

Wedding of the Messiah III

containing:

The Wandering Bride Final Instructions Home At Last

by
Dean & Susan Wheelock

Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory,
For the marriage of the Lamb has come,
And His wife has made herself ready.
And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen,
Clean and bright,
For the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.
Revelation 19:7-8

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~ *Table of Contents* ~

Introduction. 1
The Wandering Bride. 2
Final Instructions. 8
Home At Last. 14
Sources. 19

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

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. This booklet is volume three in a series, and culminates the initial part of the story when the children of Israel finally entered the Promised Land after forty years of wandering in the wilderness. By way of analogy, we too, as the Bride of Messiah, are wandering in the wilderness of this wicked world waiting for our Betrothed Husband to take us to the *Chuppah* (Wedding Chamber) so that we can begin our new life with Him.

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.

Shalom!

Dean & Susan Wheelock

Beit Shalom,
December, 2013

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poised ready to enter the Promised Land. These are contained in the book of *Devarim* (Deh-vah-ream' = Deuteronomy).

~ The Wandering Bride ~

And you shall remember
That the LORD your God led you all the way
These forty years in the wilderness,
To humble you *and* test you,
To know what was in your heart,
Whether you would keep His commandments or not.
Deuteronomy 8:2



After the incident of the Spies, when the children of Israel refused to enter the Promised Land (Num. 14) -- because of a fearful lack of faith -- *YHVH* punished His Wife (the children of Israel) for her infidelity by relegating her to wander in the wilderness forty years until all the men of that generation (who were age twenty and above when they left Egypt) had died:

""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. 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. 14:33-35)

The children of Israel were allowed to count, as part of the forty years, the time that had already past since leaving Egypt. Because the incident of the spies included bringing back grapes from the land of Canaan, it can be assumed that it took place in early fall of that year, when the grapes were ripe. This would mean that about a year and one-half had passed since the children of Israel had left Egypt. This meant there were over thirty-eight years remaining before they would be allowed entry into the Promised Land. A large majority of those years were spent at a place called *Kadesh Barnea* קַדְשׁ בְּרִנֵּי (Kah-dehsh Bahr-nay'-ah).

~ Additional Instruction ~

Those thirty-eight years were filled with events, most of which are set forth in the second half of the book of *Bamidbar* (Bah-meed-bar' = Numbers). Interspersed within the stories are various instructions given by the Husband (*YHVH*) to His Wife (the children of Israel). These include: Responsibilities of the Priests and Levites (Num. 18), Ceremony of the Red Heifer (Num. 19), Inheritance of the Daughters of Zelophehad (Num. 27), Laws of Required Offerings (Num. 28-29), Vows (Num. 30), Levitical Cities and Cities of Refuge (Num. 35), and Inheritance of Daughters (Num. 36).

More instructions were given by *Moshe* מֹשֶׁה (Mow'-shay = Moses) just prior to his death, as the children of Israel were

~ A Rebellion Is Instigated ~

Despite the sin of the Golden Calf and the sin of the Ten Spies, plus *HaShem's* constant reiteration that *Moshe* and *Aharon* אַהֲרֹן (Ah-ha-rohn' = Aaron) were His hand picked leaders, the children of Israel kept rebelling and complaining. The next recorded rebellion was led by a member of the Levitical family, *Korach* קֹרַח (Koh-rack' = Korah).

This rebellion was instigated because *Korach* was dissatisfied with his position as a member of the family of *K'hat* קְהָת (K-haht' = Kohath). The Kohathites camped on the south side of the Tabernacle and were responsible for transporting its furniture, including the Ark of the Covenant:

"The families of the children of Kohath were to camp on the south side of the tabernacle. ... Their duty included the ark, the table, the lampstand, the altars, the utensils of the sanctuary with which they ministered, the screen, and all the work relating to them."
(Num. 3:29, 31)

Korach was given a responsibility that must have been the envy of many in the other tribes, yet he was dissatisfied because it was not on a par with what had been assigned to *Moshe* and *Aharon*:

"They gathered together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, 'You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the LORD [*YHVH*] is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD [*YHVH*]?"
(Num. 16:3)

While *Korach* no doubt spoke for himself, he also acted as a spokesman for others. To gather support among the non-Levitical tribes, he convinced a number of men from the tribe of *Re'uben* רְאוּבֵן (Reh-oo'-vehn = Reuben) that they too were 'holy' (set-apart). The leaders of the rebellious *Re'ubenites* were *Datan* דָּתָן (Dah-tahn' = Dathan) and *Aviram* אַבִּירָם (Ah-vee-rahm' = Abiram):

"Now Korah the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, with Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men; ..."
(Num. 16:1)

It was convenient for *Korach* to work his deceptions upon members of the tribe of *Re'uben* because they were one of the three non Levitical tribes which also camped on the south side of the Tabernacle. This placed *Korach*, *Aviram*, and *Dathan* right next to each other in the camp.

Korach's persuasion was so great he was able to sway two hundred and fifty leaders of Israel to join with him in rebellion:

"... they rose up before Moses with some of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, representatives of the congregation, men of renown."
(Num. 16:2)

This rebellion was different from previous ones in that, prior to this time, the children of Israel had complained about specific problems such as lack of water, quality of food, etc. This time, however, it was just plain rebellion, for the perpetrators wanted to overthrow *Moshe* and *Aharon* as leaders of the congregation of Israel and take control themselves.

~ The Rebellion is Quashed ~

This rebellion was so fierce it required that a number of different steps be taken before it could be eliminated. The initial step was to eliminate *Korach* and his close band of followers. However, before that could be done the two hundred and fifty leaders also had to be tested to see how far they were willing to go. So *Moshe*, under God's direction, instructed each one of them to prepare an incense offering to God and bring it, along with a censer, to the Tabernacle the next morning (Num. 16:6-7).

Then *Moshe* called *Datan* and *Aviram* to come and see him but they refused to even discuss the matter:

"And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, but they said, 'We will not come up! Is it a small thing that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, that you should keep acting like a prince over us? Moreover you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor given us inheritance of fields and vineyards. Will you put out the eyes of these men? We will not come up!'" (Num. 16:12-14)

The next morning *Korach* had an army of people gathered in his support at the door of the Tabernacle:

"So every man took his censer, put fire in it, laid incense on it, and stood at the door of the tabernacle of meeting with Moses and Aaron.

"And Korach gathered all the congregation against them at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Then the glory of the LORD [YHVH] appeared to all the congregation.

"And the LORD [YHVH] spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, 'Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.'" (Num. 16:18-21)

Once again, God was ready to destroy the children of Israel and start fresh with *Moshe* and *Aharon*. However, once again they interceded for the Bride:

"Then they fell on their faces, and said, 'O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and You be angry with all the congregation?'" (Num. 16:22)

Once again, God relented and punished only those who refused to separate themselves from *Korach*, *Datan*, and *Aviram*:

"So the LORD [YHVH] spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the congregation, saying, "Get away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram."'"

"Then Moses rose and went to Dathan and Abiram, and the elders of Israel followed him. And he spoke to the

congregation, saying, 'Depart now from the tents of these wicked men! Touch nothing of theirs, lest you be consumed in all their sins.'

"So they got away from around the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; and Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the door of their tents, with their wives, their sons, and their little children." (Num. 16:23-27)

Moshe then indicated that if God was really against this rebellion He would cause the ground to open up and swallow those who refused to separate themselves from the tents of the three leaders. This is exactly what happened:

"Now it came to pass, as he finished speaking all these words, that the ground split apart under them, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah, with all their goods. So they and all those with them went down alive into the pit; the earth closed over them, and they perished from among the assembly." (Num. 16:31-33)

One very interesting aspect of this event was that the sons of *Korach* separated themselves from their father and did not perish:

"Nevertheless the children of Korah did not die." (Num. 26:9)

Centuries later, the descendants of *Korach* were active as Psalmists in the Tabernacle of David:

"To the Chief Musician. A Contemplation of the sons of Korah." (Psalm 42:1)

However, there was still more cleanup work to be done. The next step, in quelling the rebellion was to take care of the two hundred and fifty leaders who had appeared at the Tabernacle with incense offerings and censers in hand. Even though they had been specifically told to appear before God with the offerings and censers, they should have known they were not authorized to perform such priestly duties. This was especially true, for they all knew what had happened when two authorized priests (*Nadav* and *Avihu*) took 'profane fire' (unauthorized fire) in their censers and offered it to God:

"Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD [YHVH], which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the LORD [YHVH] and devoured them, and they died before the LORD [YHVH]." (Lev. 10:1-2)

As a result of this even greater impertinence by the two hundred and fifty leaders, they also received a swift and just punishment:

"And a fire came out from the LORD [YHVH] and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering incense." (Num. 16:35)

However, since the bronze metal of the censers was intended by its owners to be used for service at the Tabernacle, God instructed *Moshe* to have *El'azar* אֶלְעָזָר (Ehl'-ah-zahr = Eleazar) the priest use the metal as a covering for the altar:

"So Eleazar the priest took the bronze censers, which those who were burned up had presented, and they were hammered out as a covering on the altar, *to be a memorial to the children of Israel that no outsider, who is not a descendant of Aaron, should come near to offer incense before the LORD [YHVH], that he might not become like Korah and his companions, ..."* (Num. 16:39-40)

~ The Rebellion Grows ~

One would think that after seeing all of these events transpire, the Bride (children of Israel) would have learned her lesson and accepted the fact that *Moshe* and *Aharon* were specifically selected by God to be her leaders during these years of wilderness wandering. But that was still not the case:

"On the next day all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron, saying, 'You have killed the people of the LORD [YHVH].'" (Num. 16:41)

The people's anger stemmed from their belief that it was *Moshe's* idea for the leaders to offer incense before God, and therefore it was his fault they had died. Once again, the Husband (YHVH) became angry with His Wife and was ready to put her away permanently:

"And the LORD [YHVH] spoke to Moses, saying, 'Get away from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.'" (Num. 16:44-45)

Despite all of the abuse *Moshe* had taken from the children of Israel, he once again went to bat for them. His action was quick and decisive:

"So Moses said to Aaron, 'Take a censer and put fire in it from the altar, put incense *on it*, and take it quickly to the congregation and make atonement for them; for wrath has gone out from the LORD [YHVH]. The plague has begun.'

"Then Aaron took *it* as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the assembly; and already the plague had begun among the people. So he put in the incense and made atonement for the people. And he stood between the dead and the living; so the plague was stopped.

"Now those who died in the plague were fourteen thousand seven hundred, besides those who died in the Korah incident." (Num. 16:46-49)

~ The Rod that Budded ~

The Husband (YHVH) wanted His Bride to understand exactly which tribe was responsible for the service of the Tabernacle, so He arranged for a clear demonstration to be made. He asked that a rod be obtained from the leader of each tribe and that the name of *Aharon* be inscribed on the rod of the tribe of *Levi*. The rod of the tribe that budded would signify which tribe was to serve God in the Tabernacle:

"So Moses spoke to the children of Israel, and each of their leaders gave him a rod apiece, for each leader according to their fathers' houses, twelve rods; and the rod of Aaron *was* among their rods. And Moses placed the rods

before the LORD [YHVH] in the tabernacle of witness." (Num. 17:6-7)

The outcome was speedy and decisive:

"Now it came to pass on the next day that Moses went into the tabernacle of witness, and behold, the rod of Aaron, of the house of Levi, had sprouted and put forth buds, had produced blossoms and yielded ripe almonds." (Num. 17:8)

The end result of this rebellion was a reaffirmation that the tribe of *Levi* was to safeguard the Tabernacle and assist the priests in prescribed ways, while the family of *Aharon* (within the tribe of *Levi*) were solely responsible for conducting the *avodah* אֲוֹדָה (ah-voh-dah' = service):

"Then the LORD [YHVH] said to Aaron: '... bring with you your brethren of the tribe of Levi, the tribe of your father, that they may be joined with you and serve you while you and your sons *are* with you before the tabernacle of witness. ... but an outsider shall not come near you. ... the outsider who comes near shall be put to death.'" (Num. 18:1-2, 4, 7)

~ A Run of Troubles ~

Korach's rebellion is considered to be the last recorded event for a number of years. The Scriptures fast forward to the end of the wilderness wandering and pick up the story with a string of troubling events. The first of these was the death of *Miriam*:

"Then the children of Israel, the whole congregation, came into the Wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed in Kadesh; and Miriam died there and was buried there." (Num. 29:1)

In Jewish tradition, the death of *Miriam* מִרְיָם (Mehr'-yham) is said to have occurred after all of the men of the generation that was brought out of Egypt had died.

The next event was another lack of water. The sages teach that the source of their water dried up because the people did not shed tears over *Miriam's* death:

"Now there was no water for the congregation; so they gathered together against Moses and Aaron. And the people contended with Moses and spoke, saying: 'If only we had died when our brethren died before the LORD [YHVH]! Why have you brought up the assembly of the LORD [YHVH] into this wilderness, that we and our animals should die here? And why have you made us come up out of Egypt, to bring us to this evil place? It *is not* a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates; nor *is there any water to drink.*'" (Num. 20:2-5)

Here they were, just about ready to go home and the Bride begins complaining again. Not only did they complain, they repeated the very same sins that had brought their Husband's wrath upon their fathers; they looked back to Egypt.

God's answer to this outburst was to again show them His miraculous power by bringing forth water from a rock:

"Then the LORD [YHVH] spoke to Moses, saying, 'Take the rod; you and your brother Aaron gather the congregation together. Speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield its water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals.'" (Num. 20:7-8)

God's command to *Moshe* was that he speak to the rock and it would yield its water. However, *Moshe* was angry with the children of Israel and instead of speaking to the rock he smote the rock with his staff:

"And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, 'Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?'"

"Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank." (Num. 20:10-11)

The Stone Edition Chumash gives a very interesting commentary on the 'rock' from an orthodox Jewish point of view:

"The definite article *the* indicates that this was a known rock. The Sages teach that God had created a rock that He used often as a source of miraculous waters. This was the rock that the angel revealed to Hagar when her son Ishmael was dying of thirst (*Genesis* 21:19), and from which Moses was commanded to draw water nearly forty years earlier (*Exodus* 17:6). And that same rock accompanied the people throughout their wanderings, as long as Miriam was alive. After her death, it ceased to yield water and was hidden." (p. 843)

The Apostle Paul (*Shaul*) also speaks about this same rock, giving it even greater importance:

"Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ [Messiah].

"But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted." (I Cor. 10:1-6)

If the 'rock' that followed the Bride was indeed a physical representation of the Messiah, then the punishment given to *Moshe* for striking the 'rock' is more understandable:

"Then the LORD [YHVH] spoke to Moses and Aaron, 'Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.'" (Num. 20:12)

This 'rock' that followed was very important in the eyes of God. It represented the Messiah, therefore it also represented Him. Thus, *Moshe's* action of striking the 'rock' instead of speaking to it is equated with not hallowing the Name of God.

For this sin, *Moshe* was denied the privilege of entering the Promised Land with the children of Israel.

Next in the line of troubles was the refusal of *Edom* אֱדוֹם (Eh-dohm' = the descendants of Esau עֵשָׂו Ay-sahv') to allow the children of Israel to pass through their land, even though they offered to pay for any water that might be consumed on the way.

Then came the death of *Aharon*. His death was also linked to *Moshe's* act of striking the 'rock':

"Then the children of Israel, the whole congregation, journeyed from Kadesh and came to Mount Hor. And the LORD [YHVH] spoke to Moses and Aaron in Mount Hor by the border of the land of Edom, saying: 'Aaron shall be gathered to his people, for he shall not enter the land which I have given to the children of Israel, because you rebelled against My word at the water of Meribah. ... Now when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, all the house of Israel mourned for Aaron thirty days.'" (Num. 20:22-24)

~ A Run of Success ~

Not everything was doom and gloom during these important months just prior to the entry of the Bride into the Promised Land; there were also some successes. The first success was when the children of Israel destroyed a southern Canaanite tribe led by king *Arad* אֶרָד (Ah-rahd'). Likewise, there were victories over *Sihon* סִיחֹן (Sec-hohn'), king of the Amorites אֲמֹרִי (eh-moh-ree'), and *Og* עוֹג (Ohg), king of *Bashan* בָּשָׁן (Bah-shan'). (Num. 21:21-35). Despite these successes there was still complaining:

"Then they journeyed from Mount Hor by the Way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the soul of the people became very discouraged on the way. And the people spoke against God and against Moses: 'Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread.'" (Num. 21:4-5)

Why the *manna* מָן (mahn), that had sustained them for forty years, was suddenly proclaimed to be "worthless" is not known. Sometimes people just seem to need something about which to complain. God's response was again swift:

"So the LORD [YHVH] sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died." (Num. 21:6)

As usual, when trouble arose the Bride turned to *Moshe* for a solution and, of course, he complied:

"Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, 'We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD [YHVH] and against you; pray to the LORD [YHVH] that He take away the serpents from us.' So Moses prayed for the people.

"Then the LORD [YHVH] said to Moses, 'Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.'

"So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived." (Num. 21:7-9)

~ From Curses Come Blessings ~

The Husband (*HaShem*) then moved His Bride to the east side of the Jordan River just across from Jericho:

"Then the children of Israel moved, and camped in the plains of Moab on the side of the Jordan across from Jericho." (Num. 22:1)

It was at this time when the king of Moab, *Balak* בְּלָק (Bah-lahk'), sent for the Gentile prophet *Balaam* בְּלַעַם (Beel-ahm') in the hope that he could place a curse upon the Bride of *HaShem* and thereby prevent the children of Israel from taking over the land of Canaan:

"Now Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. And Moab was exceedingly afraid of the people because they were many, and Moab was sick with dread because of the children of Israel." (Num. 22:2-3)

The story of *Balaam* and *Balak* is quite lengthy and is found in Numbers 22-24. The outcome of *Balak's* attempts to have *Balaam* curse Israel was that God turned each one of his intended curses into a blessing. The first blessing (Num. 23:7-10) ends with a prophecy of Israel's future greatness:

**"For from the top of the rocks I see him,
And from the hills I behold him;
There! A people dwelling alone,
Not reckoning itself among the nations.
Who can count the dust of Jacob,
Or number one-fourth of Israel?
Let me die the death of the righteous,
And let my end be like his!"** (Num. 23:9-10)

The second blessing (Num. 23:18-24) speaks of a time when all the sins of Israel have been removed and God sees only their righteousness:

**"He has not observed iniquity in Jacob,
Nor has He seen wickedness in Israel.
The LORD [YHVH] his God is with him,
And the shout of a King is among them."** (Num. 23:21)

The third blessing (Num. 24:24:3-9) contains a word picture setting forth the beauty of the camp of Israel in its orderliness:

**"How lovely are your tents, O Jacob!
Your dwellings, O Israel!
Like valleys that stretch out,
Like gardens by the riverside,
Like aloes planted by the LORD [YHVH],
Like cedars beside the waters.
He shall pour water from his buckets,
And his seed shall be in many waters.
His king shall be higher than Agag,
And his kingdom shall be exalted.**

...

"Blessed is he who blesses you,

And cursed is he who curses you." (Num. 24:5-7, 9)

Balaam's last prophecy/blessing speaks of the coming Messiah:

**"I see Him, but not now;
I behold Him, but not near;
A Star shall come out of Jacob;
A Scepter shall rise out of Israel,
And batter the brow of Moab,
And destroy all the sons of tumult.
And Edom shall be a possession;
Seir also, his enemies, shall be a possession,
While Israel does valiantly.
Out of Jacob One shall have dominion,
And destroy the remains of the city."** (Num. 24:17-19)

It is evident from these beautiful passages that God had not lost His love for His Bride. Rather, His plan was to shower her with all the blessings of married life, in their own home, *Eretz Israel* אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל (Eh-rehtz' Yees-rah-ayl' = the land of Israel).

~ Balaam's Legacy ~

It would seem, from a casual reading, that *Balaam* did not succeed in his desire to obtain riches from *Balak* for cursing Israel, since all of his oracles came out as blessings instead. However, tradition teaches that before he left, *Balaam* told *Balak* how the children of Israel could be made to sin and thereby lose favor with their Husband (*YHVH*).

Balaam's plan was to have the beautiful daughters of Moab entice the men of Israel into idolatry. This was accomplished by having the women dress very seductively. Once they had gained the attention of an Israelite man, they enticed him into doing immoral acts as a part of the Moabite idol worship, the sin God most hates:

"Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab. They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the LORD [YHVH] was aroused against Israel." (Num. 25:1-3)

This scenario is confirmed in the New Testament. Speaking to the church at Pergamum, *Y'shua* said:

"But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality." (Rev. 2:14)

For this reason the children of Israel put *Balaam* to death when they captured him later on:

"The children of Israel also killed with the sword Balaam the son of Beor, the soothsayer, among those who were killed by them." (Josh. 13:22)

~ Another Severe Punishment ~

The Husband's anger was again kindled and His punishment was again severe -- the death penalty was decreed for those who had fallen for the trap:

"Then the LORD [YHVH] said to Moses, 'Take all the leaders of the people and hang the offenders before the LORD [YHVH], out in the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD [YHVH] may turn away from Israel.'

"So Moses said to the judges of Israel, 'Every one of you kill his men who were joined to Baal of Peor. ... And those who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand.'"
(Num. 25:4-5, 9)

The hero of the day was *Pinchas* פִּינְחָס (Peen-khahs' = Phinehas), the son of *El'azar* אֶלְעָזָר (El'-ah-zahr) the priest. It all started when *Zimri* זִמְרִי (Zeem-ree' = a leader of the tribe of *Shimon* שִׁמְעוֹן (Shee-moan' = Simeon,) brought *Kozbi* כּוֹזְבִי (Chahz-bee' a daughter of *Zur* צוּר (Tzoor), the tribal head of an ancestral house in Midian) right into the camp of Israel and proceeded to sin in public view. *Pinchas* did not wait for someone older to act, he took matters into his own hands:

"Now when Pinchas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose from among the congregation and took a javelin in his hand; and he went after the man of Israel into the tent and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her body. So the plague was stopped among the children of Israel."
(Num. 25:7-8)

As a result of his swift and decisive action, *Pinchas* received a reward from God:

"Then the LORD [YHVH] spoke to Moses, saying: 'Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the children of Israel, because he was zealous with My zeal among them, so that I did not consume the children of Israel in My zeal. Therefore say, "Behold, I give to him My covenant of peace; and it shall be to him and his descendants after him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel."'
(Num. 25:10-13)

According to Jewish teaching, at this time only *Aharon* and *El'azar* were priests and only children born after their ordination would qualify for the priesthood. Since *Pinchas* was born prior to his father's and grandfather's ordination, he was not eligible for the priesthood but was just an ordinary Levite. Because of this action, *Pinchas* was elevated to the priesthood, as well as his descendants.

~ The Second Census ~

Prior to entering the land, God told *Moshe* to take a second census of the tribes. After thirty-nine years of wandering the total population of the men of Israel (not counting the Levites) was actually 1820 less. Several tribes gained population while *Re'uben*, *Gad*, *Efrayim*, and *Naftali* all decreased in number. The big loser was the tribe of *Shimon* who decreased by 37,100

men. It is believed that a great number of *Shimon's* men were involved in the sin of *Baal Peor* בַּעַל פְּעוֹר (Bah-ahl' P-ohr') when 24,000 died (Num. 25:9).

~ Ready to Go Home ~

Everything was now ready for the Husband (*YHVH*) and His Bride (the children of Israel) to go to their permanent home in *Eretz Israel*. Some last minute instructions had to be given concerning special laws of inheritance for those who had died without leaving a son. It was determined that in such cases the daughters were to be allowed to inherit their father's land (Num. 36).

God did grant one special favor for *Moshe*, His faithful servant. He was allowed to see the Promised Land before he died:

"Now the LORD [YHVH] said to Moses: 'Go up into this Mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given to the children of Israel. And when you have seen it, you also shall be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother was gathered.'"
(Num. 27:12-13)

It was important that the new leadership of the Bride be established prior to the death of *Moshe*, so God ordained *Y'hoshua* יְהוֹשֻׁעַ (Y'-hoh'-shoo-ah = Joshua) to begin sharing responsibility with *Moshe*:

"And the LORD [YHVH] said to Moses: 'Take Joshua the son of Nun with you, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him; set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and inaugurate him in their sight. And you shall give some of your authority to him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient. ... And he laid his hands on him and inaugurated him, just as the LORD [YHVH] commanded by the hand of Moses.'"
(Num. 27:18-20, 23)

~ The Final Action ~

One last military action was necessary before the Bride was ready to go to her new home. God told the children of Israel to take vengeance on the Midianites, who had joined with Moab in seducing Israel at Baal Peor:

"So Moses spoke to the people, saying, 'Arm some of yourselves for war, and let them go against the Midianites to take vengeance for the LORD [YHVH] on Midian. Then Moses sent them to the war, ... And they warred against the Midianites, just as the LORD [YHVH] commanded Moses, and they killed all the males. They killed the kings of Midian with the rest of those who were killed -- Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian. Balaam the son of Beor they also killed with the sword."'
(Num. 31:3, 6-8)

But, as usual, there were problems. The warriors took all of the women and children captive, including those who had participated in seducing Israel into idol worship. *Moshe's* remedy protected them from any possible further seduction:

"And the children of Israel took the women of Midian captive, with their little ones, and took as spoil all their cattle, all their flocks, and all their goods. ...

"But Moses was angry with the officers of the army, with the captains over thousands and captains over hundreds, who had come from the battle. And Moses said to them: 'Have you kept all the women alive? Look, these women caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the LORD [YHVH] in the incident of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD [YHVH]. Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known a man intimately. But keep alive for yourselves all the young girls who have not known a man intimately.'" (Num. 31:9, 14-18)

Since the young girls were not yet indoctrinated in the immorality associated with the worship of Baal Peor, they were allowed to live. The spoils of this war were then divided after the warriors had gone through a seven day purification period while outside the camp.

~ Summary ~

It is not fair to say that the Bride of *HaShem* was in rebellion during the entire forty years of their wilderness wandering, for there must have been more years of quiet peace than there were of dissension. Still the record given in the Scriptures is primarily one that dwells upon their shortcomings.

Even after the death of the ten spies, who gave an evil report of the land, there continued to be significant transgressions by the Bride against her Husband. The first of these involved the rebellion of *Korach* (Korah), which was so grievous, and the penalty so severe, it seemed to have caused a lull in rebellious activity for a number of years.

However, just prior to the end of the forty years, after the generation of men who had left Egypt had all died, the new generation of men began to question *Moshe's* authority and succumb to their rebellious instincts. The most serious of these was the sin of adulterous idolatry with the Moabite and Midianite women and the gods of Baal Peor.

Despite these problems, the Gentile prophet *Balaam* was inspired to proclaim four beautiful visions of how God viewed the children of Israel. These poetic utterings remain some of the most beautiful and sublime prophecies ever uttered. They picture the righteousness of the children of Israel throughout their wilderness wanderings, on into their dwelling in the Promised Land as a great nation, and finally even a prophecy of Israel in the coming days of the Messianic Kingdom.

The Bride was now prepared to take possession of her new home. All that remained was for *Moshe* to give his final instructions before his death. That will be the subject of the next installment.

~ Final Instructions ~

And now, Israel,
What does the LORD your God require of you,
But to fear the LORD your God,
To walk in all His ways and to love Him,
To serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul,
And to keep the commandments of the LORD
And His statutes which I command you today for your good.
Deuteronomy 10:12-13



Now that the Bride had completed her forty year period of exile in the wilderness, she was ready to be taken home to the Promised Land. However, before this event could take place there had to be some final instructions given. These instructions were for the purpose of teaching the Bride how to act properly once she and her Husband were settled in their new home (The Promised Land). These instructions might be compared to the final remarks a coach gives his team just before they take the field of play. The record of *Moshe's* final instructions are found in the book of Deuteronomy.

~ Devarim ~

In Hebrew, the book of Deuteronomy is called *Devarim* (Deh-vah-reem') which merely means 'Words.'

"These are the words [*devarim*] which Moses spoke to all Israel on this side of the Jordan in the wilderness, ..."

(Deut. 1:1a)

Although the Hebrew word *Devarim* means 'Words,' this book is commonly called *Deuteronomy* in English. This name comes from the *Septuagint* (Greek version of the Old Testament) and means "Second Law" or "Repeated Law."

There are other names for Deuteronomy: *Elleh HaDevarim* (Ehl-leh' Hah Deh-vah-reem' = These Are the Words), *Mishneh HaTorah* (Meesh-neh' Hah Torah = The Law, A Second Time), and *Sefer Tahahit* (Seh-fehr' Tah-hah-heet' = Book of Admonition).

Devarim is specifically called *The Book of the Law* four times within its own text:

"For the LORD [YHVH] will again rejoice over you for good as He rejoiced over your fathers, ¹⁰ if you obey the voice of the LORD [YHVH] your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this Book of the Law [Torah], and if you turn to the LORD [YHVH] your God with all your heart and with all your soul." (Deut. 30:9b-10)

The other verses identifying Deuteronomy as *The Book of the Law* are to be found in Deut. 28:61, 29:21, and 31:26.

~ The Uniqueness of Devarim ~

It is important to note that *Devarim* is unique among the five books of the *Torah* in that it contains the words *Moshe*

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spoke to the children of Israel rather than (as was the practice in the previous books) *Moshe's* repetition of the words God had spoken to him. In the previous books of the *Torah*, in which *Moshe* is a central figure (Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers), when God wished to communicate to the people the passage would begin with:

"Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them ..."
(Lev. 1:2a)

Or,
"Then the LORD [YHVH] said to Moses, ..."
(Ex. 20:22a)

However, in *Devarim*, the phraseology is different, showing that it is *Moshe* speaking his own words to explain what God had previously revealed to him:

"And the LORD [YHVH] said to me, ..." (Deut. 1:42a)

This is not to say that *Devarim* was not inspired by God, for it most certainly was the final revelation of God to the children of Israel prior to their entrance into the Promised Land. The difference between this book and the previous books, is that *Devarim* is a review of all that had gone before, both the historical record as well as a repetition of many of the *mitzvot* מִצְוֹת (meets'-vote = commandments) which had already been given.

According to the *Stone Edition Chumash*, the Rabbis have counted over 100 *mitzvot* in *Devarim*. Of these, over 70 are new commandments which serve to complete the 613 commandments that are found in the entirety of the *Torah*. The majority of these *mitzvot* deal with issues pertaining to a settled people living in a settled land, rather than to nomads wandering in the desert. That is the reason why God waited until the very end of the Wilderness Wandering to reveal these 'new' laws. *Devarim* was the Bride's introduction to a new life in *Eretz Israel* (the Promised Land).

~ Communication Lines ~

Up until this time, the Husband (YHVH) had communicated to His Bride (the children of Israel) through a human mediator; *Moshe*. However, *Moshe* had angered God at *Meribah* מְרִיבָה (Mh-ree-bah') (Num. 20:1-13) by not hallowing Him, and as a result *Moshe* was not allowed to lead the Bride into the Promised Land:

"Go up this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, across from Jericho; view the land of Canaan, which I give to the children of Israel as a possession; ⁵⁰ and die on the mountain which you ascend, and be gathered to your people, just as Aaron your brother died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people; ⁵¹because you trespassed against Me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah Kadesh, in the Wilderness of Zin, because you did not hallow Me in the midst of the children of Israel."
(Deut. 32:49-51)

Since the Bride (the children of Israel) was not yet ready to take on the full freedoms God had designed and desired her to have, it was necessary that another 'leader' be appointed to

bring her through the interim period prior to the establishment of the Judges. This individual was none other than *Yehoshua* (Joshua):

"Now Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; so the children of Israel heeded him, and did as the LORD [YHVH] had commanded Moses."
(Deut. 34:9)

The impending death of their beloved leader *Moshe* must have made the children of Israel especially attentive to what he had to teach them prior to his departure and their subsequent journey across the Jordan River.

~ Moshe's Message ~

Devarim is characterized as being *Moshe's* long farewell address. It begins by setting the time and place where it was pronounced:

"These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel on this side of the Jordan in the wilderness, in the plain opposite Suph, between Paran, Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Dizahab. ..."

"³ Now it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spoke to the children of Israel according to all that the LORD [YHVH] had given him as commandments to them, ... ⁵ On this side of the Jordan in the land of Moab, Moses began to explain [ba'ar] this law, ..."
(Deut. 1:1, 3, 5)

The Hebrew word *ba'ar* בָּאָר (bah-are') means: "to make plain, or make clear." This was *Moshe's* last opportunity to clearly teach the Bride what she was supposed to do in her new home, and how she was supposed to act before her Husband (YHVH).

Scholars divide *Devarim* up in different ways, although most agree on the general outline. The following is a composite taken from a number of sources:

- ◆ Deut. 1:1-5: Notice of time and Place.
- ◆ Deut. 1:6 - 4:43: An Introductory Discourse which includes many of God's acts on behalf of Israel.
- ◆ Deut. 4:44 - 26:19: The Second Discourse in two parts:
 - Deut. 4:44 - 11:32: An exposition of the Decalogue (Ten Words) and a development of the first commandment.
 - Deut. 12:1 - 26:19: The Deuteronomic code of Laws.
- ◆ Deut. 27:1 - 30:20: The Third Discourse which is an appeal for the Covenant.
- ◆ Deut. 31:1 - 34:12: *Moshe's* Last Words and Death.

Moshe's message to the Bride covered a wide range of topics that are not necessarily apparent from this general outline. Buried within each section we find *Moshe* leading the children of Israel along a path that is meant to prepare them for what lay ahead as they entered the Land. One might liken it to a husband and wife who have experienced a rather rocky

honeymoon and now must go home and learn how to live together through the mundane existence of everyday living. By giving this teaching, *Moshe* hoped to prepare the Bride in order to ease her through some of the problems that were bound to come up in their new marriage relationship.

~ God's Treaty With Israel ~

Many scholars have identified a similarity between the Book of Deuteronomy and ancient treaties made between kings and their vassal states. In the case of Israel, God was to be the King and the children of Israel (the Bride) were to be subject to Him in every way.

Louis Goldberg, in his commentary on *Deuteronomy*, shows how the Hittite treaties of the second millennium BCE matched the book of *Deuteronomy*:

- ◆ The preamble: the covenant mediator (Deut. 1:1-5)
- ◆ The historical prologue: covenant history (Deut. 1:6 - 4:49)
- ◆ Stipulations: covenant life
 - The great commandment (Deut. 5:1 - 11:32)
 - Ancillary commandments (Deut. 12:1 - 26:19)
- ◆ Sanctions: covenant ratification, blessings and curses, covenant oath, restoration, decision (27:1 - 30:20)
- ◆ Dynastic disposition: covenant continuity (31:1 - 34:12)

Every aspect of life was covered in this covenant between God, the Husband, and the children of Israel, His wife: how the Bride was to approach her Husband was revealed in the ceremonial aspects of the Law, while relationships between the members of the Bride were covered within the Moral, Civil, and Criminal sections.

However, God was not only into specifics, He was also very concerned that His wife understand at the conceptual level. A strictly 'legalistic' obedience was not what He was after. Physical circumcision, as expressed in Leviticus 12:3, was important, but what was even more important was for each member of the Bride to undergo spiritual circumcision of the heart:

"And now, Israel, what does the LORD [YHVH] your God require of you, but to fear the LORD [YHVH] your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD [YHVH] your God with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹³ and to keep the commandments of the LORD [YHVH] and His statutes which I command you today for your good? ... ¹⁶ Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer." (Deut. 10:12-13, 16)

This treaty was not just for the native Israelites, it also included the 'stranger' who dwelt among them:

"Therefore keep the words of this covenant, and do them, that you may prosper in all that you do. ¹⁰ All of you stand today before the LORD [YHVH] your God: your leaders and your tribes and your elders and your officers, all the men of Israel, ¹¹ your little ones and your wives -- also the stranger who is in your camp, from the one who

cuts your wood to the one who draws your water -- ¹² that you may enter into covenant with the LORD [YHVH] your God, and into His oath, which the LORD [YHVH] your God makes with you today, ¹³ that He may establish you today as a people for Himself, and that He may be God to you, just as He has spoken to you, and just as He has sworn to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." (Deut. 29:9-13)

Likewise, it was not just for the people who were alive at that time, it was for all of their descendants as well, along with anyone who attached themselves to the Bride (the children of Israel):

"I make this covenant and this oath, not with you alone, ¹⁵ but with him who stands here with us today before the LORD [YHVH] our God, as well as with him who is not here with us today ...

²⁹ 'The secret things belong to the LORD [YHVH] our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.'" (Deut. 29:14-15, 29)

Truly, this is a covenant for all time and for all people who are willing to submit to the Creator God.

~ A Major Theme ~

One of the most significant themes to appear in the book of *Devarim* is the Husband's insistence that His Bride learn to obey the *mitzvot* (commandments) He had established for her. *Moshe* constantly told the Bride that all of her troubles up to this time were a result of disobedience to the instructions of her Husband and that all of her troubles in the future would come upon her because of similar kinds of disobedience. The main problem she would run into would be the tendency to succumb to idolatry:

"Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: ²⁷ the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD [YHVH] your God which I command you today; ²⁸ and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD [YHVH] your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you today, to go after other gods which you have not known." (Deut. 11:26-28)

Not only was the Bride to avoid idolatry at all costs, she was to practice serving her Husband by bringing Him the offerings He had specified at the place which He would choose once they were in the land:

"Only the holy things which you have, and your vowed offerings, you shall take and go to the place which the LORD [YHVH] chooses. ²⁷ And you shall offer your burnt offerings, the meat and the blood, on the altar of the LORD [YHVH] your God; and the blood of your sacrifices shall be poured out on the altar of the LORD [YHVH] your God, and you shall eat the meat. ²⁸ Observe and obey all these words which I command you, that it may go well with you and your children after you forever, when you do what is good and right in the sight of the LORD [YHVH] your God." (Deut. 12:26-28)

The Husband (*YHVH*) was so adamant about proper worship that He decreed that anyone who tried to entice a fellow Israelite into idolatry must be put to death so they would no longer be able to spread such evil among the people. This was true even if the person in question seemed able to perform miraculous signs:

"If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, ² and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, "Let us go after other gods" -- which you have not known -- "and let us serve them," ³ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD [YHVH] your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD [YHVH] your God with all your heart and with all your soul. ⁴ You shall walk after the LORD [YHVH] your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice, and you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him.

⁵ 'But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the LORD [YHVH] your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the LORD [YHVH] your God commanded you to walk. So you shall put away the evil from your midst.'" (Deut. 13:1-5)

However, all of the *mitzvot* (commandments) of God are important, not just the ones dealing with idolatry. Social commands which covered how the members of the Bride were to relate with one another were also to be observed. For example:

"At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release of debts. ² And this is the form of the release: Every creditor who has lent anything to his neighbor shall release it; he shall not require it of his neighbor or his brother, because it is called the LORD's [YHVH's] release. ³ Of a foreigner you may require it; but you shall give up your claim to what is owed by your brother, ⁴ except when there may be no poor among you; for the LORD [YHVH] will greatly bless you in the land which the LORD [YHVH] your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance -- ⁵ only if you carefully obey the voice of the LORD [YHVH] your God, to observe with care all these commandments which I command you today.'" (Deut. 15:1-5)

Members of the Bride were to treat each other honestly when it came to buying and selling:

"You shall not have in your bag differing weights, a heavy and a light. ¹⁴ You shall not have in your house differing measures, a large and a small. ¹⁵ You shall have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure, that your days may be lengthened in the land which the LORD [YHVH] your God is giving you.'" (Deut. 25:13-15)

~ A Special People ~

Two blessings were promised which would accrue to the Bride in response to an obedient nature. These were security

and longevity in the land, and the promise that she would be God's special people:

"Therefore know this day, and consider it in your heart, that the LORD [YHVH] Himself is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other. ⁴⁰ You shall therefore keep His statutes and His commandments which I command you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which the LORD [YHVH] your God is giving you for all time." (Deut. 4:39-40)

As God's Chosen People, the children of Israel were a special treasure to Him:

"For you are a holy people to the LORD [YHVH] your God; the LORD [YHVH] your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth.'" (Deut. 7:6)

~ Love: A Two Way Street ~

The Husband (*YHVH*) desired an obedient wife, but what He wanted even more was a loving wife. While obedience out of fear might have achieved the desired behavior, it would not necessarily have made for a happy home. The attribute of a loving wife is apparent in the *Shema* שמע ישראל (Shah-mah'), the ultimate Jewish statement of faith:

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD [YHVH] our God, the LORD [YHVH] is one! ⁵ You shall love the LORD [YHVH] your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. ⁶ And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.'" (Deut. 6:4-6)

In this context, obedience becomes not a fear matter, but a heart matter. The Bride was to obey her Husband because she loved Him, not because she feared Him. In return for His Wife's love, the Husband (*YHVH*) promised to express His love by blessing her abundantly:

"Therefore you shall keep the commandment, the statutes, and the judgments which I command you today, to observe them. ¹² Then it shall come to pass, because you listen to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the LORD [YHVH] your God will keep with you the covenant and the mercy which He swore to your fathers. ¹³ And He will love you and bless you and multiply you; ... ¹⁴ You shall be blessed above all peoples ..." (Deut. 7:11:14)

The greatest, or first, of the commandments is not just to obey God, but to love God:

"Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, 'Which is the first commandment of all?' ²⁹ Jesus [*Y'shua*] answered him, 'The first of all the commandments is: "Hear, O Israel, the LORD [YHVH] our God, the LORD [YHVH] is one. ³⁰ And you shall love the LORD [YHVH] your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." This is the first commandment.'" (Mark 12:28-30)

Once an individual member of the Bride had come to truly love God, obedience to His will would naturally follow:

"And now, Israel, what does the LORD [YHVH] your God require of you, but to fear the LORD [YHVH] your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD [YHVH] your God with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹³ and to keep the commandments of the LORD [YHVH] and His statutes which I command you today for your good? ¹⁴ Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the LORD [YHVH] your God, also the earth with all that is in it." (Deut. 10:12-14)

The Husband (YHVH) did not want His Wife to be obedient for His sake, He wanted His Bride to obey for her own good, because if she obeyed she would "live long and prosper." This meant that learning to love and obey, was tantamount to choosing life over death:

"I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; ²⁰ that you may love the LORD [YHVH] your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD [YHVH] swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them." (Deut. 30:19-20)

~ Blessing and Cursing ~

A significant part of the ancient Hittite treaties were the blessings that would accrue to the vassal subjects for their obedience to the king, and the curses that would come upon them if they failed to perform those things which the treaty declared to be required. God's treaty with His Bride is no different. Chapter 28 clearly delineates this clause of the covenant with Israel.

The blessings for obedience all pertain to conditions "in the land." They would flow to the Bride if she diligently performed all of the commandments stipulated in the treaty:

"He will bless you in the land which the LORD [YHVH] your God is giving you." (Deut. 28:8b)

Likewise, the curses for disobedience are linked directly to conditions "in the land." The supreme punishment was expulsion from the land:

"And it shall be, that just as the LORD [YHVH] rejoiced over you to do you good and multiply you, so the LORD [YHVH] will rejoice over you to destroy you and bring you to nothing; and you shall be plucked from off the land which you go to possess. ⁶⁴ Then the LORD [YHVH] will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods, which neither you nor your fathers have known -- wood and stone." (Deut. 28:63-64)

The end result of these curses would be that the Bride would have to serve other gods; those graven images which are not gods, but only the work of men's hands.

The blessings and curses are the part of God's Covenant that is conditional. If the Bride (children of Israel) would obey, they were to be physically blessed in their own land. If the Bride disobeyed, they were to be physically cursed, first in their own land and, if they continued in their disobedience, they were promised to be even more greatly cursed in foreign lands.

~ The Unconditional Covenant ~

However, there was another part of the covenant that was unconditional. That had to do with the fact that the Bride would never be totally forsaken, but her Husband (YHVH) would always remember her and, if she were exiled, one day He would bring her back to the land He had given her and reestablish her once more:

"Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD [YHVH] your God drives you, ² and you return to the LORD [YHVH] your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, ³ that the LORD [YHVH] your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the LORD [YHVH] your God has scattered you. ...

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

(Deut. 30:1-3, 5-6, 8)

The present state of Israel is a partial fulfillment of this prophecy, for a substantial part of the House of Judah has returned to the Promised Land. The House of Israel has yet to return. Perhaps they will return when they begin to take seriously the following admonition:

"You shall not at all do as we are doing here today -- every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes -- ⁹ for as yet you have not come to the rest and the inheritance which the LORD [YHVH] your God is giving you."

(Deut. 12:8-9)

~ Prophet Prophesied ~

Of all the figures written about in the Hebrew Scriptures, one stands out as the leader of all leaders. That person is *Moshe*:

"But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the LORD [YHVH] knew face to face, ¹¹ in all the signs and wonders which the LORD [YHVH] sent him to do in the land of Egypt, before Pharaoh, before all his servants, and in all his land, ¹² and by all that mighty

power and all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel." (Deut. 34:10-12)

However, it was prophesied that one day there would be a Prophet like *Moshe*, but even greater:

"The LORD [YHVH] your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear, ¹⁶ according to all you desired of the LORD [YHVH] your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, "Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD [YHVH] my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die."

¹⁷ 'And the LORD [YHVH] said to me: "What they have spoken is good. I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. ¹⁹ And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him. ²⁰ But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die."" (Deut. 18:15-20)

We believe that *Y'shua HaMashiach* (Yeh-shoe'-ah Hah Mah-she'-ach = Jesus the Messiah) is that Prophet. *Y'shua* Himself said:

"The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works." (John 14:10)

The reason *Y'shua* could speak the words of the Father is because, as He said:

"I and My Father are one." (John 10:30)

~ The Custody of the Covenant ~

One of *Moshe's* final acts was to place the 'Book of the Law,' which he had spoken to the Bride, into the custody of the Priests for safe keeping:

"So Moses wrote this law and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD [YHVH], and to all the elders of Israel." (Deut. 31:9)

Along with the custody of the "Book of the Law," *Moshe* commanded that it be read to the people every seven years at the Festival of *Succot*. This was to be done so that the Bride would always understand that she was to show the proper respect (usually rendered 'fear' in English Bibles) to her Husband (YHVH):

"And Moses commanded them, saying: 'At the end of every seven years, at the appointed time in the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles, ¹¹ when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD [YHVH] your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. ¹² Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the LORD [YHVH] your God and carefully observe all the

words of this law, ¹³ and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD [YHVH] your God as long as you live in the land which you cross the Jordan to possess." (Deut. 31:10-13)

While this command was given for the children of Israel living in the Land, it can also be a wonderful custom to observe today as well, for it helps us to understand how important it is for the Bride to obey her Husband, both then and now.

~ Summary ~

The book of *Devarim*, *Moshe's* last teaching to the Bride (the children of Israel) is centered around the land which they were about to possess and the way they were to live their lives once that had entered into the Promised Land.

While traveling in the wilderness, the Bride was in constant contact with her Husband because the Tabernacle was within walking distance of every single member of Israel. In addition, they could look towards the Tabernacle at any time, day or night, and see a visible manifestation of God's Presence through the Pillar of Cloud by day and the Pillar of Fire by night.

Once they were settled in the Land, the majority of the Bride would be scattered throughout the nation and would no longer have the Tabernacle near enough to them to be able see those visible manifestations. Therefore, it was extremely important for the members of the Bride to understand the need to follow all of the commandments of their Husband (YHVH), whether it had to do with how to approach Him (in worship) or how to live peacefully and prosperously with their neighbors.

The key to understanding the future travails of the Bride (the children of Israel) and whether she would be allowed to stay in the land or be taken into captivity, was dependent entirely upon her willingness to obey the *mitzvot* (commandments) given by her Husband. This is the crux of the Blessing and Cursing section found in chapter 28.

But there is much more to this marriage relationship (between YHVH and Israel) than just obedience. What the Husband really desires is that His wife love Him, for a truly loving wife will also be an obedient wife, one who wants to please her Husband in every way.

"And the LORD [YHVH] your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD [YHVH] your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live." (Deut. 30:6)

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

~ Home At Last ~

Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan,
You and all this people,

To the land which I am giving to them -- the children of Israel.
Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you,
As I said to Moses.

Joshua 1:2-3



There must have been an air of excitement when the Bride (the children of Israel) realized they were truly going to take up residence in their promised home in the land of Canaan. After forty years of wandering through the desert wilderness, having only *manna* to eat, the idea of settling down in their own homes must have been almost unbelievable.

With the excitement, however, there must have also been a great deal of apprehension. After all, they still had to face the giants before whom their fathers had cowed. Just as God had prepared their fathers to enter the Land, now He once again showed the Bride His power just prior to her entrance into the Promised Land.

~ Learning to Fight ~

One thing the Bride needed to learn was how to fight battles with those who wanted to destroy her. But she also had to learn that unless her Husband (*YHVH*) was in favor of the battle, she should not enter it. These lessons were begun anew as the children of Israel proceeded northward toward the Promised Land. Their first battle was with *Sihon* the Amorite who was king of *Heshbon*:

"Rise, take your journey, and cross over the River Arnon. Look, I have given into your hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land. Begin to possess it, and engage him in battle. ²⁵ This day I will begin to put the dread and fear of you upon the nations under the whole heaven, who shall hear the report of you, and shall tremble and be in anguish because of you." (Deut. 2:24-25)

Heshbon was located just to the north and east of the Dead Sea. *Sihon* did not stand a chance against the Bride because her Husband (*YHVH*) was fighting for her:

"Then Sihon and all his people came out against us to fight at Jahaz. ³³ And the LORD [*YHVH*] our God delivered him over to us; so we defeated him, his sons, and all his people. ³⁴ We took all his cities at that time, and we utterly destroyed the men, women, and little ones of every city; we left none remaining. ³⁵ We took only the livestock as plunder for ourselves, with the spoil of the cities which we took." (Deut. 2:32-35)

The Bride was beginning to learn that the source of her strength was her Husband (*YHVH*) and the source of her weakness was herself:

"From Aroer, which is on the bank of the River Arnon, and from the city that is in the ravine, as far as

Gilead, there was not one city too strong for us; the LORD [*YHVH*] our God delivered all to us." (Deut. 2:36)

The Bride moved further north into the area of *Bashan* where she encountered king *Og*:

"So the LORD [*YHVH*] our God also delivered into our hands Og king of Bashan, with all his people, and we attacked him until he had no survivors remaining. ⁴ And we took all his cities at that time; there was not a city which we did not take from them: sixty cities, all the region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan. ⁵ All these cities were fortified with high walls, gates, and bars, besides a great many rural towns. ⁶ And we utterly destroyed them, as we did to Sihon king of Heshbon, utterly destroying the men, women, and children of every city. ⁷ But all the livestock and the spoil of the cities we took as booty for ourselves."

(Deut. 3:3-7)

In fact, the Bride fought battles and penetrated all the way to Mount Hermon on the east side of the Jordan River:

"And at that time we took the land from the hand of the two kings of the Amorites who were on this side of the Jordan, from the River Arnon to Mount Hermon ⁹ (the Sidonians call Hermon Sirion, and the Amorites call it Senir), ¹⁰ all the cities of the plain, all Gilead, and all Bashan, as far as Salcah and Edrei, cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan."

(Deut. 3:8-10)

It was this land, east of the Jordan, that *Moshe* granted to the tribes of *Reuven*, *Gad* and the half tribe of *Manashe*:

"And this land, which we possessed at that time, from Aroer, which is by the River Arnon, and half the mountains of Gilead and its cities, I gave to the Reubenites and the Gadites. ¹³ The rest of Gilead, and all Bashan, the kingdom of Og, I gave to half the tribe of Manasseh."

(Deut. 3:12-13)

~ Preparing to Go Home ~

These battles were preparatory training for the Bride so that she would know how to handle herself once she was at home across the Jordan.

However, the Bride's beloved leader, *Moshe*, was not going to go home with her. He was destined to die and be buried east of the Jordan. But before that eventful day took place, the Husband (*YHVH*) had *Moshe* install a new leader in his place. That new leader was, of course, *Joshua*:

"Then Moses spoke to the LORD [*YHVH*], saying: ¹⁶ Let the LORD [*YHVH*], the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, ¹⁷ who may go out before them and go in before them, who may lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD [*YHVH*] may not be like sheep which have no shepherd.' ¹⁸ And the LORD [*YHVH*] said to Moses: 'Take Joshua the son of Nun with you, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him; ¹⁹ set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and inaugurate him in their sight.'"

(Num. 27:15-19)

Moshe was also instructed to impart some of his authority to *Joshua* so that the Bride would listen to him just as they had listened (some of the time at least) to *Moshe*:

"And you shall give some of your authority to him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient." (Num. 27:20)

However, *Joshua* was not to receive as much authority as *Moshe* had carried, rather he was required to share some of it with *Eleazar* the priest:

"He shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire before the LORD [YHVH] for him by the judgment of the Urim. At his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, he and all the children of Israel with him -- all the congregation." (Num. 27:21)

Joshua was not given the privilege of speaking directly with God. Instead, he would have to receive his instructions through the office of the High Priest and the agency of the *Urim* אֹרְיִם (Oo-reem') and *Thummin* תְּמִינִים (Too-meem').

Then *Moshe* took *Joshua*, his able assistant, and *Eleazar* the priest and they officially performed the inauguration ceremony:

"So Moses did as the LORD [YHVH] commanded him. He took Joshua and set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation. ²³ And he laid his hands on him and inaugurated him, just as the LORD [YHVH] commanded by the hand of Moses." (Num. 27:22-23)

~ Losing a Leader ~

In some ways the entry into the Promised Land must have been a bittersweet experience for the children of Israel. Although they were in great anticipation of crossing the Jordan, they also had the sad experience of losing *Moshe*; their leader for the last forty years.

As *Moshe* neared the end of his life, he called the children of Israel together and gave them his 'song':

"Then Moses spoke in the hearing of all the assembly of Israel the words of this song until they were ended." (Deut. 31:30)

The entire 'song' is found in Deuteronomy 32. *Moshe* began it by calling heaven and earth to witness that the Husband (YHVH) is perfect and upright:

"Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak;

And hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.

²**Let my teaching drop as the rain,**

My speech distill as the dew,

As raindrops on the tender herb,

And as showers on the grass.

³**For I proclaim the name of the LORD [YHVH]:**

Ascribe greatness to our God.

⁴**He is the Rock,**

His work is perfect;

For all His ways are justice,

A God of truth and without injustice;

Righteous and upright is He."

(Deut. 32:1-4)

Moshe had a prophetic understanding that the Bride would continue to sin after coming home, just as she had sinned repeatedly in the wilderness:

"But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked;

You grew fat, you grew thick,

You are obese!

Then he forsook God who made him,

And scornfully esteemed the Rock of his salvation."

(Deut. 32:15)

But *The Song of Moshe* was not without hope, for *Moshe* knew that in the end the Husband (YHVH) would redeem His Bride and make atonement for His loved ones. But the hope is not just for Israel, it is also for the Gentiles who are willing to accept His sacrifice and follow His ways:

"Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people;

For He will avenge the blood of His servants,

And render vengeance to His adversaries;

He will provide atonement for His land and

His people."

(Deut. 32:43)

After completing his 'song,' *Moshe* gave one last admonition to the Bride, that she should observe and do all of the commands of the *Torah* because doing so would give her the key to life:

"Moses finished speaking all these words to all Israel, ⁴⁶and He said to them: 'Set your hearts on all the words which I testify among you today, which you shall command your children to be careful to observe -- all the words of this law. ⁴⁷For it is not a futile thing for you, because it is your life, and by this word you shall prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess."

(Deut. 32:45-47)

Before He went up on Mount Nebo to die, *Moshe* gave a blessing to each of the Tribes; the sons of Israel. These blessings, found in Deuteronomy 33, are covered in detail in our recorded teaching series: *Tribal Traits*.

~ The Promised Land ~

Before he died, *Moshe* was allowed to see the Promised Land from afar:

"Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is across from Jericho. And the LORD [YHVH] showed him all the land of Gilead as far as Dan, ²all Naphtali and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea, ³the South, and the plain of the Valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar. ⁴Then the LORD [YHVH] said to him, 'This is the land of which I swore to give Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, "I will give it to your descendants." I have caused you to see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there.' (Deut. 34:1-4)

After viewing this beautiful land with his own eyes, *Moshe* died and was buried:

"So Moses the servant of the LORD [YHVH] died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD

[YHVH]. ⁶ And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth Peor; but no one knows his grave to this day. ⁷ Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died. His eyes were not dim nor his natural vigor diminished." (Deut. 34:5-7)

The Bride mourned for *Moshe* thirty days before they proceeded into the Promised Land:

"And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days. So the days of weeping and mourning for Moses ended." (Deut. 34:8)

~ The New Leader ~

Now it was time for *Joshua* to take command and begin the process of leading the Bride home; across the Jordan River. *Joshua* was well equipped for this job. He had been *Moshe's* personal assistant since the children of Israel had left Egypt some forty years previously. He had been on Mount Sinai with *Moshe*, although not at the specific place where God met with *Moshe*:

"So Moses arose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up to the mountain of God. ¹⁴ And he said to the elders, 'Wait here for us until we come back to you. Indeed Aaron and Hur are with you. If any man has a difficulty, let him go to them.' ¹⁵ Then Moses went up into the mountain, and a cloud covered the mountain."

(Ex. 24:13-15)

When *Moshe* moved his tent outside the camp, after the sin of the golden calf, *Joshua* stayed in the tent even when *Moshe* went back into the camp to speak with the people:

"So the LORD [YHVH] spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. And he would return to the camp, but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle." (Ex. 33:11)

When it came time to send the men into the land of Canaan to spy out the land, *Joshua* went as the representative of the Tribe of *Ephraim* and came back with a good report:

"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; ⁷ 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.'"

(Num. 14:6-7)

Joshua had proven himself, very early on, as a military leader who was not afraid to go out and fight:

"Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. ⁹ And Moses said to Joshua, 'Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand.' ¹⁰ So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill."

(Ex. 17:8-10)

The Bride (children of Israel) could not have found a better replacement for *Moshe* than the one their loving Husband (YHVH) gave to them in the person of *Joshua*.

~ The Final Preparations ~

The very first thing the Bride needed after the death of *Moshe* was to have her new leader strengthened so that he would not flinch in battle. He received two pep talks. The first one came directly from the Husband (YHVH):

"Have I not commanded you? **Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD [YHVH] your God is with you wherever you go.**"

(Josh. 1:9)

The second pep talk came from the people, along with their assurances that they would follow his command:

"So they answered Joshua, saying, 'All that you command us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. ¹⁷ Just as we heeded Moses in all things, so we will heed you. Only the LORD [YHVH] your God be with you, as He was with Moses. ¹⁸ Whoever rebels against your command and does not heed your words, in all that you command him, shall be put to death. Only **be strong and of good courage.**'"

(Josh. 1:16-18)

~ Checking Out the House ~

The first order of business was to check out the Bride's new house. However, there was a problem, the current tenant had to be evicted. The job of getting them out of the house was going to fall on the shoulders of *Joshua* and his fighting men. Like any good military leader, *Joshua* wanted some good information. So, he sent in a reconnaissance team, two men who went into Jericho to check it out. After their encounter with *Rahab* רַחַב (Rah-khahv'), they returned with a far different report than the ten spies of *Moshe's* day:

"So the two men returned, descended from the mountain, and crossed over; and they came to Joshua the son of Nun, and told him all that had befallen them. ²⁴ And they said to Joshua, 'Truly the LORD [YHVH] has delivered all the land into our hands, for indeed all the inhabitants of the country are fainthearted because of us.'"

(Josh. 2:23-24)

~ Ready to Move ~

After hearing the report from the two spies, *Joshua* determined that the Bride was ready to move into her new home. However, there were a few last minute details that needed to be taken care of before they could make the move. The people had to be prepared for the crossing of the Jordan and instructions had to be given:

"So it was, after three days, that the officers went through the camp; ³ and they commanded the people, saying, 'When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD [YHVH] your God, and the priests, the Levites, bearing it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it.'"

(Josh 3:2-3)

The next step was for the people to sanctify themselves:

"And Joshua said to the people, 'Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD [YHVH] will do wonders among you.'" (Josh. 3:5)

Exactly what was done to accomplish this command is unclear. Certainly, the people were to prepare themselves in some way to enter the Promised Land, *Eretz Israel*. They were to become set apart and consecrated to their Husband (YHVH). Perhaps they were required to immerse themselves as they did prior to God's appearance at Mount Sinai. Whatever they were required to do, it appears that all of them accomplished the task as commanded.

The next step was for the priests to take up the Ark of the Covenant and pass before the people so they all knew that their movement to their new home was imminent:

"Then Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, 'Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over before the people.' So they took up the ark of the covenant and went before the people." (Josh. 3:6)

Now it was *Joshua's* turn to give the Bride a pep talk so she would be confident that her Husband was truly going with her into their new home in the Promised Land:

"And Joshua said, 'By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Hivites and the Perizzites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Jebusites: ¹¹ Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over before you into the Jordan.'" (Josh. 3:10-11)

A miraculous sign was promised to the Bride so that she would know that her Husband (YHVH) was indeed with her:

"And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of the LORD [YHVH], the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, that the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off, the waters that come down from upstream, and they shall stand as a heap." (Josh. 3:13)

~ Making the Move ~

Although it was nearing the early spring harvest season, and the Jordan River had more water in it than at other times of the year, it may not have been necessary for God to perform this miracle so that the children of Israel could cross over. The Jordan is not that deep or that wide of a river. They may well have been able to wade across, albeit with some difficulty. However, God knew that if He gave them a sign by cutting off the water and piling it up in a heap, while they passed over on dry land, the Bride would be impressed and would no doubt remember how their ancestors passed through the Red Sea some forty years previously:

"So it was, when the people set out from their camp to cross over the Jordan, with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people, ¹⁵ and as those who bore the ark came to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests who bore the ark dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan

overflows all its banks during the whole time of harvest), ¹⁶that the waters which came down from upstream stood still, and rose in a heap very far away at Adam, the city that is beside Zaretan.

"So the waters that went down into the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, failed, and were cut off; and the people crossed over opposite Jericho. ¹⁷ Then the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD [YHVH] stood firm on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan; and all Israel crossed over on dry ground, until all the people had crossed completely over the Jordan." (Josh. 3:14-17)

This event was so significant that God told *Joshua* to set up a memorial in the middle of the river to mark the place where they had crossed:

"Then Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the children of Israel, one man from every tribe; ⁵ and Joshua said to them: 'Cross over before the ark of the LORD [YHVH] your God into the midst of the Jordan, and each one of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, ⁶ that this may be a sign among you when your children ask in time to come, saying, 'What do these stones mean to you?'"

"⁷ Then you shall answer them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD [YHVH]; when it crossed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. And these stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever.'

"⁸ And the children of Israel did so, just as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones from the midst of the Jordan, as the LORD [YHVH] had spoken to Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and carried them over with them to the place where they lodged, and laid them down there. ⁹ Then Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests who bore the ark of the covenant stood; and they are there to this day."

(Josh. 4:4-9)

Once all of the people had passed over and the stone memorial had been put in place, the priests who were carrying the Ark were allowed to finish their crossing:

"Then it came to pass, when all the people had completely crossed over, that the ark of the LORD [YHVH] and the priests crossed over in the presence of the people." (Josh. 4:11)

Once they were out of the river, the waters that were piled up began to flow once again:

"And it came to pass, when the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD [YHVH] had come from the midst of the Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet touched the dry land, that the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and overflowed all its banks as before." (Josh. 4:18)

As a result of this miraculous event, the people of Israel gained enormous respect for their new leader:

"On that day the LORD [YHVH] exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they had feared Moses, all the days of his life." (Josh. 4:14)

~ More Preparation ~

The children of Israel moved into the Promised Land on the tenth day of the first month (Josh. 4:19). Even though they had 'sanctified' themselves prior to their crossing, there were some who were not yet ready to take possession of the Land because they had not been circumcised:

"At that time the LORD [YHVH] said to Joshua, 'Make flint knives for yourself, and circumcise the sons of Israel again the second time.' ³ So Joshua made flint knives for himself, and circumcised the sons of Israel at the hill of the foreskins." (Josh. 5:2-3)

During the forty years of wandering in the desert, the Bride (children of Israel) did not circumcise their new born males as commanded in the *Torah*:

"For all the people who came out had been circumcised, but all the people born in the wilderness, on the way as they came out of Egypt, had not been circumcised. ⁶ For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people *who were* men of war, who came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they did not obey the voice of the LORD [YHVH] -- to whom the LORD [YHVH] swore that He would not show them the land which the LORD [YHVH] had sworn to their fathers that He would give us, 'a land flowing with milk and honey.'" (Josh. 5:5-6)

The usual reason given for the children of Israel's failure to circumcise their children in the wilderness is that it was not done because of health reasons. In our opinion that is not the full story, for circumcision is tied up intimately with the possession of the land, and while they were in the wilderness they were not yet in a position to inherit the land:

"And I [YHVH] will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. ⁸ Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.'

⁹ And God said to Abraham: 'As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. ¹⁰ This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; ¹¹ and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you.'" (Gen. 17:7-11)

The Abrahamic Covenant specifically ties circumcision with inheriting the Land. The *Encyclopedia Judaica* states:

"The promise that Abraham's seed should inherit the land of Canaan was bound up together with this covenant." (CD-Rom Version)

Once the children of Israel had attained entrance into the Land, it was imperative that they be circumcised, otherwise those individuals who were not circumcised would have no inheritance. Now that they had crossed the Jordan River and were physically in the land, the men were required to be circumcised; otherwise they would be made *karet* כָּרֵת (kah-reht') or "cutoff" from their people. That could mean they would be expelled from the Promised Land; the very goal to which they were now attaining:

"And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off [*karet*] from his people; he has broken My covenant." (Gen. 17:14)

It was now time to perform the circumcision rite on those who had been born in the Wilderness:

"Then Joshua circumcised their sons *whom He raised up in their place*; for they were uncircumcised, because they had not been circumcised on the way. ⁸ So it was, when they had finished circumcising all the people, that they stayed in their places in the camp till they were healed. ⁹ Then the LORD [YHVH] said to Joshua, 'This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.' Therefore the name of the place is called Gilgal to this day." (Josh. 5:7-9)

~ A Celebration ~

After the mass circumcision had been completed, it was time for the Bride and Groom to celebrate their first Festival in their new home:

"Now the children of Israel camped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight [*between the two evenings*] on the plains of Jericho." (Josh. 5:10)

Now that the Bride was at home in the Promised Land, it was no longer necessary for her Husband (YHVH) to provide the Wilderness food (*manna*). Instead, she began to feast on the stored produce of the Land:

"And they ate of the produce of the land on the day after the Passover, unleavened bread and parched grain, on the very same day. ¹² Then the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten the produce of the land; and the children of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate the food of the land of Canaan that year." (Josh. 5:11-12)

~ Summary ~

Moving to a new home is always an exciting time. For the Bride of Messiah it was no exception, for she had been anticipating this event for forty full years.

However, after all that time in the Wilderness, there were some preparations that had to be accomplished before she was ready to accept the responsibilities of everyday life. For example: when the Bride entered the Land, the *manna* stopped and she had to learn how to plant and raise crops for both herself and her livestock. Food was no longer available for the gathering.

There were other preparations that had to be made. The Bride had to learn again that her strength was not her own but that of her Husband (*YHVH*). For this reason, God put the Bride through a series of military skirmishes, so she would be ready to do battle with the current tenants of the Land.

Accompanying all of these new situations, the Bride suffered the traumatic experience of losing *Moshe*; her trusted leader of forty years. Nevertheless, God provided the Bride with a new and very capable leader in the person of *Joshua*. However, God also used this change of leadership as an opportunity to begin weaning the Bride from a single strong leader, for *Joshua* was not given the privilege of talking with God face to face as *Moshe* had done. Instead, he had to go through *Eleazar* the High Priest using the *Urim* and *Thummim* which he carried, in order to communicate with the Bride's Husband (*YHVH*). This change would help prepare the Bride for the day when she would be subject to a government of Judges.

All in all, this was a very eventful time in the life of the Bride. The change in leadership, the resistance from the people who lived on the east side of the Jordan, the miraculous crossing of the Jordan, the circumcising of the males who had been born in the Wilderness, and finally the celebration of the Passover in her own home. Now the Bride could truly say that she was *Home At Last*.

Today, the spiritual Bride of Messiah is once again poised to enter the Promised Land (the Kingdom of God). We are awaiting our Betrothed Husband (*Y'shua*) to come for us and take us to the *Chuppah* (Wedding Chamber). After the wedding, we will return to earth with Him to help establish a permanent home.

But that is another story for another time.

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