

The Wedding of the Messiah

Part III Reluctant Bride

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

(Part 1 of 2)

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

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

The betrothal of HaShem (Hah Shem = the Name) to the children of Israel, which took place when HaShem encountered Moshe (Mow-shay = Moses) at the Burning Bush (See Issue 99-3), was a difficult one for both parties. It might seem strange to us that even though the children of Israel knew they were in a betrothal relationship with the very Creator of the Universe, yet they continually tried His patience with their frequent murmuring whenever trouble arose during their wedding march to Mount Sinai. This disposition toward murmuring was indicative of the fact that the children of Israel constituted a reluctant and untrusting Bride, right from the very beginning.

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

~ A Shaky Betrothal ~

Prior to the time when the children of Israel became betrothed to the God of Ya'acov (Yah-cove = Jacob), the Bride was living in the home of her adoptive/foster father, the evil Pharaoh of Egypt. It was at Moshe's Betrothal meeting with HaShem when God expressed His commitment to bring the children of Israel out of their Egyptian captivity:

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

Even though HaShem had expressed His commitment to His chosen Bride, she was not secure in her relationship with Him. Chapters 5 and 6 of Exodus tell about the lack of emunah on the part of the Bride. Apparently many members of the Bride were afraid that God was going to punish them if they did not go out in the desert to worship Him as directed, for it is written:

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

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

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

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

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

order to show the betrothed Bride that He would be a good Husband and protector:

"Yes, again and again they tempted God,
And limited the Holy One of Israel.

They did not remember His power:
The day when He redeemed them from the
enemy, When He worked His signs in Egypt,
And His wonders in the field of Zoan;

Turned their rivers into blood,
And their streams, that they could not
drink. He sent swarms of flies among
them, which devoured them, And frogs,
which destroyed them...." (Psalm 78:41-45)

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

~ Fear of the Unknown ~

Like any young bride who is taken out of her father's house during the night, the children of Israel were both elated and also somewhat apprehensive. They very much wanted to trust their Husband, but they had lingering doubts about His ability to actually accomplish what He had set out to do. At first was a wonderful celebration:

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

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

"And they baked unleavened
cakes of the dough which they had
brought out of Egypt; for it was not
leavened, because they were driven
out of Egypt and could not wait, nor
had they prepared provisions for
themselves." (Ex. 12:39)

On their way out they stopped and picked up the bones of their ancestor

Joseph, as had been promised him when he died:

"And Moses took the bones of Joseph with~him, for he had placed the children of Israel under solemn oath, saying, 'God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here with you.'" (Ex. 13:19)

However, the faith of the children of Israel wavered before they had finished their exit from the land of Egypt. HaShem, in His infinite mercy, took them in a direction that would protect them from having to experience war so early in their departure (by way of the Reed [Red] Sea). He was visibly with them all of the way:

"And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night." (Ex. 13:21)

~ Faltering Faith ~

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

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

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

the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness.'" (Ex. 14:10-12)

The complaints of the children of Israel were not against Moshe personally, they were really against the One who had delivered them out of Egypt; their betrothed Husband, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Moshe was merely the mediator between the Bride and her Husband.

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

The next complaint came after they had gone three days without finding fresh water. When they did find water at Marah it was too bitter to drink:

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

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

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

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

It is clear from the following verses that their murmurings are really against HaShem, even though they take the form of being against Moshe and Aharon (Ah-rone = Aaron).

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

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

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

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

It is interesting to note that most of the complaints were about food and drink, although all of her complaining was indicative of a Bride that simply had not yet learned to trust her Bridegroom to deliver her from harm's way. However, when a real test came forth, in the form of the attack on the children of Israel by the Amalekites, the members of the Bride who were chosen to fight, faithfully went forth in to battle under the leadership of Joshua. Thus they were able to gain the victory because Moshe held up the rod of God in his hand, thanks to support from Aaron and Hur.

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

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

~ Wedding Jitters ~

Up to this point in time, the Bride (the children of Israel) had not yet come face to face with the Bridegroom (the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob).

She had seen manifestations of His great power through the ten plagues of Egypt and the various miracles which He performed for them during the Wedding March from Egypt to Mount Sinai, but had never spoken to Him directly.

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

"Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled....

"Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice."
(Ex. 19:16, 18-19)

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

Traditionally, in the Ancient Wedding, the Bridegroom reads the Ketuvah

to His Bride. This wedding was no exception, for HaShem read His Ketuvah (the ten commandments or words) in His own voice to each and every member of the assembled Bride, as it is written:

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

"Now all the people witnessed
the thunderings, the lightning
flashes, the sound of the trumpet,
and the mountain smoking; and
when the people saw it, they trem-
bled and stood afar off.

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

"And Moses said to the people,
'Do not fear; for God has come to
test you, and that His fear may be be-
fore you, so that you may not sin.'"
(Ex. 20:1, 18-20)

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

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

"God, who at various times and
in different ways spoke in time past
to the fathers by the prophets, has in
these last days spoken to us by His
Son, whom He has appointed heir of
all things through whom also He
made the worlds; who being the

brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." (Heb. 1:1-4)

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

HaShem had taken His vow first:

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

Then the Bride had followed suit:

"So Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words which the LORD commanded him. Then all the people answered together and said, 'All that the LORD has spoken we will do.' So Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD." (Ex. 19:7-8)

The final ratification, in blood, of the marriage covenant took place following the setting forth of additional judgments (Heb. mishpat) from the Ketuvah, concerning proper behavior (see Ex. 21-23):

"And Moses took half the blood and put it in basins, and half the

blood he sprinkled on the altar.
Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, 'All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient.'

"And Moses took the blood,
sprinkled it on the people, and said,
'Behold, the blood of the covenant
which the LORD has made with you
according to all these words.'"
(Ex. 24:6-8)

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

~ The Chuppah ~

The time the Bridegroom and Bride spend in the Chuppah (Who-pah = wedding chamber), is supposed to be a time during which they become intimately acquainted with each other and begin to develop the bond that will hold them together over the years ahead. But how can a Bride enter the Chuppah when she refuses to even listen to her Husband's voice? Because of her reluctance to have face to face contact with HaShem, the vast majority of the members of the Bride were excluded from entering the Chuppah. Instead, a group of seventy elders, along with Moshe (including his assistant Joshua), Aharon, Nadiv (Nadab), and AviHu (Abihu) were invited to ascend the mountain up to a certain point. There they personally saw their Husband, the God of Israel:

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

At this point they were not in the Chuppah itself, it was only the entrance to the Chuppah. It was left to Moshe alone to fully enter the Chuppah, although his assistant Joshua was allowed to go further up the

mountain while Aharon and the elders had to return to camp.

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

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

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

The unique characteristic of the Chuppah is that it has a covering or canopy under which the Bridegroom and Bride spend their intimate honeymoon time together. The cloud which covered the top of the mountain served as the canopy for the Chuppah. HaShem was there along with Moshe, who stood in for the Bride as their mediator or representative. Had the Bride not been too frightened to hear God's voice, perhaps the cloud would have rested over the entirety of the camp of Israel and they would all have been in the Chuppah together, learning the Torah (instructions) directly from their Husband, HaShem.

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

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

~ The Adulterous Bride ~

While Moshe (who was also a member of the Bride) was personally getting

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

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

"When Moshe did not return by noon, the Bnai Yisrael knew that he could no longer be expected on that day, for both his ascents to the mountain as well as his descents therefrom always took place in the early mornings. According to their calculations, the forty days had already passed since they included in the total the day of Moshe's departure. In reality, that day was excluded since it was not a complete twenty-four hour period (because Moshe had still been in the Camp during the night preceding that day). "
(The Midrash Says, Vol. 1I, p.315.)

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

"Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, 'Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.'" (Ex. 32:1)

According to tradition, Aharon was not sure what to do so he tried to buy some time hoping that Moshe would return soon and put an end to their speculations. For this reason, he asked them to "break off" their golden earrings and give them to him, fully expecting they would not do so. To his surprise, they complied with his request. Seemingly unsure of himself and not knowing what to do next, Aharon went ahead and melted the gold and made a molded calf.

What is most interesting about this calf is that the people called it a representation of the god that brought them out of Egypt.

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

"So when Aaron saw it, he built
an altar before it. And Aaron made
a proclamation and said, 'Tomorrow
is a feast to the LORD.'"

(Ex. 32:4b-5)

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

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

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

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

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

(End Part 1 of 2)

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The Wedding of the Messiah

A Reluctant Bride
(Part 2 of 2)

~ A Husband's Reaction ~

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

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

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

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

spoken of I give to your descendants,
and they shall inherit it forever."

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

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

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

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

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

"Then the LORD said to Moses,
'Thus you shall say to the children of
Israel: "You have seen that I have
talked with you from heaven. You
shall not make anything to be with
Me - gods of silver or gods of gold
you shall not make for yourselves.'"
(Ex 20:22-23)

So Moshe, who also represented HaShem to the children of Israel,
took the Bride's lover (the golden calf) and destroyed it. Thus, their
adulterous lover was, in a sense, put to death as the Torah commands.
Then Moshe called out to see if any members of the Bride had and would
continue to remain faithful to their Husband. The tribe of Levi

answered that call. Upon instruction they went through the camp of Israel killing those who were the perpetrators of this evil. Three thousand members of the Bride died that day as a result of their idolatry (adultery) with the golden calf.

~ A Need for Atonement ~

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

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

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

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

"So the LORD plagued the people because of what they did with the calf which Aaron made."
(Ex. 32:30-35)

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

their Husband was going to personally abandon them and send an angel to lead them into the promised land, instead of going along with them Himself, they began to understand the enormity of their sin. This realization caused intense mourning on their part:

"And when the people heard these grave tidings,
they mourned, and no one put on his ornaments
So the children of Israel stripped
themselves of their ornaments by
Mount Horeb." (Ex.33:4,6)

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

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

"So the LORD spoke to Moses face
to face, as a man speaks to his...friend" (Ex. 33:11)

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

"Then Moses said to the LORD,
See, You say to me, "Bring up this
people." But You have not let me
know whom You will send with me.
Yet You have said, I know you by
name, and you have also found grace
in my sight." Now wherefore, I
pray, if I have found grace in Your
sight, show me now Your way, that I
may know You and that I may find
grace in Your sight. And consider
that this nation is Your people.'

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

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

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

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

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

"So he cut two tablets of stone like the first ones. Then Moses rose early in the morning and went up Mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him; and he took in his hand the two tablets of stone." (Ex. 34:4)

~ Atonement is Made ~

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

"And he said, 'Please show me Your glory.'" (Ex. 33:18)

HaShem agreed to show Moshe His Glory, but He said:

"... You cannot see My face; for no man

shall see Me, and live.'" (Ex. 33:20)

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

"Then the LORD descended in
the cloud and stood with him there,
and proclaimed the name of the
LORD." (Ex 34:5)

However, for HaShem to show Himself in all His Glory meant far more than just appearing with a great radiance of light. While that in itself would be awesome and most frightful to any human, what really is being communicated here is the very essence of HaShem; the Thirteen Attributes of God's Nature, from which He cannot and will not deviate:

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

The Thirteen Attributes Of God's Nature

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

1 & 2) The LORD, the LORD (Heb. YHVH,* YHYH). In the original Hebrew text this phrase would constitute the actual name of HaShem. It is said that the reason the Name is repeated is because it teaches us that God is merciful twice, both before we sin, and again after we sin. HaShem does not change, He is always merciful. What must change is the heart of the sinner.

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

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

3) God (Heb. EL). This attribute shows that HaShem is the all powerful God of the Universe.

4) merciful (Heb. rachum).
God is full of sympathy for all of suffering humanity.

5) and gracious (Heb. vechannun).
God is always gracious; willing to assist and help.

6) longsuffering (Heb. erech appayim).
This attribute is sometimes translated as "slow to anger." God is not quick to punish sinners, rather He allows plenty of time for the sinner to repent.

7) abounding in goodness (Heb. rav chesed sometimes translated as 'lovingkindness').
It is God's inherent will to do good to those whom He has created, if only they will let Him do so.

8) and truth (Heb. ve-emet).
If God were nothing else, He would have to be true, both to Himself and to mankind. Rabbi Dr. J.H. Hertz, in The Soncino Edition of the Pentateuch and Haftorahs, has this comment about chesed and emet: "Note that 'chesed, lovingkindness, precedes 'emet,' truth, both here and generally throughout Scripture; as if to say, 'Speak the truth by all means; but be quite sure that you speak the truth in love.'" (p. 365).

9) keeping mercy for thousands (Heb. nobler chesed laalafim).
HaShem remembers all of the good deeds which His people do,

even down to the farthest removed of the descendants. Thus, we are blessed even today because of the righteousness of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

10) forgiving iniquity (Heb. noseh avon).

The Hebrew word 'avon' means sins that are committed because one's disposition is evil. God is willing to forgive even these nasty types of sin.

11) (forgiving) transgression (Heb. pesha).

these are sins that come from rebellion against God, and they too can be forgiven.

12) (forgiving) sin (Heb. chattaah). These are the sins that result from error, also forgivable.

13) by no means clearing the guilty (Heb. venakkeh lo yentakkeh).
Hertz comments:

"The Rabbis explain: venakkeh 'acquitting--the penitent; lo yentakkeh, but not 'acquitting--the impenitent.'
He is merciful and gracious and forgiving; but He will never obliterate the eternal and unbridgeable distinction between light and darkness, between good and evil. God cannot leave repeated wickedness and obstinate persistence in evil entirely unpunished. His goodness cannot destroy His justice. The sinner must suffer the consequences of his misdeeds. The unfailing and impartial consequences of sin help man to perceive that there is no 'chance' in morals. The punishments of sin are thus not vindictive, but remedial." (Ibid., p. 365).

The final phrase of this passage:

"visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."

relates to the natural consequences that result from sin, which can have a negative effect upon future generations. However, HaShem, in His mercy, does not allow such consequences to affect people beyond the fourth generation, while His mercy and forgiveness extends to a thousand generations.

Moshe certainly saw God in all of His glory. As a result, he knew

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

~ The Covenant is Renewed ~

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

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

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

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

In addition to specific instructions about what kind of relationship the children of Israel were to have with the people who currently lived in the Promised Land (they were to have no relationship with them whatsoever), God also reiterated the need to observe the three

national pilgrimage festivals (Pesach, Shavu'ot, and Succoth), the offering of the firstborn, and the bringing of firstfruits.

Finally, the ratification of this renewed covenant took place:

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

"So he was there with the LORD
forty days and forty nights; he nei-
ther ate bread nor drank water. And
He wrote on the tablets the words of
the covenant, the Ten Command-
ments." (Ex. 34:27-28)

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

When the children of Israel saw that Moshe's face shone, they knew that HaShem had taken them back. This day (10 Tishri) became Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement). To this day, the Jewish people go through a forty day period of repentance and return (teshavah) beginning on 1 Elul and ending on Yom Kippur (see issue 96-2 for more detail).

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

~ A Time of Peace ~

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

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

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

"And let them make Me a sanctuary (Heb. mikdash), that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle (MisAkan) and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it." (Ex. 25:8-9)

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

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

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

"So Moses gave a commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, 'Let neither man nor woman

do any more work for the offering of the sanctuary.' And the people were restrained from bringing, for the material they had was sufficient for all the work to be done -- indeed too much." (Ex. 36:6-7)

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

~ The Mishkan Is Erected ~

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

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

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

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

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

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

To be continued... next issue.

Dean and Susan Wheelock

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