

Wedding of the Messiah II

containing:

A Reluctant Bride On the Road Again Time to Go Home

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

Hebrew Roots® Press

PO Box 400
Lakewood, WI 54138

~ Table of Contents ~

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| <i>Introduction.</i> | 1 |
| <i>A Reluctant Bride.</i> | 2 |
| <i>On the Road Again</i> | 11 |
| <i>Time to Go Home.</i> | 15 |
| <i>Sources.</i> | 23 |

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Other Scriptures used in this booklet are:

The Holy Bible (KJV)
Oxford University Press
London
Tanakh, The Holy Scriptures, (TNK)
The Jewish Publication Society,
New York, 1988.

Published by:

Hebrew Roots® Press
PO Box 400
Lakewood, WI 54138
715-757-2775

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 have undertaken 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, 2013

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~ A Reluctant Bride ~

I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt,
My covenant which they broke,
Though I was a husband to them,
Says the LORD.
Jeremiah 31:32b



Marriage is a divine institution, ordained of God and is to be honored among all peoples. This being true in the human realm, how much more is it true when the One who ordained marriage is a marriage partner Himself? The Scriptures are absolutely clear that God considers His relationship with the children of Israel to be a marriage relationship.

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

The betrothal of God to the children of Israel, which took place when He encountered *Moshe* מֹשֶׁה (Mow'-shay = Moses) at the Burning Bush, was a difficult one for both parties. It might seem strange to us that even though the children of Israel knew they were in a betrothal relationship with the very Creator of the Universe, yet they continually tried His patience with their frequent murmuring whenever trouble arose during their wedding march to Mount Sinai. This disposition toward murmuring was indicative of the fact that the children of Israel constituted a reluctant and untrusting Bride, right from the very beginning.

To illustrate, let us review the events which took place even prior to the exit of the children of Israel out of Egypt. In this way we will see how, right from the beginning, the Bride lacked *emunah* אֱמוּנָה (eh-moo-nah' = trusting faith or confidence) in her Husband, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

~ A Shaky Betrothal ~

Prior to the time when the children of Israel became betrothed to the God of *Ya'acov* יַעֲקֹב (Yah ah'-cove = Jacob), the Bride was living in the home of her adoptive/foster father, the evil *Paroh* פַּרְעֹה (Pah'-roh = Pharaoh) of *Mitzraim* מִצְרַיִם (Mitz-rah-eem' = Egypt). It was at *Moshe's* Betrothal meeting with God when He expressed His commitment to bring the children of Israel out of their Egyptian captivity:

"And the LORD [YHVH] said: 'I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, ...'" (Ex. 3:7-8)

Even though God had expressed His commitment to His chosen Bride, she was not secure in her relationship with Him.

Chapters 5 and 6 of Exodus tell about the lack of *emunah* on the part of the Bride. Apparently many members of the Bride were afraid that God was going to punish them if they did not go out in the desert to worship Him as directed, for it is written:

"...The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please, let us go three days journey into the desert and sacrifice to the LORD [YHVH] our God, lest He fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword.'" (Ex. 5:3)

Because that generation of the children of Israel had experienced cruel bondage, it appears they projected that same trait onto God, as evidenced by their words, "lest He strike us."

To make matters worse, additional afflictions were placed upon them by the Pharaoh as a result of *Moshe's* arrival on the scene. *Moshe* tried to reassure the children of Israel that God indeed was going to take them out of their bondage, but they would not listen:

"So Moses spoke thus to the children of Israel; but they would not heed Moses, because of anguish of spirit and cruel bondage." (Ex. 6:9)

It was into this situation that God brought a series of plagues upon the Pharaoh and his people. The purpose of these plagues was not to convince Pharaoh to let the children of Israel go, for if that had been their purpose, then God could have accomplished the Exodus quickly by immediately bringing on the slaying of the firstborn and taking His Bride out to the wedding. Yet, God did not choose to do it that way. Rather, He spent nearly one full year bringing various plagues upon the Egyptians (only the first three plagues were visited upon the children of Israel as well) in order to show the betrothed Bride that He would be a good Husband and protector:

**"Yes, again and again they tempted God,
And limited the Holy One of Israel.
They did not remember His power:
The day when He redeemed them from the enemy,
When He worked His signs in Egypt,
And His wonders in the field of Zoan;
Turned their rivers into blood,
And their streams, that they could not drink.
He sent swarms of flies among them, which
devoured them,
And frogs, which destroyed them. ..."**

(Psalm 78:41-45)

Finally, after a betrothal year, during which they saw the various signs and wonders of God, the children of Israel were given the opportunity to accept or reject the offer of the Bridegroom. The Bride accepted His offer as we see evidenced by the Passover experience.

~ Fear of the Unknown ~

Like any young bride who is taken out of her father's house during the night, the children of Israel were both elated but also somewhat apprehensive. They very much wanted to trust their Husband (*YHVH*), but they had lingering doubts about His

ability to actually accomplish what He had set out to do. At first it was a wonderful celebration:

"... and the children of Israel went out with boldness."
(Ex. 14:8b)

They left during the early morning hours (while it was still dark) on 15 *Aviv*, with cakes of unleavened bread. The bread was not leavened because they had to leave in haste:

"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. 12:39)

On their way out, they stopped and picked up the bones of their ancestor *Yoseif* יוֹסֵף (Yoh-safe' = Joseph), as had been promised him when he died:

"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.'"
(Ex. 13:19)

The faith of the children of Israel wavered before they had finished their exit from the land of Egypt. However God, in His infinite mercy, took them in a direction that would protect them from having to experience war so early in their departure (by way of *Yam Suf* יַם סוּף (Yam Soof = Red (or Reed) Sea). He was visibly with them all of the way:

"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."
(Ex. 13:21)

~ Faltering Faith ~

The story of the Exodus is a story of faltering faith. Over and over again the Bride lost her faith in God whenever difficulties arose. Their first display of discouragement occurred on the banks of *Yam Suf*, when they saw the approaching army of Pharaoh. Immediately the Bride cried out to God and questioned *Moshe* concerning their plight:

"And when the 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)

The complaints of the children of Israel were not against *Moshe* personally, they were really against the One who had delivered them out of Egypt; their betrothed Husband (YHVH),

the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. *Moshe* was merely the mediator between the Bride and her Husband.

Of course God was faithful to bring the Bride through the sea and destroy Pharaoh and his army. Yet, despite this second great miracle, which completed her deliverance from Egypt, the Bride still did not have confidence in her Betrothed Husband, even though He was *El Shaddai* אֱלֹהֵי שַׁדַּי (Ehl Shah-dahee' = God Almighty).

The next complaint came after they had gone three days without finding fresh water. When they did find water at *Marah* מַרָּה (Mah-rah' = Marah) it was too bitter to drink:

"And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. Now when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah."

"And the people murmured against Moses, saying, 'What shall we drink?'"
(Ex. 15:22-24)

Once again God provided for their needs by turning the bitter waters sweet and all was again fine until the next problem arose:

"Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. And the children of Israel said to them, 'Oh, that we had died by the hand of the LORD [YHVH] in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.'"
(Ex. 16:2-3)

It is clear from the following verses that their murmuring was really against God, even though they took the form of being against *Moshe* and *Aharon* אַהֲרֹן (Ah hah-rone' = Aaron).

"...for the LORD [YHVH] hears your murmurings which you make against Him. ..."
(Ex. 16:8)

This time food was provided in the form of quail in the evening and manna in the morning. Once again, God had proven Himself to be a loving and caring Bridegroom.

Despite the Bridegroom's constant miracles on behalf of the Bride, it was once again thirst that caused her next outcry. They were camped at *Rephidim* רֶפִידִים (Reh phée-deem'), and there was no water to drink. Here *Moshe* was instructed to strike the rock so that water would pour forth for the people of the Bride. On this occasion it is said that the Bride "tempted" her Husband:

"So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD [YHVH], saying, 'Is the LORD [YHVH] among us or not?'"
(Ex. 17:7)

It is interesting to note that most of the complaints were about food and drink, although all of her complaining was indicative of a Bride that simply had not yet learned to trust her Bridegroom to deliver her from harm's way. However, when a real test came forth, in the form of the attack on the children of Israel by the Amalekites, the members of the Bride, who were

chosen to fight, faithfully went forth into battle under the leadership of Joshua. Thus they were able to gain the victory because *Moshe* held up the rod of God in his hand, thanks to support from Aaron and Hur.

"So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword."
(Ex. 17:13)

Perhaps this battle experience was needed for the Bride to finally learn to trust her Bridegroom, for there are no other recorded instances of complaining or murmuring prior to their reaching Mount Sinai.

~ Wedding Jitters ~

Up to this point in time, the Bride (the children of Israel) had not yet come face to face with the Bridegroom (the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob). She had seen manifestations of His great power through the ten plagues of Egypt and the various miracles which He performed for them during the Wedding March from Egypt to Mount Sinai, but had never spoken to Him directly.

Now came the big day, but once again the Bride was not quite up for the occasion. It all started out pretty well. The instructions were established on where the Bride was to stand and what she should expect to witness. But the actual presence of the Bridegroom was so overwhelming she just could not handle it. It was not only the thick cloud, nor was it only the thunderings or the lightnings, but when the sound of the *shofar** was added to everything else, the Bride trembled with fear:

"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...."

"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, 18-19)

Traditionally, in the Ancient Wedding, the Bridegroom reads the *Ketuvah* כְּתוּבָה (keh-too'-vah = Marriage Contract) to His Bride. This wedding was no exception, for God read His *Ketuvah* (the ten commandments or words) in His own voice to each and every member of the assembled Bride, as it is written:

*The *shofar* that was sounded at Mount Sinai is called the "First Shofar." It is said to have been one of the horns that was taken from the substitutionary ram that was caught in the thicket at Mount Moriah when *Avraham* (Abraham) offered up his son *Yitzchak* (Isaac). The "Last Shofar" (or Trumpet) is said to be the other horn from the same ram, and it will be blown on *Rosh HaShanah* (Feast of Trumpets) when Messiah returns for His Bride. A third *shofar* called the "Great Shofar," is to be blown on *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement), when Messiah and His Bride return to earth to establish their one thousand year home. The "Great Shofar" also signifies the closing of the gates of judgment for that period of time.

"And God spoke all these words, saying: ..."

"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.'" (Ex. 20:1, 18-20)

This event instilled such fear in the Bride that she asked *Moshe* to mediate with her Husband (YHVH) because she feared for her life. However, according to tradition, before Him would agree to stop talking directly to the members of the Bride, each and every one of them had to individually hear the Ten Words (Heb. *davar* דָּבָר (dah-vahr' or "commandments" as we call them) and agree to observe them.

This was the first and last time that (YHVH), the Husband of the children of Israel, spoke directly so that all the members of the Bride could actually hear His voice. From this point on He only communicated through *Moshe*. Later on, He communicated through the Judges and, still later, the Prophets. Finally, He has communicated to us through His Son, *Y'shua HaMashiach*, as it is written:

"God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." (Heb. 1:1-4)

Although the Bride expressed her desire to not have direct communication with her Husband, nevertheless the children of Israel were committed to a full marriage relationship with God and He to them, for the vows had already been made.

God had taken His vow first:

""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. 19:5-6)

Then the Bride followed suit:

"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)

The final ratification, in blood, of the marriage covenant took place following the setting forth of additional judgments

(Heb. *mishpat* מִשְׁפָּט (meesh-paht') from the *Torah*, concerning proper behavior (see Ex. 21-23):

"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. 24:6-8)

Even though the Bride was too frightened to hear her Husband's voice, there was no backing out now, for the marriage had been sealed.

~ The Chuppah ~

In Ancient Wedding practice, the time the Bridegroom and Bride spend in the *Chuppah* חֻפָּה (Who'-pah = Wedding Chamber) is supposed to be a time during which they become intimately acquainted with each other and begin to develop the bond that will hold them together over the years ahead. But how can a Bride enter the *Chuppah* when she refuses to even listen to her Husband's voice? Because of the Bride's reluctance to have face to face contact with God, the vast majority of the members of the Bride were excluded from entering the *Chuppah*. Instead, a group of seventy elders, along with *Moshe* -- including his assistant *Y'hoshua* יְהוֹשֻׁעַ (Yeh hoh'-shoo-ah = Joshua -- *Aharon*, *Nadav* נָדָב (Nah-dahv' = Nadab), and *Avihu* אֲבִיהוּ (Ah-vee-hoo' = Abihu) were invited to ascend the mountain up to a certain point. There they personally saw their Husband, the God of Israel:

"Then Moses went up, also Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and they saw the God of Israel. And there was under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very heavens in its clarity. But on the nobles of the children of Israel He did not lay His hand. So they saw God, and they ate and drank." (Ex. 24:9-11)

At this point they were not in the *Chuppah* itself, it was only the entrance to the *Chuppah*. It was left to *Moshe* alone to fully enter the *Chuppah* (although his assistant Joshua was also allowed to go further up the mountain), while *Aharon* and the elders had to return to camp:

"Then the LORD [YHVH] said to Moses, 'Come up to Me on the mountain and be there; and I will give you tablets of stone, and the law and commandments which I have written, that you may teach them.'"

"So Moses arose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up to the mountain of God. ..."

"Then Moses went up into the mountain, and a cloud covered the mountain." (Ex. 24:12-13, 15)

The unique characteristic of the *Chuppah* is that it has a covering or canopy under which the Bridegroom and Bride spend their intimate honeymoon time together. The cloud

which covered the top of the mountain served as the canopy for their *Chuppah*. God was there along with *Moshe*, who stood in for the Bride as their mediator or representative. Had the Bride not been too frightened to hear God's voice, perhaps the cloud would have rested over the entirety of the camp of Israel and they would all have been in the *Chuppah* together, learning the *Torah* (instructions) directly from their Husband, (YHVH).

"Now the glory of the LORD [YHVH] rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day He called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. The sight of the glory of the LORD [YHVH] was like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel."

"So Moses went into the midst of the cloud and went up into the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights." (Ex. 24:16-18)

~ The Adulterous Bride ~

While *Moshe* (who was also a member of the Bride) was personally getting to know his Husband (YHVH) in a most intimate way in the *Chuppah* on the top of Mount Sinai, the rest of the Bride (except for Joshua) settled down in the camp to await his return. According to tradition, they knew that *Moshe* was to be gone for forty days. However, they made a mistake in the counting of days. They assumed that the day on which *Moshe* ascended the mountain would be counted as the first day of the forty days. However, there is something special about a time statement that is expressed as both "days and nights." That something is the implied instruction that "forty days and forty nights" means exactly what it says, a full forty days and a full forty nights.

Thus it was that the children of Israel erroneously expected *Moshe* to return on the fortieth day from his ascent up the mountain, when he really was not due back until the following day. Here is what Rabbi Moshe Weissman quotes from the Midrash:

"When Moshe did not return by noon, the Bnai Yisrael knew that he could no longer be expected on that day, for both his ascents to the mountain as well as his descents therefrom always took place in the early mornings. According to their calculations, the forty days had already passed since they included in the total the day of Moshe's departure. In reality, that day was excluded since it was not a complete twenty-four hour period (because Moshe had still been in the Camp during the night preceding that day)."

(The Midrash Says, Vol. II, p.315)

When *Moshe* did not appear, as expected, those in the camp who were the most reluctant members of the Bride, began to agitate for a physical image of God so they could worship what they perceived to be His image, instead of worshipping the real thing:

"Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, 'Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up

out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.'" (Ex. 32:1)

According to tradition, *Aharon* was not sure what should be done, so he tried to buy some time hoping that *Moshe* would return soon and put an end to their speculations. For this reason, he asked them to "break off" their golden earrings and give them to him, fully expecting they would not do so. To his surprise, they complied with his request. Seemingly unsure of himself and not knowing what to do next, *Aharon* went ahead and melted the gold and made a molded calf. What is most interesting about this calf is that the people called it a representation of the god that brought them out of Egypt.

"...Then they said, 'This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!'"

"So when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, 'Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD [YHVH].'" (Ex. 32:4b-5)

It seems highly unlikely that *Aharon* believed they would be keeping a feast to *YHVH* by worshipping the golden calf. Thus, *Aharon's* suggestion to delay the festivities until the next day was probably another attempt on his part to stall the people in their pursuit of worshipping this idol.

For the Bride, this was a most terrible turn of events, because God looks upon idolatry as being equivalent, in the spiritual realm, to adultery in the physical realm. Symbolically what happen was that the Bride sought to commit adultery at the very time when she should have been in the *Chuppah* with her Husband in an intimate relationship with Him:

"The LORD [YHVH] said to me: 'Son of man, will you judge Oholah and Oholibah? Then declare to them their abominations. For they have committed adultery, and blood is on their hands. They have committed adultery with their idols, and even sacrificed their sons whom they bore to Me, passing them through the fire, to devour them.'" (Ezek. 23:36-37)

Oholah and Oholibah are names for the house of Israel and the house of Judah, for Samaria and Jerusalem were the capitals of the two houses of Jacob:

"...Samaria is Oholah, and Jerusalem is Oholibah." (Ezek. 23:4)

~ A Husband's Reaction ~

Needless to say, the Bridegroom (*YHVH*), was incensed with the actions of His new Bride. According to His own *Torah*, the adulterous wife should be put to death along with her lover. This is what God initially proposed to *Moshe*:

"And the LORD [YHVH] said to Moses, 'I have seen this people, and indeed it is a stiffnecked people! Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation.'" (Ex. 32:9-10)

Moshe was still in the *Chuppah* with God, and so he pleaded for mercy on behalf of the Bride:

"Then Moses pleaded with the LORD [YHVH] his God, and said: 'LORD [YHVH], why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? ... Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.'"

"So the LORD [YHVH] relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people." (Ex. 32:11, 13-14)

When *Moshe* arrived at the foot of the mountain he discovered that things were worse than he had imagined. Not only had *Aharon* made the golden calf, the people were singing and dancing around it in great joy:

"So it was, as soon as he came near the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing. So Moses' anger became hot, and he cast the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain." (Ex. 32:19)

Symbolically, the breaking of the tablets was the same as breaking the *Ketuvah*, the marriage covenant. Of course, that is exactly what some members of the Bride had already done by their actions. They had spiritually climbed into bed with their lover (an idol of Egypt) while their mediator was in the *Chuppah* with their Husband learning *Torah*, i.e. how to be a proper wife.

This was the very thing that God had warned Israel about at *Har Sinai* הַר סִינַי (Hahr See-nahee' = Mount Sinai), just after He had spoken the Ten Words directly into the ears of the Bride, when they had asked that henceforth He speak to them only through *Moshe*. God knew that if the Bride refused to enter the *Chuppah* with Him, they would be putting themselves at great risk of falling into idolatry. Therefore He warned them:

"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."'" (Ex 20:22-23)

So *Moshe*, who represented God to the children of Israel, took the Bride's lover (the golden calf) and destroyed it. Thus, their adulterous lover was, in a sense, put to death as the *Torah* commands. Then *Moshe* called out to see if any members of the Bride had and would continue to remain faithful to their Husband. The tribe of Levi answered that call. Upon instruction, they went through the camp of Israel killing those who were the perpetrators of this evil. Three thousand members of the Bride died that day as a result of their idolatry (adultery) with the golden calf.

~ A Need for Atonement ~

Even though the main perpetrators of the sin of the golden calf had been eliminated, it was still necessary that atonement be made for the rest of the Bride:

"And it came to pass on the next day that Moses said to the people, 'You have sinned a great sin. So now I will go up to the LORD [YHVH]; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.'"

"Then Moses returned to the LORD [YHVH] and said, 'Oh, these people have sinned a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! Yet now, if You will forgive their sin -- but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written.'

"And the LORD [YHVH] said to Moses, 'Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book. Now therefore, go, lead the people to *the place* of which I have spoken to you. Behold, My Angel shall go before you. Nevertheless, in the day when I visit for punishment, I will visit punishment upon them for their sin.'

"So the LORD [YHVH] plagued the people because of what they did with the calf which Aaron made."

(Ex. 32:30-35)

At this point, atonement had not yet been made for the Bride, but God was at least willing to hold off destroying all of them while He tested them to see if they still had a heart for obedience such as they did when He had spoken to them on Mount Sinai a few weeks previous.

Because of the death of the three thousand, the Bride had become very remorseful. But when the children of Israel heard that their Husband was going to personally abandon them and send an angel to lead them into the promised land, instead of going along with them Himself, they began to understand the enormity of their sin. This realization caused intense mourning on their part:

"And when the people heard these grave tidings, they mourned, and no one put on his ornaments. ... So the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments by Mount Horeb."

(Ex. 33:4, 6)

Because the Bride was in a state of uncleanness as a result of her adultery (idolatry), *Moshe* was forced to remove his tent and pitch it outside the camp so that he could continue to have communion with God. It was impossible for God to enter the camp as long as the Bride was unclean from the blood of her sacrifices to the idol.

During this period of time it was the tent of *Moshe*, pitched outside the camp, which served as the communication point between God and *Moshe*. The tent was pitched within sight of the camp of Israel, for Scripture tells us the children of Israel could see the pillar of cloud descend and stand at the door of the tent whenever God chose to talk with *Moshe*. During these times, they had direct conversations:

"So the LORD [YHVH] spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. ..."

(Ex. 33:11)

During these encounters, one of the main topics of conversation was who was going to escort the Bride to their home in the Promised Land:

"Then Moses said to the LORD [YHVH], 'See, You say to me, "Bring up this people." But You have not let me know whom You will send with me. Yet You have said, "I know you by name, and you have also found grace in My

sight." Now wherefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation is Your people.'

"And He said, 'My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.'

"Then he said to Him, 'If Your Presence does not go *with us*, do not bring us up from here. For how then will it be known that Your people and I have found grace in Your sight, except You go with us? So we shall be separate, Your people and I, from all the people who *are* upon the face of the earth.'

"Then the LORD [YHVH] said to Moses, 'I will also do this thing that you have spoken; for you have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name.'" (Ex. 33:12-17)

In this passage the English word 'presence' is translated from the Hebrew word *panim* פָּנִים (pah-neem'), which literally means 'face.' So what God actually said is: "My face will go with you." Thus, instead of sending an angel to accompany the Bride to their home, God agreed to continue accompanying them Himself.

With that issue settled, it was now time for the *Ketuvah* document (the Ten Words inscribed on tablets of stone) to be reissued. This was accomplished when *Moshe* took another forty day trip to the top of Mount Sinai to receive this new document. This time, however, *Moshe* had to cut the two tablets of stone himself and carry them up to the top of the mount:

"So he cut two tablets of stone like the first ones. Then Moses rose early in the morning and went up Mount Sinai, as the LORD [YHVH] had commanded him; and he took in his hand the two tablets of stone."

(Ex. 34:4)

~ Atonement is Made ~

Moshe had made one additional request of God during their meetings in *Moshe's* tent:

"And he said, 'Please show me Your glory.'"

(Ex. 33:18)

God agreed to show *Moshe* His Glory, but He said:

"... 'You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.'"

(Ex. 33:20)

Why did *Moshe* want to see God in His Glory? Was it merely curiosity? Was it so he could brag about it to his grandchildren? No, the reason *Moshe* asked that God show Himself in all His Glory was to confirm the promise God had made to him that His Presence (face) would go with the Bride into the promised land.

"Then the LORD [YHVH] descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD [YHVH]."

(Ex. 34:5)

However, for God to show Himself in all His Glory meant far more than just appearing with a great radiance of light. While that in itself would be awesome and most frightful to any human, what really is being communicated here is the very

essence of God; the *Thirteen Attributes of God's Nature*, from which He cannot and will not deviate:

"And the LORD [YHVH] passed before him and proclaimed, 'The LORD [YHVH], the LORD [YHVH] God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation.'" (Ex. 34:6-7)

The Thirteen Attributes of God's Nature

According to traditional teaching, God's Divine Nature is made up of the following thirteen attributes. These attributes combine to give us an ethical definition of God.

- ◆ 1. & 2.) **The LORD, the LORD** (Heb. *YHVH*,* *YHVH*). In the original Hebrew text this phrase would constitute the actual name of God. It is said that the reason the Name is repeated is because it teaches us that God is merciful twice; both before we sin, and again after we sin. God does not change, He is always merciful. What must change is the heart of the sinner. It could also be an indication of the Father and the Son who sits at His right hand (see Psalm 110).
- ◆ 3.) **God** (Heb. *El* אֱלֹהִים). This attribute shows that God is the all powerful God of the Universe.
- ◆ 4. **merciful** (Heb. *rachum* רַחוּם). God is full of sympathy for all of suffering humanity.
- ◆ 5.) **and gracious** (Heb. *ve-channun* וְחַנּוּן). God is always gracious; willing to assist and help.
- ◆ 6.) **longsuffering** (Heb. *erech appayim* אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם). This attribute is sometimes translated as "slow to anger." God is not quick to punish sinners, rather He allows plenty of time for the sinner to repent.
- ◆ 7.) **abounding in goodness** (Heb. *rav chesed* רַב חֶסֶד sometimes translated as 'lovingkindness'). It is God's inherent will to do good to those whom He has created, if only they will let Him do so.

* This name is known as the Tetragrammaton. Transliterating the Hebrew letters into English result in *YHVH*. There is much disagreement as to how this name is to be pronounced. While we have researched this matter and have our own opinion, it is our policy not to use the translated name in our publication in order not to offend readers of Jewish background who believe that the name should only be pronounced in the Synagogue on *Yom Kippur* (the Day of Atonement). Therefore, we prefer to use the traditional euphemisms for the Tetragrammaton, such as LORD, God, or *God* (literally, "The Name"). Those who wish to substitute their rendition of how the Name is pronounced are free to do so, and those who wish not too are not offended.

Please do not write to us about this matter in an attempt to "set us straight." We already have a cardboard box full of various letters containing opinions on this subject.

- ◆ 8.) **and truth** (Heb. *ve-emet* וְאֱמֶת). If God were nothing else, He would have to be true, both to Himself and to mankind. Rabbi Dr. J.H. Hertz, in *The Soncino Edition of the Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, has this comment about *chesed* and *emet*: "Note that '*chesed*,' lovingkindness, precedes '*emet*,' truth, both here and generally throughout Scripture; as if to say, 'Speak the truth by all means; but be quite sure that you speak the truth *in love*.'" (p. 365).
- ◆ 9.) **keeping mercy for thousands** (Heb. *notzer chesed la-alafim* נֹצֵר חֶסֶד לְאַלְפִים). God remembers all of the good deeds which His people do, even down to the farthest removed of the descendants. Thus, we are blessed even today because of the righteousness of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- ◆ 10.) **forgiving iniquity** (Heb. *naseh avon* נָשָׂא עֲוֹן). The Hebrew word '*avon*' means sins that are committed because one's disposition is evil. God is willing to forgive even those nasty types of sin.
- ◆ 11.) **(forgiving) transgression** (Heb. *pesha* פֶּשַׁע). these are sins that come from rebellion against God, and they too can be forgiven.
- ◆ 12.) **(forgiving) sin** (Heb. *chattaah* חַטָּאת). These are the sins that result from error, also forgivable.
- ◆ 13.) **by no means clearing the guilty** (Heb. *venakkeh lo yentakkeh* לֹא יְנַקֵּה וְנִקְיָה). Hertz comments: "The Rabbis explain: *venakkeh* 'acquitting--the penitent; *lo yentakkeh*, but not 'acquitting--the impenitent.' He is merciful and gracious and forgiving; but He will never obliterate the eternal and unbridgeable distinction between light and darkness, between good and evil. God cannot leave repeated wickedness and obstinate persistence in evil entirely unpunished. His goodness cannot destroy His justice. The sinner must suffer the consequences of his misdeeds. The unfailing and impartial consequences of sin help man to perceive that there is no 'chance' in morals. The punishments of sin are thus not vindictive, but remedial." (Ibid., p. 365).

The final phrase of this passage: **"visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."** relates to the natural consequences that result from sin, which can have a negative effect upon future generations. However, God, in His mercy, does not allow such consequences to affect people beyond the fourth generation, while His mercy and forgiveness extends to a thousand generations.

Moshe certainly saw God in all of His glory. As a result, he knew exactly what God was like and what he could expect from Him. This was extremely important for *Moshe*, for this revelation boosted his *emunah* (trust and faith) in God. Now *Moshe* could lead the children of Israel in confidence, knowing that God would surely see them through to the end.

~ The Covenant Is Renewed ~

The engraving on the first set of tablets represented the original marriage covenant which was broken by the Bride. Then came the first of a number of covenant renewals. This second covenant, that God made with the children of Israel, was not brand new in that it did not replace the one that He had made only a few weeks earlier. Rather, it was a renewing of the original covenant:

"And He said: 'Behold I make a covenant. ... Observe what I command you this day. ... Take heed to yourself, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land where you are going, lest it be a snare in your midst. But you shall destroy their altars, break their *sacred* pillars, and cut down their *wooden* images (for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD [YHVH], whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God), ... You shall make no molded gods for yourselves.'" (Ex. 34:10, 12-14, 17)

Most of the instructions (of this covenant) had been mentioned before, while some others were new. However, the marriage contract that was entered into at Mount Sinai was still in effect, because God did not choose to end it by writing the Bride a *get* גֵּט (geht = bill of divorcement) at that time.*

In addition to specific instructions about what kind of relationship the children of Israel were to have with the people who currently lived in the Promised Land (they were to have no relationship with them whatsoever), God also reiterated the need to observe the three national pilgrimage festivals (*Pesach* פֶּסַח (Peh-sock'), *Shavu'ot* שָׁבֻעוֹת (Shaw-voo oht'), and *Succoth* סֻכּוֹת (Sue-coat'), plus the offering of the firstborn, and the bringing of firstfruits.

Finally, the ratification of this renewed covenant took place:

"Then the LORD [YHVH] said to Moses, 'Write these words, for according to the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.'

"So he was there with the LORD [YHVH] forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments." (Ex. 34:27-28)

During all of these forty days and forty nights the children of Israel did not know whether their Husband, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, would take them back as His Bride. So, according to tradition, during these forty days they did *teshuvah* תְּשׁוּבָה (teh-shoe'vah = repentance and return). *Moshe* is said to have ascended the mountain this last time on the first day of *Elul*, the sixth month on the Hebrew religious calendar. Thus, after forty days and forty nights, *Moshe* returned to the camp on the tenth day of *Tishri*.

When the children of Israel saw that *Moshe's* face shone, they knew that God had taken them back. This day (10 *Tishri*)

* The Bride could not issue a *get* to her Husband, since, under *Torah*, she was not permitted to initiate a divorce. A *get* was issued much later when the northern ten tribes were sent into captivity.

became *Yom Kippur* (the Day of Atonement). To this day, the Jewish people go through a forty day period of repentance and return (*teshuvah*) beginning on 1 *Elul* and ending on *Yom Kippur*.

"Afterward all the children of Israel came near, and he gave them as commandments all that the LORD [YHVH] had spoken with him on Mount Sinai." (Ex. 34:32)

~ A Time of Peace ~

During his stay on Mount Sinai, *Moshe* was also given the complete set of plans to build a temporary dwelling for God; a place where the Husband could come and dwell with His Bride, and where she could serve Him as His dutiful wife. This dwelling was called the *Mishkan* מִשְׁכָּן (mish-kahn = Tabernacle). Since the *Mishkan* was in fact a tent, it was also sometimes referred to as the *ohel* אוֹהֶל (oh-ell' = tent).

The *Mishkan* was to be the temporary home of the Bridegroom (YHVH). Those who had been selected to serve Him as representatives of the Bride (the Priests and the Levites) would be allowed to enter that home in service to their Husband. One could say that the *Mishkan* was the first mobile home, since it was moved from place to place while still serving as a functional home.

God told *Moshe*, during his first visit to the top of the mount, that if they would build the *Mishkan* He would come and dwell among them:

"And let them make Me a sanctuary (Heb. *mikdash*), that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle (*Mishkan*) and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it."

(Ex. 25:8-9)

The word sanctuary comes from the Hebrew word *Mikdash* מִקְדָּשׁ (meek-dahsh') and it means; "a consecrated thing or place." So the *Mishkan* (the tabernacle) was also to be a *Mikdash* (a consecrated place). It was to be a place set apart from all other places on earth where the creator God of the universe would dwell with His Bride, the children of Israel. It was a place where they could approach Him for worship, sacrifice, and prayer; and where the leaders of the people could inquire about what they should do or should not do in certain special circumstances:

"And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummin, and they shall be over Aaron's heart when he goes in before the LORD [YHVH]. So Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel over his heart before the LORD [YHVH] continually." (Ex. 28:30)

Evidence that the Bride had deeply repented of her sins was reflected in the huge outpouring of materials which were donated to build the *Mishkan*. Finally, *Moshe* had to ask the children of Israel to stop bringing materials, for they had more than they could use:

"So Moses gave a commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, 'Let neither man nor woman do any more work for the offering of the sanctuary.' And the people were restrained from bringing,

for the material they had was sufficient for all the work to be done -- indeed too much." (Ex. 36:6-7)

The repentant Bride (the children of Israel) was now thankful to work diligently building a physical dwelling for her Husband.

~ The Mishkan Is Erected ~

After several months of work, during which time the Bride put her whole heart and soul into constructing all of the furnishings for the tabernacle, the *Mishkan* and its furnishings were completed:

"Then the LORD [YHVH] spoke to Moses, saying: 'On the first day of the first month you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. ... Thus Moses did; according to all that the LORD [YHVH] had commanded him, so he did. And it came to pass in the first month of the second year, on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was raised up.'" (Ex. 40:1, 16-17)

God was not slack concerning His promise, for as soon as the *Mishkan* was ready, He entered it in full glory:

"Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory [*kavod*] of the LORD [YHVH] filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory [*kavod*] of the LORD [YHVH] filled the tabernacle." (Ex. 40:34-35)

Now the Husband and His Bride were ready to journey to the Promised Land. He had his *Mishkan* in which to dwell and each member of the Bride had their own tent in which they dwelt. Everything was under the direction of the Husband (God). When He said, "Go!" they went. When He said, "Stop!" they stopped:

"When the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys. But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not journey till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the LORD [YHVH] was above the tabernacle by day, and fire was over it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys." (Ex. 40:36-38)

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

~ On the Road Again ~

Then they despised the pleasant land;
They did not believe His word,
But murmured in their tents,
And did not heed the voice of the LORD.
Psalms 106:24-25

When the children of Israel began their journey away from Mount Sinai, they expected to go directly to their new home in the land that had been promised to their father *Avram* אַבְרָם (Av-rahm' = Abram):

"And the LORD [YHVH] said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: 'Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are -- northward, southward, eastward, and westward; for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever.'" (Gen. 13:14-15)

This could have been the case if the Bride (the children of Israel) would have trusted God to perform what He had promised. But they lacked that confidence in Him. In other words, they lacked the kind of Faith (*emunah*) their father *Avram* had shown when he had answered God's clear call:

**"Now the LORD [YHVH] had said to Abram:
'Get out of your country,
From your kindred
And from your father's house,
To a land that I will show you.'
...
'So Abram departed as the LORD [YHVH] had spoken to him ..."** (Gen. 12:1, 4)

Avram did not question, he did not complain, he did not procrastinate. *Avram* departed just as God had told him to do. However, it was quite different with the children of Israel.

~ Everything Was Ready ~

The Bride could not say that her Husband had not made all the necessary preparations, for He surely had done so. The *Mishkan* (Tabernacle) had been completed so that Husband and Wife would have a place in which to meet for times of spiritual intimacy. All of the necessary *Torah* instructions had been given on what the Priests and Levites were to do each day, as well as on the Sabbath and Festivals, when the Wife was to come before her Husband with proper offerings and prayers. These instructions are recorded in the book of Leviticus.

In addition, YHVH had given His Wife instructions on how the family members were to behave in their relationships with each other, so that peace could reign. (See Lev. 18 & 19).

Finally, God gave His Wife a brief summary of the basic points of obedience which He required:

**"You shall not make idols for yourselves;
neither a carved image nor a sacred pillar shall you
rear up for yourselves;**

**nor shall you set up an engraved stone in your land,
to bow down to it;
for I am the LORD [YHVH] your God.
You shall keep My Sabbaths
and reverence My sanctuary;
I am the LORD [YHVH]."** (Lev. 26:1-2)

The bottom line was that God's Wife (the children of Israel) was to obey (submit to His authority), with the promise that if she did, she would be blessed beyond measure:

**"If you walk in My statutes and keep
My commandments, and perform them,
then I will give you rain in its season,
the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the
field shall yield their fruit."** (Lev. 26:3-4)

However, along with this promise of great blessings came a warning of what would happen if His Wife failed to live up to her part of the *Ketuvah* (wedding contract):

**"But if you do not obey Me, and do not observe all
these commandments,
and if you despise My statutes, or if your soul abhors
My judgments, so that you do not perform all My
commandments, but break My covenant,
I will do this to you: ..."** (Lev. 26:14-16a)

What followed was a litany of problems that would overtake the Bride in the event that she did not respect, honor, and obey her Husband. The punishments would begin with sickness and famine. If that would not turn her around, then her Husband would send wild beasts among the people. The next step for continued disobedience would be war and pestilence, followed by destruction and captivity among the nations of the world:

**"You shall perish among the nations, and the land of
your enemies shall eat you up.
And those of you who are left shall waste away in their
iniquity in your enemies' lands;
also in their fathers' iniquities, which are with them,
they shall waste away."** (Lev. 26:38-39)

~ A Husband of Mercy ~

God is not a Husband of vindictiveness, rather, He is a Husband of mercy. Therefore, God gave His word that even if His Wife (the children of Israel) did become so sinful as to merit the punishments listed, He would take her back if she showed true *teshuvah* (repentance and return):

**"But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of
their fathers, with their unfaithfulness in which they
were unfaithful to Me, and that they also have
walked contrary to Me,
and that I also have walked contrary to them and have
brought them into the land of their enemies;
if their uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and they
accept their guilt --**

then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and My covenant with Isaac and My covenant with Abraham I will remember; I will remember the land." (Lev. 26:40-42)

Not only did God promise to be faithful to His Wife when she obeyed Him, He also promised to remain faithful to her whether or not she was to Him:

"But for their sake I will remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God:

I am the LORD [YHVH]." (Lev. 26:45)

~ The First Census ~

While they were still at Mount Sinai, God instructed His Wife to take inventory of the members that constituted their assembly. This being accomplished, the Wife was given the travel plans of how to arrange the various tribes around the *Mishkan* when they moved from place to place.

The tribes of *Judah* יהודה, *Issachar* יִשָּׂשכָר, and *Zebulun* זְבֻלֻן were to break camp first and march on the eastern side of the *Mishkan*. On the southern side were the tribes of *Reuben* ראובן, *Simeon* שִׁמְעוֹן, and *Gad* גָּד. On the western side were *Ephraim* אֶפְרַיִם, *Manasseh* מְנַשֶּׁשֶׁה, and *Benjamin* בִּנְיָמִן, the descendants of *Jacob's* favorite wife, *Rachel* רָחֵל. And on the northern side were *Dan* דָּן, *Asher* אָשֶׁר, and *Naphtali* נַפְתָּלִי.

In the middle of this entourage were the Levites, who surrounded and transported the *Mishkan* as they moved from place to place.

~ The Second Passover ~

It had now been one full year since the children of Israel had left Egypt as the Betrothed Bride of the God of *Avraham* אַבְרָהָם (Ahv'-rah-hahm), *Yitzchak* יִצְחָק (Yeet'-sock), and *Ya'acov* יַעֲקֹב (Yah ah'-cove). Once again, it was time to celebrate the Passover:

"So Moses told the children of Israel that they should keep the Passover. And they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month, at twilight [lit. between the two evenings], in the Wilderness of Sinai; according to all that the LORD [YHVH] commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did." (Num. 9:4-5)

The children of Israel were settled at Mount Sinai just short of one full year, having arrived at the beginning of the third month and departing near the end of the second:

"Now it came to pass on the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year, that the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle of the Testimony. And the children of Israel set out from the Wilderness of Sinai on their journeys; then the cloud settled down in the Wilderness of Paran." (Num. 10:11-12)

~ Divine Direction ~

When and where they would move was always directed by their Husband:

"Whenever the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, after that the children of Israel would journey; and in the place where the cloud settled, there the children of Israel would pitch their tents. ...

"At the command of the LORD [YHVH] they remained encamped, and at the command of the LORD [YHVH] they journeyed; they kept the charge of the LORD [YHVH], at the command of the LORD [YHVH] by the hand of Moses."

(Num. 9:17, 23)

"So they departed from the mountain of the LORD [YHVH] on a journey of three days; and the ark of the covenant of the LORD [YHVH] went before them for the three days' journey, to search out a resting place for them. And the cloud of the LORD [YHVH] was above them by day when they went out from the camp.

"So it was, whenever the ark set out, that Moses said:

'Rise up, O LORD [YHVH]!

Let Your enemies be scattered,

and let those who hate You flee before You.'

"And when it rested, he said;

'Return, O LORD [YHVH], to the many thousands

of Israel.'" (Num. 10:33-36)

~ A Complaining Spirit ~

The children of Israel had hardly left the Wilderness of Sinai when the complaining began once again. The Wife's first complaint was about having to move, and it did not at all please her Husband (YHVH):

"Now when the people complained, it displeased the LORD [YHVH]; for the LORD [YHVH] heard it, and His anger was aroused." (Num. 11:1a)

This complaint was squashed by a fire from the LORD which consumed some of the people at the outskirts of the camp. *Moshe* interceded in prayer and the fire was extinguished.

Next came their complaint about the food. This time it was the "mixed multitude" who fell victim to a craving for meat, and their complaining had its effect upon other members of the children of Israel:

"... so the children of Israel also wept again and said; 'Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!'" (Num. 11:4b-6)

The children of Israel had been living on *man* מַן (mahn = manna) for about one full year. Despite the fact that they were in an arid region and did not have time to plant and harvest crops, all six hundred thousand of the men, twenty years old

and up (plus women and children), had never gone hungry. Yet, here they were complaining about their Husband's provisions. The only requirement for the Wife was to go out, gather it, and prepare it for consumption. It truly was bread from above:

"Now the manna was like coriander seed, and its color like the color of bdellium. The people went about and gathered it, ground it on millstones or beat it in the mortar, cooked it in pans, and made cakes of it; and its taste was like the taste of pastry prepared with oil. And when the dew fell on the camp in the night, the manna fell on it."

(Num. 11:7-9)

God's reaction to His Wife's complaint about the food was to give her what she wanted. Embedded in this story is a lesson for all of us: Be careful what you ask for, you just might get it:

"Then you shall say to the people, 'Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat meat; for you have wept in the hearing of the LORD [YHVH], saying, 'Who will give us meat to eat? For it was well with us in Egypt.' Therefore the LORD [YHVH] will give you meat, and you shall eat. You shall eat, not one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days, but for a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you, because you have despised the LORD [YHVH] who is among you, and have wept before Him saying, 'Why did we ever come up out of Egypt?'"

(Num. 11:18-20)

Even *Moshe* doubted that God could deliver meat for the entire assembly for a whole month. God's response to *Moshe* was a classic:

"...Has the LORD's [YHVH's] arm been shortened? Now you shall see whether My word will befall you or not."

(Num. 11:23)

One thing the Wife needed to learn was that when her Husband said He would do something, He did it:

"Now a wind went out from the LORD [YHVH], and it brought quail from the sea and left them fluttering near the camp, about a day's journey on this side and about a day's journey on the other side, all around the camp, and about two cubits above the surface of the ground."

"And the people stayed up all that day, all that night, and all the next day, and gathered the quail (he who gathered least gathered ten homers); and they spread them out for themselves all around the camp." (Num. 11:31-32)

The quail did not prove to be the blessing the children of Israel expected. Instead, it turned out to be a curse:

"But while the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the wrath of the LORD [YHVH] was aroused against the people, and the LORD [YHVH] struck the people with a very great plague. So he called the name of that place Kibroth Hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had yielded to craving." (Num. 11:33-34)

Once again, the Wife of *YHVH* (the children of Israel) had to suffer a bitter punishment because she had a complaining spirit.

~ Sharing the Burden ~

In the midst of the problem over not having meat to eat, *Moshe* also complained:

"So Moses said to the LORD [YHVH], 'Why have You afflicted Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You have laid the burden of all these people on me? Did I conceive all these people? Did I beget them, that You should say to me, "Carry them in your bosom, as a guardian carries a nursing child," to the land which You swore to their fathers? ...

"I am not able to bear all these people alone, because the burden is too heavy for me. If You treat me like this, please kill me here and now -- if I have found favor in Your sight -- and do not let me see my wretchedness!"

(Num. 11:11-12, 14-15)

As a result of this plea, God took of the spirit that was upon *Moshe* and placed it on the seventy elders of the children of Israel so they too could bear the burden of the people. That way, *Moshe* would not have to bear it all alone:

"Then the LORD [YHVH] came down in the cloud, and spoke to him, and took of the Spirit that was upon him, and placed the same upon the seventy elders; and it happened, when the Spirit rested upon them, that they prophesied, although they never did so again."

(Num. 11:25)

~ Lashon Hara ~

This event may have been instrumental in triggering another event which occurred when the children of Israel had moved on to a place called *Hazereth* הַצֵּרֶת (Hah-tzay-roth) where:

"... Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman* whom he had married; for he had married an Ethiopian woman."

(Num. 12:1)

Jewish tradition states that the reason for the *Lashon Hara*** לָשׁוֹן הָרָע (Lah-shone' Hah-rah' = evil tongue) on the part of *Miriam* מִרְיָם (Meer-ahm') and *Aharon* (Ah-hah-rone), had to do with *Moshe's* refusal to have intimate relations with his wife. However, *Moshe's* reason for neglecting her in this manner was because he never knew when God would call him into a meeting at the *Mishkan*. Since he needed to be ritually

* Opinion is divided as to whether the woman spoken of in this passage is *Zipporah*, the wife of *Moshe*, mentioned in the book of Exodus, or if it is a different wife. This wife is spoken of as being 'Ethiopian,' which in the original Hebrew is the word *Kushi* (Koo-she'), or a person from *Kush*. *Kush* (or Cush) was a descendant from *Ham*, one of the three sons of *Noah*, while *Zipporah* was a *Moabite*. The *Moabites* were descendants of *Moab* (a son of *Lot* by his eldest daughter) and relatives of the children of Israel. (See Gen. 19:36-38.)

** *Lashon Hara* = the evil tongue or evil speech against someone.

pure at all times, so he could respond to such calls, marital intimacy was not possible, for that would have made him ritually unclean, as it is written:

"...when a woman lies with a man, and *there is an emission of semen, they both shall bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. ...*

"Thus you shall separate the children of Israel from their uncleanness, lest they die in their uncleanness when they defile My tabernacle that *is among them.*"

(Lev. 15:18, 31)

Miriam accused *Moshe* of neglecting his wife and *Aharon* supported her in this claim. However, from God's point of view, *Moshe* could not come into the *Mishkan* on the days in which he had intimacy with his wife. Therefore, *Moshe* was avoiding the intimacy.

Once *Lashon Hara* begins, it is easy for it to grow like a cancer into other areas, for next we read:

"And they said, 'Has the LORD [YHVH] indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?' And the LORD [YHVH] heard it."

(Num. 12:2)

Perhaps this was their reaction to the recent giving of the spirit to the seventy elders. But this was not the case with *Moshe*:

"(Now the man *Moses* was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.)"

(Num. 12:3)

While *Moshe* welcomed this assistance on the part of the elders, *Miriam* and *Aharon* may well have wanted the power of the spirit to remain within their own family. (*Moshe* was the brother of both *Miriam* and *Aharon*.)

~ Punishment for Sin ~

During the early years of God's marriage to the children of Israel, punishment for sin was swift and to the point. But prior to the punishment, guilt needed to be established:

"Suddenly the LORD [YHVH] said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, 'Come out, you three, to the tabernacle of meeting!' So the three came out."

(Num. 12:4)

Now *Miriam* and *Aharon* understood why *Moshe* was neglecting the intimacy needs of his wife, for it became clear to them that *Moshe* never knew when God would call him into the *Mishkan*:

"Then the LORD [YHVH] came down in the pillar of cloud and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam. And they both went forward."

"Then He said, 'Hear now My words:

**"If there is a prophet among you,
I, the LORD [YHVH], make Myself known to him
in a vision,**

And I speak to him in a dream.

Not so with My servant Moses;

He is faithful in all My house.

I speak with him face to face,

Even plainly, and not in dark sayings;

And he sees the form of the LORD [YHVH]."

**Why then were you not afraid
To speak against My servant Moses?"**

**"So the anger of the LORD [YHVH] was aroused
against them, and He departed."**

(Num. 12:5-9)

"And when the cloud departed from above the tabernacle, suddenly Miriam became leprous, as white as snow. Then Aaron turned toward Miriam, and there she was, a leper."

(Num. 12:10)

It is important to note that *Moshe* did not take offense at the *Lashon Hara* which his sister and brother spoke against him. However, although *Moshe* did not take offense, God did. This is another lesson from which all Believers can learn:

"Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written,

'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord."

(Rom. 12:19)

The punishment was swift and was effective.

~ Moshe Intercedes ~

So it was, that *Moshe* interceded with God to have the plague of leprosy lifted from his sister *Miriam*:

"So Aaron said to Moses, 'Oh, my lord! Please do not lay this sin on us, in which we have done foolishly and in which we have sinned. Please do not let her be as one dead, whose flesh is half consumed when he comes out of his mother's womb!'"

"So Moses cried out to the LORD [YHVH], saying, 'Please heal her, O God, I pray!'"

(Num. 12:11-13)

God heeded the prayer of *Moshe*, the most humble man in all the earth, and healed *Miriam* of her leprosy, but it was not without penalty. *Miriam* had to stay outside the camp as an unclean person for seven days. Thus, the journey of the children of Israel was held up for seven days while *Miriam* went through her ritual cleansing:

"And afterward the people moved from Hazeroth and camped in the Wilderness of Paran."

(Num. 12:16)

~ A Pattern of Behavior ~

It is easy to see a consistent pattern of behavior on the part of the children of Israel, the Wife of YHVH. From the time they left Egypt, over one year previous, they had complained about one thing after another. The food was boring, there was no water, they were all going to die in the wilderness, or they wanted an idol to worship. Whatever the complaint, it must have been a constant source of irritation for God, as it certainly was to *Moshe*, their mediator.

It was this negative attitude that finally resulted in the demise of that generation. Born into slavery, they just could not seem to handle freedom. They kept returning to their fears and those fears finally conquered them.

Lest we as Believers fall into this same trap, as did our ancestors the children of Israel, let us always remember that *Abba* (our heavenly Father) does allow us to be tested:

**"The LORD [YHVH] is in His holy temple.
The LORD's [YHVH's] throne is in heaven;
His eyes behold,
His eyelids test the sons of men.**

**The LORD [YHVH] tests the righteous,
But the wicked and the one who loves violence
His soul hates.**

**Upon the wicked He will rain coals,
Fire and brimstone and a burning wind;
This shall be the portion of their cup.**

**"For the LORD [YHVH] is righteous,
He loves righteousness;
His countenance beholds the upright."**

(Psalm 11:4-7)

The testing of God is for our benefit, not for our destruction. Moreover, the testing of the children of Israel was not solely for their sakes, but for ours as well, as it is written:

**"Now all these things happened to them as examples,
and they were written for our admonition, on whom the
ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks
he stands take heed lest he fall. ...**

For,

**"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is
common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you
to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the
temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may
be able to bear it."**

(I Cor. 10:11, 13)

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~ Time to Go Home ~

Then they despised the pleasant land;
They did not believe His word,
But murmured in their tents,
And did not heed the voice of the LORD.
Psalm 106:24-25



It was time for the newly married couple to prepare for their journey into the Promised Land where they were to set up their new home. The Husband (YHVH) was ready to go, but His Wife (the children of Israel) was not convinced this was what she should do. There was a contingent of members within the Wife who preferred going back to Egypt (a symbol for sin) where they could resume many facets of their old way of life while claiming God as their Lord and Husband.

~ Heading for Home ~

There are two separate accounts in Scripture which recall what happened when God announced it was time to head for home (the Promised Land). Each account approaches the story from a little different angle. The version in the book of *Numbers* has God giving specific directions to *Moshe*:

"And the LORD [YHVH] spoke to Moses, saying, 'Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the children of Israel; from each tribe of their fathers you shall send a man, every one a leader among them.'"

(Num. 13:1-2)

This incident brings up an important question: Why was it necessary to send spies to check out the land? Was God's promise not enough to give the children of Israel confidence that they would be able to conquer it? Did they not remember the great events that had transpired just one year before when they came forth out of the land of Egypt under God's mighty arm to offer their wedding vow at Mount Sinai?

"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. 19:8)

The answer to these questions lies in the fact that the account in the book of *Numbers* gives just the bare facts. The additional information was not written down until many years later when *Moshe* recalled the incident. At that time he added some important information:

"And I said to you, 'You have come to the mountains of the Amorites, which the LORD [YHVH] our God is giving us. Look, the LORD [YHVH] your God has set the land before you; go up and possess it, as the LORD [YHVH] God of your fathers has spoken to you; do not fear or be discouraged.'"

"And everyone of you came near to me and said, 'Let us send men before us, and let them search out the land for

us, and bring back word to us of the way by which we should go up, and of the cities into which we shall come."

"The plan pleased me well; so I took twelve of your men, one man from each tribe." (Deut. 1:20-23)

In this passage we learn that the reason *Moshe* sent in spies was because the people requested him to do so. As with all of *Moshe's* decisions, he would have taken their request to God for approval. The passage in Numbers 13:1-2 only tells of God's approval for this plan. It could be assumed, from the wording in Deuteronomy, that God left the final decision up to *Moshe*.

Why then would *Moshe* agree to the plan? After all, he knew that God's promises were sure and there was no need to reconnoiter the land. One possible explanation is that *Moshe* hoped that because of his ready agreement to the spy plan, the children of Israel would gain confidence and decide that if *Moshe* was so confident of their success that he would approve taking a look first, there would be no need to actually do it. There is a Jewish parable which explains this thinking:

"Someone wants to buy a donkey, but says that he must first test it. The seller enthusiastically agrees. 'May I take it to both mountains and valleys?' 'Of course!' Seeing that the seller is so confident of his animal's prowess, the buyer decides he has nothing to fear and forgoes the test. He buys the donkey and is very satisfied." (*The Stone Edition Chumash*, p.799).

In this case the children of Israel did not accept the assurance, but decided to go ahead and take a look for themselves:

"So Moses sent them from the Wilderness of Paran according to the command of the LORD [YHVH], all of them men who were heads of the children of Israel. ...

"Then Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said to them, 'Go up this way into the South, and go up to the mountains, and see what the land is like: whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak, few or many; whether the land they dwell in is good or bad; whether the cities they inhabit are like camps or strongholds; whether the land is rich or poor; and whether there are forests there or not. Be of good courage. And bring some of the fruit of the land.' Now the time was the season of the first ripe grapes." (Num. 13:3, 17-20)

For this important task, *Moshe* chose a highly capable leader from each tribe. The two which deserve special remembrance were *Hoshea* הוֹשֵׁעַ (Hoh-shay'-ah = Hosea), from the tribe of *Efrayim* (Ephraim) and *Kalev* כָּלֵב (Kah-lehv' = Caleb) from the tribe of *Y'hudah* (Judah).

Before the spies left on their mission, *Moshe* added the Hebrew letter *Yod* (י) to the beginning of *Hoshea's* name, making it *Y'hoshua* יְהוֹשֻׁעַ (Yeh hoe'-shoe-ah). This changed the meaning of his name from 'salvation' to "YHVH is salvation" (Strong's #3091). It is interesting to note that modifying *Y'hoshua's* name to *Y'shua* modifies its meaning to "He will save" (Strong's #3442).

~ Spying Out the Land ~

The twelve spies did exactly as they were instructed. They went throughout the land of Canaan seeking pertinent information that might be useful to them when they went in to conquer their homeland:

"So they went up and spied out the land from the Wilderness of Zin as far as Rehob, near the entrance of Hamath. And they went up through the South and came to Hebron; Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi, the descendants of Anak, were there. (Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) Then they came to the Valley of Eshcol, and there cut down a branch with one cluster of grapes; they carried it between two of them on a pole. They also brought some of the pomegranates and figs. ... And they returned from spying out the land after forty days.

"Now they departed and came back to Moses and Aaron and all the congregation of the children of Israel in the Wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; they brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land." (Num. 13:21-23, 25-26)

The produce the spies brought back from Canaan must have been most impressive to the people. Such richness could easily make the children of Israel forget about the onions, leeks, melons, and garlic of Egypt:

"Then they told him, and said: 'We went to the land where you sent us. It truly flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit.'" (Num. 13:27)

However, there was one catch. Ten of the spies lost faith when they saw the physical prowess of the Canaanites and the fortifications of their cities:

"Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large; moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the South; the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountains; and the Canaanites dwell by the sea and along the banks of the Jordan."

(Num. 13:28-29)

It is very difficult for people to successfully come out of slavery and into freedom, for to truly live free requires a great deal of faith, trust, and confidence. When one is in slavery, all a person needs to do is follow the instructions of his master. Personal decision making is not important to a slave, but it is of supreme importance to a free man. God wanted His wife to be free (within the parameters of the *Torah*) so He allowed her to have freewill in making decisions pertinent to her life.

~ Disagreement in the Ranks ~

It is not surprising, given the slave mentality of the children of Israel, that the vast majority of the spies felt their band of ill armed people would be helpless trying to conquer a formidable foe such as the Canaanite people. Of course, they were looking at it strictly from a physical point of view, totally excluding the power of their Husband, God. However, *Kalev* (Caleb), from the tribe of *Y'hudah* (Judah) did not agree:

"Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, 'Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it.'" (Num. 13:30)

It is interesting to note the *Kalev*, even though he represented the tribe of *Y'hudah*, was not even Jewish; he was a Kenite, a descendant of Esau, although his mother may have been from the tribe of *Y'hudah*. However, *Kalev* was only one voice against ten:

"But the men who had gone up with him said, 'We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we.'" (Num. 13:31)

~ Poisoning the People ~

It is one thing to give a private report to your leader and another to spread rumors throughout the entire camp. Yet, this is exactly what the ten spies did. After giving their negative report to *Moshe*, they proceeded to tell their families and neighbors about what they saw and why they were afraid:

"And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, 'The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.'" (Num. 13:32-33)

Stories have a way of growing as they are retold. Before the spies' report had made its way from one end of the camp to the other, the people of Canaan had grown to become giants, while the children of Israel were like grasshoppers. The underlying message was that it would not take much for a group of giants to crush a swarm of grasshoppers.

What happened next was a repeat of what *Moshe* had experienced several times before when the children of Israel were faced with a troubling situation. They began to weep and wail and carry on:

"So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night." (Num. 14:1)

One can only imagine what must have been going through *Moshe's* mind as he listened to the wail emerging from the camp of God's Bride. The next morning was predictable. The children of Israel once again looked back longingly to their slavery in Egypt where all they had to do was work in the brick yards of the Pharaoh:

"And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, 'If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness! Why has the LORD [YHVH] brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?'" (Num. 14:2-3)

When the children of Israel spoke about dying in the land of Egypt, they were alluding to the fact that if they had stayed in Egypt they would have been able to live out their natural

lives. Their fear was that they would experience a premature death and that all of them, including their wives and children, would suffer the same fate. Apparently they had forgotten about the Pharaoh's decree which had sentenced their newborn boys to immediate death, as well as the various miracles their Husband (*YHVH*) had performed for them along the way.

~ Rebellion ~

This time the fear experienced by the children of Israel was so powerful they actually proposed electing a new leader and returning to Egypt:

"So they said to one another, 'Let us select a leader and return to Egypt.'" (Num. 14:4)

This was open rebellion. In the modern marriage context, this would be equivalent to a newlywed Bride deciding to leave her Husband immediately following the honeymoon and return to live with her parents.

Moshe and *Aharon* (Aaron) understood the gravity of the situation:

"Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel." (Num. 14:5)

Up to this point *Y'hoshua* (Joshua) had remained silent. The reason for this is probably because he knew the people would just accuse him of siding with his mentor, *Moshe*. Better to let *Kalev*, who did not have that close association with *Moshe*, put forth the argument that they should go up and take the land. The people would be more likely to listen to him than to *Y'hoshua*. But now things were getting desperate and *Y'hoshua*, along with *Kalev*, spoke up loud and clear:

"But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes; and they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: 'The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. If the LORD [YHVH] delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, "a land which flows with milk and honey." Only do not rebel against the LORD [YHVH], nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the LORD [YHVH] is with us. Do not fear them.'" (Num. 14:6-9)

One might say that *Y'hoshua* and *Kalev* considered the Canaanites to be "toast" when compared to the strength of their Husband *YHVH*. But the remainder of the people were in no mood to listen to such talk:

"And all the congregation said to stone them with stones." (Num. 14:10a)

~ Divine Intervention ~

At this point things had gone too far, and their Husband (*YHVH*) directly intervened:

"Now the glory of the LORD [YHVH] appeared in the tabernacle of meeting before all the children of Israel." (Num. 14:10b)

Exactly how the *kavod* כָּבוֹד (kah-vohd' = glory) of God appeared in this instance is not known. However, there is a description given by the prophet Ezekiel which shows what an awesome event this might have been:

"And above the firmament over their heads was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone; on the likeness of the throne was a likeness with the appearance of a man high above it. Also from the appearance of His waist and upward I saw, as it were, the color of amber with the appearance of fire all around within it; and from the appearance of His waist and downward I saw, as it were, the appearance of fire with brightness all around. Like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness all around it. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory [*kavod*] of the LORD [YHVH]."
(Ezek. 1:26-28)

The appearance of their Husband (YHVH) brought the children of Israel to their senses. Once again they could see with their own eyes the great power and might of the One who had chosen them to be His people and to be His Wife.

The first reaction of (YHVH), to the rebellion of His wife, was to want to do away with her and start over with *Moshe*. Since *Moshe* was a direct descendant of *Avraham*, *Yitzchak*, and *Ya'acov*, such an action would not have negated God's promise to the Patriarchs:

"Then the LORD [YHVH] said to Moses: 'How long will these people reject Me? And how long will they not believe Me, with all the signs which I have performed among them? I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they.'"
(Num. 14:11-12)

Once again, *Moshe* displayed his humble spirit. Even though he had taken abuse from the people previously, this time they were threatening to stone him. Still, he pleaded with God to withhold His hand from destroying the people. First *Moshe* appealed to God's sense of pride:

"And Moses said to the LORD [YHVH]: 'Then the Egyptians will hear it, for by Your might You brought these people up from among them, and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that You, LORD [YHVH], are among these people; that You, LORD [YHVH], are seen face to face and Your cloud stands above them, and You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night.

"Now if You kill these people as one man, then the nations which have heard of Your fame will speak, saying, 'Because the LORD [YHVH] was not able to bring this people to the land which He swore to give them, therefore He killed them in the wilderness.'"
(Num. 14:13-16)

Only then did *Moshe* appeal to God's merciful nature by quoting His own words:

"And now, I pray, let the power of my LORD [YHVH] be great, just as You have spoken, saying, 'The LORD [YHVH] is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means clears the

guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation.'"

"Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray, according to the greatness of Your mercy, just as You have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.'" (Num. 14:17-19)

Moshe's appeal to God (quoted above), asking that He spare the children of Israel, contains a number of the *Thirteen Attributes of Mercy* which were issued following the incident of the Golden Calf:

"And the LORD [YHVH] passed before him and proclaimed, 'The LORD [YHVH], the LORD [YHVH] God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation.'"
(Ex. 34:6-7)

As noted earlier, the *Thirteen Attributes of Mercy* are:

- ◆ The LORD - the first use of the name YHVH denotes that God is merciful before a person sins.
- ◆ The LORD - the second use of the name YHVH denotes that God is merciful to forgive a person even after he has sinned.
- ◆ God (*Elohim*) - denotes that He has the power to forgive.
- ◆ Merciful.
- ◆ Gracious.
- ◆ Longsuffering.
- ◆ Abounding in goodness.
- ◆ Abounding in truth.
- ◆ Keeping mercy for thousands of generations.
- ◆ Forgiving iniquity.
- ◆ Forgiving transgression.
- ◆ Forgiving sin.
- ◆ One who clears the guilty but not completely unless one fully repents.

In the context of *Moshe's* appeal to God -- to spare the children of Israel because they believed the spies evil report and wanted to stone the leadership -- only some of the *Thirteen Attributes of Mercy* are mentioned. However, they were enough to get through this crisis.

~ The Penalty ~

While God was quick to extend His mercy to His Wife, and withdraw the extermination threat, this incident did not go by without a punishment. As the Rabbis teach: God will clear the guilty, but He does not always do so completely. This is exactly what happened, for God repented from destroying them as a nation, but He punished them severely for their rebellion:

"Then the LORD [YHVH] said: 'I have pardoned, according to your word; but truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD [YHVH] -- because all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice, they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it.'"
(Num. 14:20-23)

The penalty was severe; that generation of men, ages twenty and upward, would not live to see the Promised Land. All of them would die in the wilderness with the exception of one, *Kalev*:

"But My servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit in him and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it."
(Num. 14:24)

Kalev is singled out for inclusion in the Promised Land, along with all of those men under the age of twenty. God made good on His promise when He established *Kalev* and his descendants in the Promised Land (see Joshua 14). The question often arises: Why was *Y'hoshua* not included in this promise? The answer is because he had already been selected to become the leader after *Moshe* was gone.

~ The Ten Tests ~

The ten times when the children of Israel had 'tested' God's patience, as referred to in verse 22, were:

- ◆ Prior to entering the Reed Sea (Ex. 14:11).
- ◆ At the bitter waters of *Marah* (Ex. 15:24).
- ◆ When they ran out of food (Ex. 16:3).
- ◆ When they left the *manna* overnight (Ex. 16:20).
- ◆ When they went out to gather *manna* on *Shabbat* (Ex. 16:27).
- ◆ When the water ran out at *Refidim* (Ex. 17:2).
- ◆ When they built and worshipped the Golden Calf (Ex. 32:4).
- ◆ When they complained against God's commandments (Num. 11:1).
- ◆ When they complained because they were tired of the *manna* (Num. 11:4).
- ◆ When they believed the report of the evil spies (Num. 14:1).

According to E.W. Bullinger, in his book *Number in Scripture*, ten is the number that signifies the "perfection of Divine order." It shows the: "Completeness of order, marking the entire round of anything... It implies that nothing is wanting; that the number and order are perfect; that the cycle is complete." (p. 243). Thus, the significance of the ten 'tests' of God by the children of Israel is that it "marked the completed series of Israel's perversities." (p. 245).

~ Wilderness Wandering ~

Perhaps this is why God, at this point, issued His final decree on this generation:

"And the LORD [YHVH] spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, 'How long shall I bear with this evil congregation who complain against Me? I have heard the complaints which the children of Israel make against Me.

"Say to them, "As I live," says the LORD [YHVH], "just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you: The carcasses of you who have complained against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above.""
(Num. 14:26-28)

In addition to the men under the age of twenty, two older men were included among those who would live to enter the Promised Land:

"Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun, you shall by no means enter the land which I swore I would make you dwell in.""
(Num. 14:30)

One of the complaints frequently given by the children of Israel was that their children were going to die in the wilderness. Because of this unfounded fear, God made a promise to those children:

"But your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised. But as for you, your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness. And your sons shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years, and bear the brunt of your infidelity, until your carcasses are consumed in the wilderness.""
(Num. 14:31-33)

According to tradition, each man died when he reached the age of sixty. When those who were twenty (at the time they left Egypt), reached the age of sixty, the forty years of wandering had been completed. As soon as that last group of men died, the children of Israel who remained were allowed to enter the Promised Land.

The time of the wilderness wandering was set to be a year for a day. The spies had spent forty days reconnoitering the land, therefore it would take forty years for the last man of that generation to die:

"According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year, namely forty years, and you shall know My rejection. I the LORD [YHVH] have spoken this; I will surely do so to all this evil congregation who are gathered together against Me. In this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.""
(Num. 14:34-35)

While it took a full forty years for the entire decree to be accomplished, the ten evil spies died immediately:

"Now the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land, who returned and made all the congregation complain against him by bringing a bad report of the land, those very

men who brought the evil report about the land, died by the plague before the LORD [YHVH]." (Num. 14:36-37)

~ A Futile Attempt ~

When God's Wife (the children of Israel) heard what the punishment was going to be, she fell into deep mourning:

"Then Moses told these words to all the children of Israel, and the people mourned greatly." (Num. 14:39)

Like many people, the children of Israel now wanted to "make up" for their transgression by going ahead into battle against one of the tribes that dwelt nearby in the land of Canaan:

"And they rose early in the morning and went up to the top of the mountain, saying, 'Here we are, and we will go up to the place which the LORD [YHVH] has promised, for we have sinned!'" (Num. 14:40)

However, as the old saying goes; "Once the cat is out of the bag, you will never be able to put him back in." In this case, it was too little, too late, and *Moshe* warned them not to try and conquer the land when their Husband (YHVH) was not a party to the effort:

"And Moses said, 'Now why do you transgress the command of the LORD [YHVH]? For this will not succeed. Do not go up, lest you be defeated by your enemies, for the LORD [YHVH] is not among you. For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and you shall fall by the sword; because you have turned away from the LORD [YHVH], the LORD [YHVH] will not be with you.'" (Num. 14:41-43)

The men would not listen and the results were disastrous:

"But they presumed to go up to the mountaintop; nevertheless, neither the ark of the covenant of the LORD [YHVH] nor Moses departed from the camp. Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who dwelt in that mountain came down and attacked them, and drove them back as far as Hormah." (Num. 14:44-45)

As it turned out, the spies were correct in one thing; the Canaanites were too strong for the children of Israel to defeat on their own. Only with the help of their all-powerful Husband (YHVH) would they ever hope to accomplish the task God had set before them.

~ A Time For Offerings ~

The children of Israel had sinned grievously by listening to the evil report of the ten spies. However, God brought a ray of hope to those who were not under the death penalty by giving them instructions for additional offerings that were to be made once they had occupied the land. Even though the Tabernacle in the Wilderness was already functioning at this time, these new offerings were specified for the Promised Land (still some thirty-nine years down the road). Some teachers believe these instructions were given at this time to console the younger generation, making them aware of the fact that they would live

to see the day when these meal and libation offerings would be performed in the Promised Land. According to the *Stone Edition Chumash*:

"The offerings of Abel, Noah, and Abraham were a *satisfying aroma to God (Leviticus 1:9)* even without the benefit of an additional libation, but after the sin of the Golden Calf, God commanded that libations be added to the daily continual offerings. After the sin of the spies the commandment was extended to certain other offerings, as well." (p. 811).

Perhaps this explains in part the passage that is often misunderstood to mean that all of the *Torah* commandments have been "done away:"

"What purpose then does the law [of the Levitical Priesthood] serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator." (Gal. 3:19)

Certainly, this is one example where a "law" was added because the people had transgressed. (For other added laws see *Hebrew Roots*® Issue 13-2.)

In addition, other important understandings relating to the forgiveness of sins are found in this passage. First, God gave instruction on which offerings were necessary in order for expiation to be made for national sins that were committed unintentionally by His Wife, the children of Israel:

""If you sin unintentionally, and do not observe all these commandments which the LORD [YHVH] has spoken to Moses -- all that the LORD [YHVH] has commanded you by the hand of Moses, from the day the LORD [YHVH] gave commandment and onward throughout your generations -- then it will be, if it is unintentionally committed, without the knowledge of the congregation, that the whole congregation shall offer one young bull as a burnt offering, as a sweet aroma to the LORD [YHVH], with its grain offering and its drink offering, according to the ordinance, and one kid of the goats as a sin offering."

""So the priest shall make atonement for the whole congregation of the children of Israel, and it shall be forgiven them, for it was unintentional; they shall bring their offering, an offering made by fire to the LORD [YHVH], and their sin offering before the LORD [YHVH], for their unintended sin. It shall be forgiven the whole congregation of the children of Israel and the stranger who dwells among them, because all the people did it unintentionally."" (Num. 15:22-26)

Next, attention is turned as to what must be done for the unintentional sin of an individual:

""And if a person sins unintentionally, then he shall bring a female goat in its first year as a sin offering. So the priest shall make atonement for the person who sins unintentionally, when he sins unintentionally before the LORD [YHVH], to make atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him. You shall have one law for him who sins unintentionally, for him who is native-born among the

children of Israel and for the stranger who dwells among them. (Num. 15:27-29)

The last category pertains to those people who sin intentionally, or in a high-handed manner. This is usually understood to be the sin of idol worship. Such a sin cannot be atoned for by an offering. Such an individual will be *karet* כָּרַת (kah-reht' = cutoff) from the congregation of Israel:

""But the person who does *anything* presumptuously, whether he is native-born or a stranger, that one brings reproach on the LORD [YHVH], and he shall be cut off from among his people. Because he has despised the word of the LORD [YHVH], and has broken His commandment, that person shall be completely cut off; his guilt shall be upon him."" (Num. 15:30-31)

According to the Rabbis, the trespasses of one who sins intentionally can only be forgiven if the person repents and does *teshuvah* (repentance and return to the ways of God).

~ Sabbath Desecration ~

The next recorded incident tells of a man who decided that *Shabbat* was a good time to gather some wood:

"Now while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation. They put him under guard, because it had not been explained what should be done to him.

"Then the LORD [YHVH] said to Moses, 'The man must surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp.'

"So, as the LORD [YHVH] commanded Moses, all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him with stones, and he died." (Num. 15:32-36)

~ A Positive Command ~

After all of these negative happenings, God gave His Wife something positive that she could do to remember the *mitzvot* מִצְוֹת (meetz'-vote = commandments) which she was to perform in order to please her Husband:

"Again the LORD [YHVH] spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the children of Israel: Tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a blue thread in the tassels of the corners. And you shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the LORD [YHVH] and do them, and that you may not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined, and that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy for your God.

"I am the LORD [YHVH] your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the LORD [YHVH] your God." (Num. 15:37-41)

Now the children of Israel had a daily physical sign which would remind them to keep all of the commandments of God

that pertained to them individually. The *tzit-tzit* תִּצִּית (tzeet-tzeet = tassels) were to be worn on the corners of their garments where they were accessible and visible.

There is a related word to *tzit-tzit* which means to 'peer' at something. Thus, the purpose of the *tzit-tzit* was so the wearer would look upon them and be constantly reminded of what they signified. It was not enough just to wear them as a sign of identification. They were to be worn so they would cause the wearer to constantly remember their obligations to the *Torah*.

The *tzit-tzit* are to be worn "throughout their generations." This implies that the parents were to teach the commandments of God to their children. They too were to wear the *tzit-tzit* so they would remember all the commandments of God and teach their children to do them as well. In this manner, the instructions (commandments) of God would be passed down from generation to generation, even unto our own day.

~ Summary ~

In the context of a marriage relationship, it is evident from these passages in the book of *Numbers* that the Wife of God was not ready to take on the responsibilities of living a life of freedom in the Promised Land which her Husband (YHVH) had prepared for her. In fact, corporately the Wife did not have the faith, trust, and confidence in her Husband that He would be able to accomplish all that He said He would do for her.

Because of her lack of faith, the Wife of YHVH insisted that spies be sent into the Land prior to their going up as a body to possess it. Then, when they came back with an evil report, the Wife of YHVH rebelled against going into the land because she feared the inhabitants. The rebellion was so intense she actually wanted to stone the leadership and return to her sinful life in the idolatrous land of Egypt.

It was only through the direct glorious intervention of her Husband (YHVH) that the Wife became convinced that what she proposed to do was a very bad idea. However, by then it was too late, for God had already decided to let her live in the Wilderness for the next thirty-nine years until all of her men who were age twenty and above (when they left the land of Egypt) would die in the Wilderness, never having the opportunity to even see the Promised Land.

However, God did not leave His Wife without hope. The younger generation was given some new commandments concerning meal and libation offerings which were to be brought once they were in the land. This gave them hope that they would actually live to see the day they were dwelling in the Promised Land as free men.

Also, their Husband gave them the *tzit-tzit*, a beautiful physical reminder that they were to keep all of the commandments of God, just as they had promised to do back at Mount Sinai when they said:

"All that the LORD [YHVH] has spoken we will do." (Ex. 19:8)

~ A Lesson for Today ~

The lesson for Believers today is that once our sins have been forgiven through the blood of Messiah *Y'shua*, we must not continue to live in sin:

"For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?" (Heb. 10:26-29)

As the Rabbis teach, such a grave sin can only be forgiven through *teshuvah* (repentance and return):

"This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

"If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*] His Son cleanses us from all sin.

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (I John 1:5-9)

"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb. 4:16)

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1-715-757-2775

