bestow firstborn status on the son of the loved wife in preference to the son of the unloved, the true firstborn. But he shall acknowledge the son of the unloved wife as the firstborn by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his."

(Deut. 21:15-17)

Re'uven had the natural right of the firstborn and would have received the double portion had he not 'defiled his father's bed.' Thus, God once again chose the younger of the two 'firstborn' sons (*Yoseif* instead of *Re'uven*) to receive the birthright portion. This allowed the two sons of *Yoseif*; *Efrayim* אֶפְרַיִם (Ehf-rye-eem') and *M'nasheh* מְנַשֶּׁה (Meh' nah-shay') to each receive a full portion of land once the tribes came into the promised land. Not only that, these same two sons also received the birthright blessing, not only through their father, but directly from their grandfather *Israel*:

"Now it came to pass after these things that Joseph was told, 'Indeed your father is sick;' and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. And Jacob was told, 'Look, your son Joseph is coming to you;' and Israel strengthened himself and sat up on the bed.

"Then Jacob said to Joseph: 'God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, and said to me, "Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a multitude of people, and give this land to your descendants after you as an everlasting possession. And now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine. Your offspring whom you beget after them shall be yours; and will be called by the name of their brothers in their inheritance. But as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died beside me in the land of Canaan on the way, when there was but a little distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).'"

(Gen. 48:1-7)

Because *Yoseif* was considered to be the firstborn for purposes of calculating the double portion, his two sons, *Efrayim* and *M'nasheh* were formally 'adopted' by *Israel* (*Ya'acov*) as though they were his very own sons. Not only were *Efrayim* and *M'nasheh* formally adopted, they also received the blessing of the firstborn:

"Then Israel saw Joseph's sons, and said, 'Who are these?'

"And Joseph said to his father, 'They are my sons, whom God has given me in this place.' And he said, 'Please bring them to me, and I will bless them.'

"Now the eyes of Israel were dim with age, so that he could not see. Then Joseph brought them near him, and he kissed them and embraced them. And Israel said to Joseph,

'I had not thought to see your face; but in fact, God has also shown me your offspring!'

"So Joseph brought them from beside his knees, and he bowed down with his face to the earth. And Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near him.

"Then Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on Ephraim's head, who *was* the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, guiding his hands knowingly, for Manasseh *was* the firstborn.

"And he blessed Joseph, and said:

'God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked,

The God who has fed me all my life long to this day,

The Angel who has redeemed me from all evil,

Bless the lads;

Let my name be named upon them,

And the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac;

And let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth." (Gen. 48:8-16)

Notice that the blessing is considered to be upon *Yoseif* even though it is being pronounced upon the heads of his two sons. This is because they are the inheritors of the double portion, the birthright of the eldest, for *Yoseif* is considered to be the firstborn because of *Re'uven's* sin with *Bilhah*.

The blessing states that both *Efrayim* and *M'nasheh* are to become known by the name of *Israel*, rather than by their own names. Not only are they to be known by the name *Israel*, they are also to be known by the names of *Avraham* and *Yitzchak* as well. This is indeed the passing of the Birthright, which now progresses from *Avraham* to *Yitzchak* to *Israel* and unto the heads of *Efrayim* and *M'nasheh*, the two sons of *Yoseif*.

However, *Yoseif* became concerned, because his father *Israel* was placing the preeminent blessing upon his younger son *Efrayim* instead of upon the older son *M'nasheh*. This was done by the way *Israel* placed his hands on the heads of his grandsons. The right hand was supposed to be placed upon the head of the elder son and the left upon the younger. *Israel* had them reversed, even though *Yoseif* had positioned them properly before his father. *Yoseif* brought this to his father's attention to no avail:

"Now when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him; so he took hold of his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. And Joseph said to his father, 'Not so, my father, for this *one* is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head.'

"But his father refused and said, 'I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations.'

"So he blessed them that day, saying, 'By you Israel will bless, saying, "May God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh!"' And thus he set Ephraim before Manasseh."

(Gen. 48:17-20)

Once again, the youngest son receives the greatest blessing. However, in this case, both sons have a place in the Matched Bride of *HaShem*, not like *Ishmael* and *Aisav* who both lost out completely on becoming a natural part of the Bride.

In Genesis chapter 49, *Israel* called all of his sons into his presence so that he could give each one of them a prophecy concerning what would befall their descendants in the 'last days.' When it came to prosperity and material goods, *Yoseif* by far received not only the lengthiest, but also the greatest blessing:

"Joseph is a fruitful bough,

A fruitful bough by a well;

His branches run over the wall.

The archers have bitterly grieved him,

Shot *at him* and hated him.

But his bow remained in strength,

And the arms of his hands were made strong

By the hands of the Mighty *God* of Jacob

(From there *is* the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel),

By the God of your father who will help you,

And by the Almighty who will bless you

With blessings of heaven above,

Blessings of the deep that lies beneath,

Blessings of the breasts and of the womb.

The blessings of your father

Have excelled the blessings of my ancestors,

Up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills.

They shall be on the head of Joseph,

And on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers." (Gen. 49:22-26)

~ *Y'hudah's* Role ~

There was one other preeminent tribe among the descendants of *Israel* -- the tribe of *Y'hudah* (Judah). *Y'hudah* was not even close to being either a firstborn son, nor a youngest son. In fact, he was the fourth of six sons born to *Leah*, following *Re'uven*, *Shim'on* שִׁמְעוֹן (She-moan'), and *Levi* לֵוִי (Leh-vee'). Nevertheless, *Y'hudah* was chosen by God to be the tribe of royalty:

"Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise;

Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies;

Your father's children shall bow down before you.

Judah is a lion's whelp;

From the prey, my son, you have gone up.

He bows down, he lies down as a lion;

And as a lion, who shall rouse him?

The scepter shall not depart from Judah,

Nor a lawgiver from between his feet,

Until Shiloh comes;

And to Him shall be the obedience of the people.

Binding his donkey to the vine,

And his donkey's colt to the choice vine,

He washed his garments in wine,

And his clothes in the blood of grapes.

His eyes are darker than wine,

And his teeth whiter than milk." (Gen. 49:8-12)

It is generally accepted that the term *Shiloh* שִׁילֹה (Shee'-loh = Shiloh) refers to the Messiah. So it was to the descendants of *Y'hudah* through whom the Messiah was to come. Later on, in Scripture, it becomes apparent that the Messiah was to be a direct descendant of King David, who was from the tribe of *Y'hudah*. *Y'shua* was from the tribe of *Y'hudah* and a direct descendant of King David:

"For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood."

(Heb. 7:14)

Even though the sons of *Yoseif* and *Y'hudah* were destined to become the preeminent tribes among the children of Israel, it must be remembered that all of *Ya'acov's* descendants became members of the Bride whom God had Matched for Himself.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

~ The Betrothal ~

I will betroth you to Me forever;
Yes, I will betroth you to Me
In righteousness and justice,
In lovingkindness and mercy;
I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness,
And you shall know the LORD.
Hosea 2:19-20



As we have seen, the process which *HaShem* used to Match Himself to His Bride took a considerable amount of time and involved a rather large number of people. With the death of *Israel*, this process was now complete, however, the Bride herself was not yet ready for Betrothal. There needed to be an additional passage of time so that the seventy descendants of *Israel* (who came down to Egypt during the famine in the land of Canaan) would have sufficient time in which to mature into a nation:

"Now these are the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt; each man and his household came with Jacob: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah; Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin; Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher.

"All those who were descendants of Jacob were seventy persons (for Joseph was in Egypt already)." (Ex. 1:1-5)

~ The Bride Matures ~

This particular Match could be likened to a situation where a girl was matched to a man even before she was born, for not even *Yitzchak* existed when God first Matched Himself to the descendants of *Avraham*. Just as a young girl must grow into maturity before her Betrothal and Marriage can take place, so the children of Israel had to mature into a people large enough

to be considered a nation, before God would complete the marriage.

The entire process took over 400 years. From the time that *Avram* was first called by God until *Ya'acov* went down to Egypt with his sons, was 215 years. At that time the Matched Bride consisted of only 70 members. This meant that the children of Israel lived in Egypt for a total of 215 years, for they came out of Egypt exactly 430 years after the Covenant Between the Parts:

"Now the sojourn of the children of Israel who lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years -- on that very same day -- it came to pass that all the armies of the LORD [YHVH] went out from the land of Egypt."

(Ex. 12:40-41)

The total time span, beginning with the time God first made His covenant with *Avram* until the children of Israel came out of Egypt, was 430 years. The covenant was made when *Avram* was 75 years old. *Yitzchak* was born when *Avraham* was 100 years old. Why then does Genesis 15:13 talk about a four hundred year period?

"Then He said to Abram: 'Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years.'"

(Gen. 15:13)

This passage declares that *Avram's* descendants would be afflicted for four hundred years, but it does not specifically state that they will dwell in Egypt for that entire period of time. However, they did dwell in a "land that was not theirs," for at that time, Canaan did not yet belong to them. The four hundred year 'affliction' began when *Yitzchak* was five years old. It was at that time when his half-brother, *Ishmael*, began the persecution of the 'chosen' Bride of *HaShem*:

"So the child (*Yitzchak*) grew and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on the same day that Isaac was weaned. And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, scoffing."

(Gen. 21:8-9)

The persecution of the Matched Bride by the Gentiles began at this point in time, for *Ishmael* was the son of an Egyptian woman. According to tradition, what *Ishmael* was doing to *Yitzchak* was far more than just 'scoffing.' *Ishmael* was said to be shooting arrows at *Yitzchak*, and *Sarah* saw him do it. That is why she demanded that *Avraham* send *Hagar* and *Ishmael* away.

The persecution continued against *Yitzchak's* son, *Ya'acov*, through his brother *Aisav*, who wanted to kill him for stealing his firstborn blessing. *Yoseif*, also received persecution at the hands of his own brothers when he was sold into slavery and taken to Egypt.

But the greatest persecution did not occur until after the death of both *Ya'acov* and *Yoseif*, when the children of Israel began to increase in number in the land of Goshen in Egypt. *Yoseif's* death was only 144 years prior to the Exodus. Given the period of time it would take for a new Pharaoh (who did not know about the legacy of *Yoseif*) to come into power, one is

probably left with a total slavery period of little more than one hundred years at most. (Tradition teaches the slavery lasted 110 years.)

Some feel the persecution actually began between the birth of *Aharon* אֶהְרֹן (Ah hah-rohn' = Aaron) and *Moshe* מֹשֶׁה (Mow-shay' = Moses), a period of only three years. If this is true, then the time of total slavery for the children of Israel would be just over eighty years.

The Apostle Paul confirmed the 430 year figure. He also placed the final year of that time period as being the year the children of Israel went to Mount Sinai, with the beginning point being when *Avram* received the Covenant Between the Parts:

"Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one, 'And to your Seed,' who is Christ [Messiah]. And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ [Messiah], that it should make the promise of no effect. For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise." (Gal. 3:16-18)

In any case, the maturation of the Bride took place over a 400 year time period, from the weaning of *Yitzhak* to the Exodus. During this time the Bride increased from three people (*Avraham*, *Sarah* and *Yitzhak*) into a body of 600,000 men, plus women and children. Now the Bride was ready for Betrothal.

~ The Evil Father ~

When the children of Israel first went to Egypt they were under the watchful care of the second in command of the entire realm, their own brother *Yoseif*, for the Pharaoh had put everything under his control:

"Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you. You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you.' And Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.'

"Pharaoh also said to Joseph, 'I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no man may lift his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.'" (Gen. 41:39-41, 44)

Yoseif was able to procure the finest sheep herding land in all of Egypt for his family to settle in. Since the Egyptians did not care for shepherds, looking upon them as an abomination, the children of Israel were allowed to live apart from them in the land of Goshen:

"Then Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, saying, 'Your father and your brothers have come to you. The land of Egypt is before you. Have your father and brothers dwell in the best of the land; let them dwell in the land of Goshen. And if you know any competent men among them, then make them chief herdsmen over my livestock.' ...

"And Joseph situated his father and his brothers, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of

the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded." (Gen. 47:5-6, 11)

During the ensuing years the children of Israel grew to be great in number:

"So Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions there and grew and multiplied exceedingly." (Gen. 47:27)

However, as time went on both *Ya'acov* and *Yoseif* died, as did all the other eleven sons of *Israel*.

"Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, 'Look, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we; come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land.'

"Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens. ... But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were in dread of the children of Israel. So the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigor." (Ex. 1:8-13)

After decades of peaceful living in this foreign land, the children of Israel had now come under the hand of an extremely harsh Pharaoh. No longer did they have a benevolent 'father' in the Pharaoh's office, now they had an evil 'father' in whose 'house' they lived as slaves.

Although God was certainly watching out for them (as evidenced by their increasing so greatly in number), He was not dealing directly with them in the same way He had with the Patriarchs. Thus, the children of Israel (the Matched Bride of *HaShem*) were allowed to be 'adopted' into the house of this extremely evil 'father.' Since Pharaoh had become a type of father to the Matched Bride, it then became necessary for God to deal directly with him in order to complete the Betrothal arrangements.

~ Betrothal Intentions ~

The Betrothal process began when God first appeared to the one who was to become the mediator for the children of Israel; none other than *Moshe*.

Moshe had been reared in the court of the Pharaoh and had spent his first forty years serving him, as his adopted grandson, in the royal court. However, *Moshe*, knowing he was really an Israelite by birth, decided to become better acquainted with his brethren. When he saw the conditions under which they lived it troubled him greatly:

"Now it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens. And he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. So he looked this way and that way, and when he saw no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

"And when he went out the second day, behold, two Hebrew men were fighting, and he said to the one who did the wrong, 'Why are you striking your companion?' Then he said, 'Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do

you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?' So Moses feared and said, 'Surely this thing is known!'

"When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh and dwelt in the land of Midian; and he sat down by a well."

(Ex. 2:11-15)

Moshe fled, not to what is known today as the Sinai peninsula, but further east to the land of Midian in Arabia. (Midian lies south of the land of Edom on the east side of the Gulf of Aqaba.) There he married, *Zipporah* זִפּוֹרָה (Zip-poh-rah), a daughter of *Reuel* רְעוּאֵל (Reh-oo-ehl') -- also known as *Yitrow* יִתְרוֹ (Yeet'-roh = Jethrow) a priest of Midian. Another forty years passed, and *Moshe* was now eighty years of age.

The time was now at hand for the Betrothal to take place. By now the Bride of *HaShem*, the children of Israel, had sufficiently matured so that she was ready to begin her preparations for full marriage. A major part of that maturation process had been learning the hard facts of life through the sufferings received at the hands of the Egyptian taskmasters:

"Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage. So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged them."

(Ex. 2:23-25)

~ The First Stage of Betrothal ~

It was now time for the Betrothal period to begin, but there was a problem. How would God make a binding Betrothal with two million people? Was it to be made only with a representative of the people, or would each individual also have to express acceptance of the Betrothal Covenant?

God worked this problem out in a very unique way. First He chose a single man to act as the representative for all of the children of Israel. That man was *Moshe*, who became the mediator between the children of Israel and *HaShem*. But before the Betrothal was finalized, He also required the head of each family to also agree to accept the 'cup of the covenant.'

The process began when *HaShem* first called *Moshe* to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, under His watchful care. *Moshe* was herding sheep in the desert of Midian near the mountain called *Horeb* הֹרֵב (Khoar-ehv'); later known as Mount Sinai) when:

"... the Angel of the LORD [YHVH] appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. ...

"Then Moses said, 'I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn.'

"So when the LORD [YHVH] saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said, 'Here I am.'

"Then He said, 'Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground.' Moreover He said, 'I am the God of your

father -- the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God."

(Ex. 3:2-6)

In the course of their conversation, God told *Moshe* that He had seen the plight of the children of Israel, and that He was ready to take action to bring them out of Egypt (the house of their evil adoptive 'father') and take them to a permanent home in the land of Canaan, just as He had promised *Avraham* some 429 years earlier. This encounter, between *HaShem* and *Moshe*, was where the Betrothal was officially made between God and the one who had been selected to be the official representative (mediator) of the children of Israel. Once this negotiation had been completed, God had made an irrevocable Betrothal commitment to the Bride in a corporate, or national, sense:

"Then Moses said to God, 'Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, "The God of your fathers has sent me to you," and they say to me, "What is His name?" what shall I say to them?'

"And God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.' And He said, 'Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, "I AM has sent me to you."'

"Moreover God said to Moses, 'Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: "The LORD [YHVH] God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations.'"" (Ex. 3:13-15)

It was here, at the Betrothal of *HaShem* to the corporate body of the Bride (the children of Israel), that God first revealed His name. That name in Hebrew is: Yod, Hey, Vav, Hey or YHVH). It might be better translated: "I WILL BE WHAT I WILL BE." The exact pronunciation of this name is not generally known except possibly by a very few Jewish sages.*

As part of this 'corporate Betrothal,' *HaShem* proceeded to give *Moshe* instructions about how he was to deal with the children of Israel and what he was to communicate to the Pharaoh. However, the bottom line was this: God was Betrothing them, and He promised to come and take them from the house of their evil, 'adoptive' father (the Pharaoh), marry them, and take them home to the Promised Land:

"Go and gather the elders of Israel together, and say to them, "The LORD [YHVH] God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared to me,

* It is our opinion that the most common English translation of the Name is not correct. While some feel that Believers should use the Hebrew Name indiscriminately every time they refer to God (and to not do so would be taking the Name of God in vain), the Jewish people believe that the Name is so sacred that it should not be used in general conversation, for that would constitute taking God's name in vain and be a direct breaking of the third commandment. For this reason the Jewish people substitute other terms which signify the sacredness of the Name without the necessity of actually pronouncing it aloud. The most common English term used is LORD, spelled in all capital letters. Hebrew terms include *HaShem* (The Name) and *Adonai* (Add-doh-nahee = Lord).

Needless to say these diametrically opposing opinions can make it very difficult for a publication like *Hebrew Roots*, which reaches a broad spectrum of people. No matter what we do, some will be offended.

saying, 'I have surely visited you and *seen* what is done to you in Egypt; and I have said I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, to a land flowing with milk and honey.

"Then they will heed your voice; and you shall come, you and the elders of Israel, to the king of Egypt; and you shall say to him, "The LORD [YHVH] God of the Hebrews has met with us; and now, please, let us go three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD [YHVH] our God."

"But I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not even by a mighty hand. So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My wonders which I will do in its midst; and after that he will let you go. And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and it shall be, when you go, that you shall not go empty-handed. But every woman shall ask of her neighbor, namely, of her who dwells near her house, articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing; and you shall put *them* on your sons and on your daughters. So you shall plunder the Egyptians."

(Ex. 3:16-22)

This was the Betrothal promise of the Bridegroom to His Bride, when God promised to return and take His Bride to a land "flowing with milk and honey." *HaShem*, as the Bridegroom, was not at this time with the Bride and He would not be with her for about another year. During that coming year, the Bride would need to finish preparing herself for the night when her husband (God Almighty) would come for her and take her away to be permanently married. Part of this preparation involved an increase in the workload of the Israelite slaves, so that she (the Bride) would truly desire to leave the security of Egypt and be willing to follow her Husband into the wilderness.

~ Negotiating the Brideprice ~

The Pharaoh had placed himself in the position of the 'father' of the Bride. However, he had no right to that position, for he had taken that 'right' by force. His motivation was totally self-centered. He did not want to let his 'daughter' go, because she was of great value to him as a slave. *Moshe* stood in the position of negotiator, or attendant, for the Bridegroom (who was God). He had accepted the responsibility of conducting those negotiations as the Bridegroom directed.

The negotiations began with a simple request which should have been honored, since originally the Bride was an 'invited' guest in the land of Egypt and should have been free to leave at any time:

"Afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD [YHVH] God of Israel: "Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness."

"And Pharaoh said, 'Who *is* the LORD [YHVH], that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD [YHVH], nor will I let Israel go.'

(Ex. 5:1-2)

This simple request did not include any provisions for a Brideprice to be paid. Basically, what God was communicating to the Pharaoh, through the mouth of *Moshe*, was that He considered the children of Israel to be His possession, and Pharaoh had no claim upon them. In other words, God did not recognize the 'fatherly' position in which the Pharaoh had placed himself in regard to the Israelites.

But the Pharaoh did have a certain amount of control. After all, the children of Israel were living in 'his' house, in the land of Goshen in Egypt. Being a very possessive 'father,' the Pharaoh decided to teach 'his daughter' a lesson:

"So the same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people and their officers, saying, 'You shall no longer give the people straw to make brick as before. Let them go and gather straw for themselves. And you shall lay on them the quota of bricks which they made before. You shall not reduce it. For they are idle; therefore they cry out, saying, "Let us go *and* sacrifice to our God." Let more work be laid on the men, that they may labor in it, and let them not regard false words.'

(Ex. 5:6-9)

Because of this increase in work, (and the beating received by the Israelite officers in charge of the workers), the children of Israel at first rebelled against their Husband's plan to free them. The elders of Israel went to ask the Pharaoh why they were being mistreated in such a fashion. They were told that the Pharaoh considered them to be idle, since they wanted to go off and sacrifice to God. The elders took their complaint directly to *Moshe* and *Aharon*, the representatives of the Husband:

"Then, as they came out from Pharaoh, they met Moses and Aaron who stood there to meet them. And they said to them, 'Let the LORD [YHVH] look on you and judge, because you have made us abhorrent in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to kill us.'

(Ex. 5:20-21)

At this point, the Bride had already accepted the Betrothal corporately through *Moshe's* direct contact with God. However, the next several months would be crucial to each individual family that made up the Bride, for each family would eventually have to decide whether they were going to follow their Husband, or whether they were going to stay with their wicked 'father,' the Pharaoh. The decision was made easier for them through the manifestations that God made to all of the people, both Egyptian and Israelite, in the form of the first nine plagues. Over a period of months (tradition considers it to be about one year) the Bride was able to see physical manifestations of the power of their Betrothed, the God of Israel. These manifestations included:

- ◆ Blood
- ◆ Frogs
- ◆ Lice
- ◆ Flies
- ◆ Disease on Beasts
- ◆ Boils on Man and Beast

- ◆ Hail
- ◆ Locusts
- ◆ Darkness

After all of these plagues had transpired, each family had to decide if they were going to accept the corporate Betrothal and become a part of the Bride:

"And the LORD [YHVH] said to Moses, 'I will bring yet one *more* plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt. Afterward he will let you go from here. When he lets *you* go, he will surely drive you out of here altogether. Speak now in the hearing of the people, and let every man ask from his neighbor and every woman from her neighbor, articles of silver and articles of gold.'"

"And the LORD [YHVH] gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover the man Moses *was* very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants and in the sight of the people." (Ex. 11:1-3)

~ The Brideprice Is Paid ~

According to the dictates of the Ancient Wedding, the Brideprice should have been paid to the father of the Bride. However, since the Pharaoh had illegally taken possession of the Bride, it was not right for him to have the Brideprice. Besides that, the Pharaoh, had also refused to negotiate with the representatives of the Bridegroom (*Moshe* and *Aharon*), so he had further forfeited any gain that might otherwise have come his way for releasing the Bride as requested. So, instead of the Pharaoh receiving the Brideprice from the Bridegroom, he ended up providing the Brideprice himself, in the form of the life savings of his own people. Thus, the Brideprice was paid directly to the Bride in the form of the silver and gold which they collected from their Egyptian neighbors.

~ Decision Time ~

Collecting the Brideprice was one thing, but trusting the Bridegroom to deliver them from slavery was yet another. In order to show their individual acceptance of their corporate Betrothal to God, each family was required to perform a very special ritual which involved the shedding of blood:

"Now the LORD [YHVH] spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, ... 'Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: "On the tenth *day* of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of *his* father, a lamb for a household. ... Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take *it* from the sheep or from the goats."

""Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight. And they shall take *some* of the blood and put *it* on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it. Then they shall eat the flesh on that night; roasted in fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter *herbs* they shall eat it. Do not eat it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roasted in fire -- its head with its legs and its entrails. You shall let none of it remain until morning, and what remains of it until morning you shall

burn with fire. And thus you shall eat it: with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD's [YHVH] Passover.

""For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I *am* the LORD [YHVH].

""Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you *are*. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy *you* when I strike the land of Egypt."" (Ex. 12:1, 3, 6-13)

For each individual family, the blood of the lamb became the 'blood of the covenant.' Just like their father *Avraham* had been required to slay a number of animals when the Match was first made back in the land of Canaan (Gen. 15), so now, some 430 years later, the children of Israel had to confirm their desire to be a part of the Betrothed Bride of Almighty God with blood. Those that refused this symbolic 'Cup of the Covenant,' by refusing to slay the lamb and apply the blood to their doorposts, would be destined to lose every person in their family who was a firstborn child.

On the other hand, those of other races and nationalities (including Egyptians) were also allowed to accept the Betrothal cup by following the exact instructions of God as told them by *Moshe*. In fact, many aliens to Israel apparently did perform the ritual and were also brought out at the time of the Exodus. They are referred to in Scripture as the 'mixed multitude.'

Meanwhile, the Pharaoh ended up paying an even higher price than that of the silver and gold which had already been collected. He also paid by losing every firstborn child in his realm, including those in his own household.

"And it came to pass at midnight that the LORD [YHVH] struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who *was* in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of livestock. So Pharaoh rose in the night, he, all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt, for *there was not a house where there was not one dead.*" (Ex. 12:29-30)

Now the Betrothal was fully complete. Corporately, the children of Israel had been Betrothed when God met *Moshe* at the burning bush on Mount Horeb. At that time, the Bridegroom made His decision to bring the Bride (the children of Israel) out of her evil 'father's' house and into a full marriage covenant. But it was not until the very night of the Bride's departure that all of the individual members of that Body made their personal decisions to be a part of the Betrothed Bride.

~ ~ ~ ~

~ Stealing the Bride ~

You have seen what I did to the Egyptians,
And how I bore you on eagles' wings
And brought you to Myself.
Exodus 19:4

In the Ancient Wedding it was customary for the Bridegroom to come for his Betrothed Bride in the middle of the night and 'steal' her from her father's house. When God married Israel, He chose to stick with that very same plan. He came in the middle of the night to 'steal' His Bride from the house of her evil 'father.' However, He did not come without adequate warning.

~ The Bride is Warned ~

It must be remembered that *Moshe* stood in the position of Attendant to the Bridegroom. In the parlance of the Ancient Wedding, *Moshe* would be called the "Friend of the Bridegroom." It was his responsibility to provide the Bride with sufficient warning concerning when the Bridegroom would come, so that she could be prepared and waiting. This warning was given to the Bride immediately following the lifting of the Plague of Darkness:

"And the LORD [YHVH] said to Moses, 'I will bring yet one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt. Afterward he will let you go from here. When he lets you go, he will surely drive you out of here altogether. Speak now in the hearing of the people, and let every man ask from his neighbor and every woman from her neighbor, articles of silver and articles of gold.'"

"And the LORD [YHVH] gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants and in the sight of the people." (Ex. 11:1-3)

As a result of this command, the Betrothed Bride was able to claim the Brideprice (it was also the back pay for all of the years of slave labor) from the Egyptian people. Then the Bridegroom's Attendant (*Moshe*) made this final proclamation to the 'father' of the Bride (the Pharaoh):

"Then Moses said, 'Thus says the LORD [YHVH]: "About midnight I will go out into the midst of Egypt; and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the female servant who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the animals. Then there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as was not like it before, nor shall be like it again."

""But against none of the children of Israel shall a dog move its tongue, against man or beast, that you may know that the LORD [YHVH] does make a difference between the Egyptians and Israel. And all these your servants shall come down to me and bow down to me, saying, 'Get out,

and all the people who follow you!' After that I will go out."

"Then he went out from Pharaoh in great anger."

(Ex. 11:4-8)

For about one year, *Moshe* had been negotiating with the Pharaoh concerning the release of *HaShem's* Betrothed Bride, and all to no avail. At times it seemed, because of the plagues, that the evil 'father' had relented and was about to release her. Yet each time he reneged. No wonder *Moshe* was frustrated and left the Pharaoh's presence in "great anger."

~ The Bride is Tested ~

All of these warnings were for a very special purpose. If God had wanted too, He could have removed His Bride from Egypt the very first time that *Moshe* and *Aharon* went to visit the Pharaoh. The real purpose for all of the negotiations was not to test the Pharaoh (for God had hardened his heart so he would not respond positively), but to test the individual members of the Bride to see if they had the faith to follow Him out of slavery and idolatry into freedom. For God knew there would be a temptation for them to stay in the relative comfort of service to the Pharaoh.

Today their decision to leave seems like an easy choice, but to the children of Israel it was not so clear cut. After all, at least they knew what to expect in Egypt. What might happen to them if they left was only a matter of conjecture. They had no life experiences that related to what was about to take place. In some ways, life in Egypt had its up side. For example they apparently had plenty to eat, since later on in the wilderness they moaned about all the good food that had been theirs in Egypt. So, one of their fears would have been how they might find adequate food once they had left.

On the other hand, being married to God meant they would then have their freedom. However, freedom can sometimes be very scary. They might be asked to pack up and move at a moments notice, and they might even have to travel at night. But freedom is also heady wine for a people who have been enslaved for a long period of time. And so, in the end, they were quite willing to comply with the next command which they received from their Bridegroom through their attendant, *Moshe*:

"Now the LORD [YHVH] spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, 'This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you."

""Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: "On the tenth day of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household. And if the household is too small for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take it according to the number of the persons; according to each man's need you shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats." (Ex. 12:1-5)

Here now was the first real test for the Betrothed Bride, for sheep were considered by the Egyptians to be gods. Would the

Bride be willing to defy her evil 'father's' religion and take one of his gods into their home for sacrifice?

"Now you shall keep it (*the lamb*) until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight. And they shall take *some* of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it. Then they shall eat the flesh on that night; roasted in fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter *herbs* they shall eat it. Do not eat it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roasted in fire -- its head with its legs and its entrails. You shall let none of it remain until morning, and what remains of it until morning you shall burn with fire." (Ex. 12:6-10)

~ The Date is Set ~

Thus did the Bridegroom (*HaShem*) set a firm date for His arrival to fetch or 'steal' the Bride from her 'father's' house. In anticipation of that arrival, the Bride had to follow some very specific procedures.

- ◆ On the tenth day of *Aviv*, each family had to select a lamb less than one year old.
- ◆ It had to be without any type of blemish.
- ◆ The lamb had to be kept in their home beginning on 10 *Aviv*.
- ◆ On 14 *Aviv* they were required to slay the lamb. This was to be done at "twilight," The literal Hebrew reads: "between the two evenings,"* and the Jews have always understood this to mean at mid-afternoon (about three p.m.) on 14 *Aviv*. (See our booklet *Passover in Egypt and Jerusalem* for more information.)
- ◆ They were to catch the blood of the lamb in a basin, take a branch of hyssop, dip it in the blood and apply the blood to the lintel (upper cross piece) and the doorposts (side posts) of the door. (Ex. 12:22).
- ◆ The lamb was then to be roasted over a fire, including its head and its entrails.**
- ◆ Any portion that was not eaten was to be totally burned in the fire before morning came.
- ◆ The meal was to be eaten after sundown at the beginning of 15 *Aviv*.

Just as the Bride had to be completely ready for the coming of the Bridegroom, so the children of Israel had to be completely ready for the coming of *HaShem*. They had been warned, even down to the day and hour when He would come for them, so they had no excuse for not being ready:

* In Hebrew thought, evening refers to what we would call afternoon. The first evening is from the time when the sun begins to recede (right after its zenith or high noon) until mid-afternoon. The second 'evening' is that portion from mid-afternoon until sunset, when the sun seems to descend more rapidly.

Thus, "between the two evenings" is mid-afternoon.

** The oral tradition of how this was done is as follows: The lamb was gutted and skinned. The entrails were then wrapped around the head of the lamb. It was then impaled on a pomegranate stake and roasted in an upright position. It was called a 'Crown Sacrifice.'

"For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I *am* the LORD [YHVH]. Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you *are*. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy *you* when I strike the land of Egypt." (Ex. 12:12-13)

In the Ancient Wedding, it was customary for the Bride to drink from a cup of wine that had been poured for her by the Bridegroom. This showed her acceptance of the Betrothal. In this wedding, the cup of wine is represented by the blood of the lamb. While the members of the Bride were not asked to literally drink of the blood (that would have been an abomination to God as recorded in His *Torah*), they did symbolically drink of it by placing the blood at the entrance of their houses. Then the Bride had to be ready to leave at a moment's notice:

"And thus you shall eat it: *with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand*. So you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD's [YHVH] *Passover*." (Ex. 12:11)

~ The Bridegroom Comes ~

There would be no point in eating the meal in a state of readiness, unless they expected to be taken out that very night. And that is exactly what happened:

"And it came to pass at midnight that the LORD [YHVH] struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who *was* in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of livestock.

"So Pharaoh rose in the night, he, all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt, for *there was not a house where there was not one dead*.

"Then he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, 'Rise, go out from among my people, both you and the children of Israel. And go, serve the LORD [YHVH] as you have said. Also take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone; and bless me also.'

"And the Egyptians urged the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste. For they said, 'We *shall all be dead*.'

"So the people took their dough before it was leavened, having their kneading bowls bound up in their clothes on their shoulders." (Ex. 12:29-34)

They were told to leave while it was still night, so they left before sunrise, probably in what we would call the early morning hours. If they had waited around another day, their bread dough would have had plenty of time to rise and they would not have had to eat unleavened bread.

The Bride had already collected her Brideprice, but as the Egyptians came to their homes in the middle of the night, asking them to leave immediately, it is probable that they brought even more valuables as an encouragement to go right away:

"Now the children of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, and they had asked from the Egyptians articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing. And the LORD [YHVH] had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they granted them *what they requested*. Thus they plundered the Egyptians."

(Ex. 12:35-36)

It was customary, in the Ancient Wedding practices, for the Bridegroom to arrive at the Bride's home amid a great deal of noise. This was also true when *HaShem* came for the children of Israel. Only this time, the noise was not that of the blowing of the *shofar*, or the sound of merriment by those accompanying the Bridegroom, instead it was the sound of weeping and lamentation:

"So Pharaoh rose in the night, he, all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt, for *there was not a house where there was not one dead*."

(Ex. 12:30)

Since the Egyptians had been warned about the possibility of their firstborn being killed, there were probably few people in Egypt who slept that night. Therefore, they would have known as soon as someone in their home died, and the lamenting would have begun. But in the homes of the Bride, all was well:"

"For the LORD [YHVH] will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD [YHVH] will pass over the door and not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike you."

(Ex. 12:23)

And so, that very night, the Bride of *HaShem* was taken out of the house of her evil 'father,' the Pharaoh, and set free to become the fully married Wife of the Creator God:

"Then the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides children. A mixed multitude went up with them also, and flocks and herds -- a great deal of livestock. And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they had brought out of Egypt; for it was not leavened, because they were driven out of Egypt and could not wait, nor had they prepared provisions for themselves."

(Ex. 12:37-39)

~ The Journey to the Wedding ~

The children of Israel left Egypt in celebration. They were free! They had been liberated from the harsh hand of the Pharaoh! Now they would be with their Husband, for whom they had been waiting so many, many years:

"...the children of Israel went out with boldness."

(Ex. 14:8b)

The first order of business was to pick up the bones of *Yoseif*, as had been promised him on his death bed:

"And Joseph said to his brethren, 'I am dying; but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.'

Then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, 'God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.'

"So Joseph died, *being* one hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt."

(Gen. 50:24-26)

Then they traveled east under the direct guidance of their Husband:

"So God led the people around by way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. ... And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had placed the children of Israel under solemn oath, saying, 'God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here with you.' ...

"And the LORD [YHVH] went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night. He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night *from before the people*."

(Ex. 13:18-19, 21-22)

However, the celebrating did not last long, for the evil 'father' of the Bride was not going to let her get away without a fight. Once again, the Pharaoh reneged on his promise. This time, since the Bride had already left, he had to chase after her with his army:

"Now it was told the king of Egypt that the people had fled, and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was turned against the people; and they said, 'Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?'

"So he made ready his chariot and took his people with him. Also, he took six hundred choice chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt with captains over every one of them. And the LORD [YHVH] hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the children of Israel; and the children of Israel went out with boldness.

"So the Egyptians pursued them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army, and overtook them camping by the sea beside Pi Hahiroth, before Baal Zephon."

(Ex. 14:5-9)

Then the Bride fell into great consternation and she spoke evil against her Husband's attendant:

"And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the LORD [YHVH].

"Then they said to Moses, 'Because *there were* no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt? *Is this not the word that we told you in Egypt*, saying, "Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians?" For *it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness*.'

(Ex. 14:10-12)

But *HaShem*, the loving Bridegroom, proceeded to show His Bride that He was completely able to take care of them and protect them. It was at this point where He produced one of the

greatest miracles ever seen by man, the drowning of the Egyptian army in the sea:

"Then the waters returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, and all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them remained. But the children of Israel had walked on dry land in the midst of the sea, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

"So the LORD [YHVH] saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Thus Israel saw the great work which the LORD had done in Egypt; so the people feared the LORD [YHVH], and believed the LORD [YHVH] and His servant Moses."
(Ex. 14:28-31)

Now it was time for the Bride to really celebrate, for she was forever out of the hands of the evil one and in the possession of her Creator God. What could be better than being Betrothed to *HaShem* and in route to the wedding ceremony? In exultation, the Bride praised God in what has become known as "The Song of Moses:"

"Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the LORD, and spoke, saying:

**'I will sing to the LORD [YHVH],
For He has triumphed gloriously!
The horse and its rider
He has thrown into the sea!
The LORD [YHVH] is my strength and song,**

**And He has become my salvation;
He is my God, and I will praise Him;
My father's God, and I will exalt Him.**

...

**You will bring them in and plant them
In the mountain of Your inheritance,
In the place, O LORD [YHVH], which You have made
For Your own dwelling,
The sanctuary, O LORD [YHVH], which Your hands
have established.**

The LORD [YHVH] shall reign forever and ever."
(Ex. 15:1-2, 17-18)

~ A Rocky Journey ~

But the Bride was still not fully trusting of her Husband. Despite the miracles she had witnessed through the ten plagues and the parting of the sea, she doubted whether or not God could truly protect her and care for her all the days of her life.

So it was, that during the journey from Egypt to Mount Sinai, where the actual wedding was to take place, the Bride faltered many times. Yet, *HaShem* continued to pick her up and carry her onward, even though, at times, her complaints were abrasive to His ears. During this journey, which took nearly fifty days, the Bride complained many times:

- ◆ She was thirsty (Ex. 15:22-24), and the waters they found were bitter. So her Husband showed *Moshe* how to make the waters sweet.
- ◆ She was hungry (Ex. 16:3), so her Husband gave her *manna* to eat.

- ◆ She gathered *manna* on the Sabbath (Ex. 16:27), against the explicit instructions of her Husband, and He became angry with her.
- ◆ She was thirsty again (Ex. 17:2-3), so her Husband gave her water from the Rock.
- ◆ The Amalekites attacked her (Ex. 17:8), so her Husband defeated them with the edge of the sword.
- ◆ The people had contentions with one another that *Moshe* had to arbitrate (Ex. 18), so a system of judges had to be established.

Finally, in the third month, the Bride arrived at the location of the wedding ceremony; Mount Sinai in Arabia. The Apostle Paul confirmed that this was the correct location of Sinai, when he wrote a *Midrash* (Meed-rash = parable) to the Galatians concerning Mount Sinai versus Jerusalem. He describes it as being:

"... Mount Sinai in Arabia ..." (Gal. 4:25)

The Bride had finally been delivered from her evil 'father' and from all her trials and troubles during the long journey. Now it was time for the actual wedding ceremony to take place.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

~ The Wedding ~

For your Maker is your husband,
The LORD of hosts is His name;
And your Redeemer
Is the Holy One of Israel;
He is called the God of the whole earth.
Isaiah 54:5



Weddings are extremely important events in the lives of those who marry. Certainly, the day on which *HaShem* completed His marriage to the children of *Israel* was no exception. In fact, it could reasonably be argued that this wedding was the most important event ever to take place in the lives of the people who were there and who participated. After 430 years, since the Match had first been made with *Avraham*, God was finally going to dwell permanently with His chosen Bride, the children of *Israel*. After all of the troubles along the way; after all the complaining on the part of the Bride, it was now time to bring the full marriage into fruition.

~ Final Preparations ~

Before the wedding could actually take place there had to be some further instructions given so that nothing would go wrong. One could liken these preparations to a modern day wedding rehearsal.

The first item on the agenda was a final confirmation that the Bride intended to go through with the marriage and be willing to follow the instructions of her Husband:

"And Moses went up to God, and the LORD [YHVH] called to him from the mountain, saying, 'Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and *how* I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. 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. 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."

(Ex. 19:3-6)

It was absolutely essential for the Bride to confirm her intent to obey God's voice, no matter what He instructed her to do. This righteous attribute of faith was best exemplified by the manner in which *Avraham* responded when he was instructed to offer up his son *Yitzchak* on the altar of burnt offering:

"So Avraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him."

(Gen. 22:3)

Avraham did not procrastinate. Instead he went right to work to accomplish the task that God had set before him. This was a true example of complete faith on the part of *Avraham*.

Moshe took God's question, concerning obedience, to the elders of Israel. They, in turn, took it to all the people:

"So Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words which the LORD [YHVH] commanded him. Then all the people answered together and said, 'All that the LORD [YHVH] has spoken we will do.' So Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD [YHVH]."

(Ex. 19:7-8)

Not only did the Bride agree to obey her Husband's voice and keep His covenant, she actually agreed to do whatever God instructed before she even heard what those instructions were. This is the literal meaning of the Hebrew in this verse.

But God was not naive concerning the human heart and how it can change at a whim. So He told *Moshe*:

"... 'Behold, I come to you in the thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and believe you forever.' So Moses told the words of the people to the LORD [YHVH]."

(Ex. 19:9)

It was *HaShem's* original intention that all of the members of the Bride should come into such an intimate relationship with Him that they would want to hear His voice directly. However, *HaShem* knew they were not yet spiritually equipped to hear him, so He devised a plan whereby they would know that *Moshe* was to be their mediator. For this reason God determined that all of the children of Israel would hear his voice this one time, when He spoke to *Moshe*, and thereafter would not question *Moshe's* authority.

Another very important instruction was the requirement that the Bride make herself ritually clean thorough the ritual of immersion:

"Then the LORD [YHVH] said to Moses, 'Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes. And let them be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD [YHVH] will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.'"

(Ex. 19:10-11)

It would be unthinkable for the Bride to come before her Husband on their wedding day in a state of ritual impurity. God is totally holy (set apart), therefore the Bride also needed to become holy or set apart. For this reason it was absolutely essential that everyone in the camp wash their clothes and be immersed in a *mikvah* מִקְוֶה (meek'-veh = immersion pool) of 'living water.' It is understood in Jewish teaching that the phrase "wash their clothes" implies that an immersion must also take place. Even today, a Jewish Bride is required to immerse in a *mikvah* the night before her wedding.

Also, the men were not to have sexual relations with their wives for a three day period prior to going to the mountain:

"So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and sanctified the people, and they washed their clothes. And he said to the people, 'Be ready for the third day; do not come near *your* wives.'"

(Ex. 19:14-15)

Now all was in readiness except for one last instruction:

"You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, 'Take heed to yourselves *that* you do *not* go up to the mountain or touch its base. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. Not a hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot *with an arrow*; whether man or beast, he shall not live.' When the trumpet sounds long, they shall come near the mountain.'"

(Ex. 19:12-13)

~ The Wedding ~

Everything was now ready for the actual wedding ceremony. The Bridegroom was ready, the Bride had made herself ready and was in a state of ritual purity. The final instructions had been given and it was now time to proceed:

"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 trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who *were* in the camp trembled. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot [*tachti*] of the mountain.

"Now Mount Sinai *was* completely in smoke, because the LORD [YHVH] descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice."

(Ex. 19:16-19)

What an awesome event this must have been; the wedding of *HaShem* to the children of Israel. There were loud thunderings, there was lightening and the sound of a very great trumpet. The Hebrew states explicitly that this trumpet was a *shofar*, or ram's horn. The noise was deafening. But in addition there was the fire and the smoke upon the top of the mountain.

Then an even more magnificent event occurred. According to tradition, the mountain itself lifted off of the ground and the Bride was ushered underneath it. Thus, Mount Sinai formed a *Chuppah* (wedding canopy) over the Bride. This tradition is derived from the Hebrew word *tachti* תַּחְתִּי (takh-tee'), which is translated "foot" in the NKJV quoted above; or as "nether" in the original KJV. It means; "lower, lowest." In Hebrew it is understood that it meant the underside of Mount Sinai.

So, the Bride stood under the *Chuppah*, (the mountain) as the Bridegroom Himself descended upon the top of the mountain:

"Then the LORD [YHVH] came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And the LORD [YHVH] called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up." (Ex. 19:20)

This would be the time in the Ancient Wedding when the officiating person would quote Psalm 118:

**"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD [YHVH]!
We have blessed you from the house of the LORD [YHVH]."** (Psalm 118:26)

In this case it was *HaShem* Himself who had come to marry the children of Israel, His beloved Bride, for whom He had waited 430 years.

~ The Reading of the Ketuvah ~

Next came the reading of the *Ketuvah* or Marriage Contract. God had already promised to hold the Bride as a "special treasure" and to make her a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation." Likewise, the Bride had agreed to do whatever her Husband commanded, even though she had not yet heard what those commands would be. (Ex. 19:5-9) Now it was time for the basic commands to be enumerated.

In Hebrew, the Ten Commandments are not really called 'commandments.' The Hebrew word used for "commandments" in the expression "Ten Commandments" is *davar* דָּבָר (dah-vahr'), and it means 'things' or 'words.'

"So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments [davar]; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone." (Deut. 4:13)

So these ten 'things' are the ten 'words' which all of the children of Israel heard spoken by the very voice of God. This event constituted the reading of the *Ketuvah*:

1.) "I am the LORD [YHVH] your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

2.) "You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD [YHVH] your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

3.) "You shall not take the name of the LORD [YHVH] your God in vain, for the LORD [YHVH] will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

4.) "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD [YHVH] your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD [YHVH] made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD [YHVH] blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

5.) "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD [YHVH] your God is giving you.

6.) "You shall not murder.

7.) "You shall not commit adultery.

8.) "You shall not steal.

9.) "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

10.) "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's." (Ex. 20:2-17)

According to tradition, the Ten Words came to each of the Israelites individually, and every person had to agree to each one of the Ten. However the entire process, the loud noises, the smoke and fire, the mountain raised above their heads, and the very voice of God ringing in their ears was more than they could take. So they asked *Moshe* to be their permanent mediator so they would not have to hear the voice of God directly:

"Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off. Then they said to Moses, 'You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.'

"And Moses said to the people, 'Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin.'

"So the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was." (Ex. 20:18-21)

The Bride was frightened. Because of this fear, she did not want to have a truly intimate relationship with her Husband. So, *Moshe* became a permanent mediator between the children

of Israel (the Bride) and her Husband (*HaShem*) until his death. For this reason, it became necessary for *HaShem* to place certain stipulations about how members of the Bride should conduct themselves when they needed or desired to approach Him:

"Then the LORD [YHVH] said to Moses, 'Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: "You have seen that I have talked with you from heaven. You shall not make anything to be with Me -- gods of silver or gods of gold you shall not make for yourselves. An altar of earth you shall make for Me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen. In every place where I record My name I will come to you, and I will bless you. And if you make Me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stone; for if you use

your tool on it, you have profaned it. Nor shall you go up by steps to My altar, that your nakedness may not be exposed on it.'"
(Ex. 20:22-26)

So ended the Wedding Ceremony of *HaShem* (the Creator God) to the children of Israel. They were now fully married, for they had heard His voice directly and accepted the *Ketuvah*. Now it was a matter of time to see how their marriage would play out. That will be the topic of Part III in *The Wedding of the Messiah* series.

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