



The Zion Letter

The Monthly Newsletter of For Zion's Sake Ministries, Inc.
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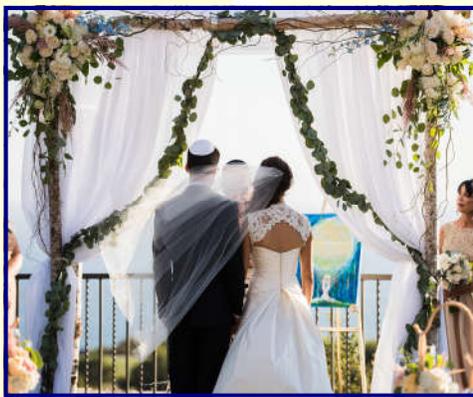
Who is the Bride of Messiah? (Part II)

In the last edition of the Zion Letter I mentioned how Yeshua/Jesus told Jerusalem, **“You will not see Me until say, Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord,” Mt 23:39** (a very familiar verse to believers, but did you know it was the first thing a rabbi says to call the bridegroom in a Jewish wedding?). In fact King David likely wrote these words because they originate in Psalm 118:26. Psalm 118 connects back to 1Chronicles 16:8 and 34 where David quoted verses also found in Psalm 118. Why is this important, because to understand the Jewish wedding you must understand a few concepts that are mostly unknown in Christendom. Did you know that there is a Sabbath connection to the Bride of Messiah throughout Jewish rabbinic commentary? We learned a lot about the Jewish wedding as it relates to Yeshua/Jesus and the Jewish people last month; this month I promised to examine how Christians fit into the picture of Yeshua's betrothal and marriage promises to Israel. In this article we will look at Covenant, Torah (God's instruction and Word through Moses), and we will look at translation and how it affects our understanding of the Bible and hopefully clear up the question of “Who is the Bride of Messiah?”

As I said last month, the Bride is made up of both Messianic Jew and Christian, but not all Jews or Christians are part of the Bride. Rev 19:7 tells us there are guests at the wedding too! It is important to note that the Marriage of the Lamb and our individual salvation are two separate things. Salvation guarantees son-ship (see Gal 3:26, Romans 8); and it guarantees eternal life (John 3:16), but nowhere does being born again promise that one is the Bride of Messiah. Read on and let's see what the Scriptures reveal!

The Importance of Covenant:

It is true that Yeshua is the Word of God (John 1) and therefore He is the voice of the Bible, speaking only what His Father instructs Him (John 14:24). Yeshua betrothed



Himself to the Jewish people some 700 years before He came in the flesh (**Hosea 2:19**); here God/Yeshua made a marriage covenant with the Jewish people forever; there was no Church in those times, but God would make a way for non-Jewish believers, Christians and Messianic Jewish followers who are not of Jewish birth to be included in the Bride; it is a covenant in which the participants will know Him (i.e. to know the Lord is to be Born again). So not all Jews are part of the Bride, because not all Jewish people are born again, nor do they all fulfill the requirements necessary to be “The Bride”. Christians who are Born Again are eligible to join in Yeshua's marriage covenant with the Jewish people, but not all Christians will choose to join that covenant; this is because we have a choice who we marry. We all become sons and daughters of God when we believe in the Son (see Galatians 3:26); however a son/daughter cannot choose the family they are born into. In ancient Israel, just as in Western culture today, the bride has a choice whether to marry the groom or not. This makes son-ship very different from being the Bride! Besides, how can a son or daughter of God be a bride at the same time? It doesn't make sense; there are some hoops people have to go through to be the Bride just as Esther had to prepare for a whole year with all the beautiful virgins of Persia to be the Bride, yet not all became the King's Bride in the Book of Esther. Again, in the Jewish wedding the Father of the Groom chooses the Bride, but as the Scripture says, **“Many are called, few are chosen.”** In other words, not all who are born again will be chosen and not all who are called will say yes. Christians can get in on God's marriage covenant with Israel and Judah, but while being born again gives son-ship, it does not promise anything about being the Bride. We will examine this further.

The Marriage Covenant: Engagement

In Judeo-Christian culture, a man would traditionally ask for a woman's hand in marriage; this was the beginning of the marriage covenant (provided she said yes). In ancient Israel, the father of the groom chose the bride for his son

and negotiated a dowry for the bride, but she still had the choice to say yes or no.

A Covenant is in essence a Holy contract that involves blood. The Word Covenant in Hebrew is “**Brit**” and it means circumcision as well as covenant. So a Biblical marriage covenant was a contract between two or more parties where an exchange of something of value is paid (The Mohar – Bride Price) by the groom’s father to the family of the Bride. A covenant also includes the shedding of blood, the word covenant in Hebrew is **Brit** and it also means “a cutting of flesh or circumcision”. For this reason it was critical even as recently as the 19th century that the Bride be a virgin, for the consummation of the marriage fulfilled the requirement of the covenant. In previous centuries kings would have priests and nobles waiting outside the marriage chamber to literally see proof (the sheets) that the marriage was consummated and that the Bride was a virgin. I know “Too much information,” but still today some cultures require such proof. In the story of choosing Rebekah for Isaac, the servant paid Gold, silver and Jewels as a bride price. In return the Bride must consent to be married just like we must accept Yeshua as our Savior. Many people say no to Yeshua and many people say no when asked to marry. The Biblical Bride always had a choice. Finally, what separates a covenant from a contract is the shedding of blood; this takes place at the consummation of the marriage. If the Bride is a virgin (as was the case in Biblical times) then the marriage covenant would be sealed in blood with the consummation of the marriage. Read between the lines if you don’t get what I’m saying. The blood of Yeshua’s marriage Covenant is the precious blood He shed for us on the Cross, but again, please note, he initially made the covenant with Israel and Judah (see Jer 31:31). Only after His death did He give His Jewish Disciples the Great Commission to go and make disciples of the nations, teaching them all that He commanded His own Disciples to do (See Mt 28:18-20).

So who did the Father choose to be His Son’s Bride and where in the Scripture are the terms of the Covenant? A marriage Covenant begins with betrothal (Erusin-Nissuin in Hebrew.) Let’s look at who the Father chose.

The first place in the Bible where the “Word of God” mentions betrothal (the first step in the ancient Jewish wedding Covenant) is in Hosea 2:19-20, **“I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, In Lovingkindness and in compassion. I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness then you will know the Lord.”** Here Yeshua is speaking to the Jewish nation, particularly those who will know the Lord as He says (i.e. who know Yeshua as Messiah). So not all Israel are the Bride. I would like to point out that these words were written around the time of Isaiah the prophet and nearly 750 years before the birth of the Messiah. The second time we hear **betrothal** mentioned is when the Apostle Paul betrothed the congregation of Corinth to Messiah as a pure virgin, (See 2Cor11:2). Why? Because He was their Rabbi, who planted the assembly of Corinth and they were a mix of Jewish believers and Gentile con-

verts sojourning in what was likely a Messianic Jewish congregation (Remember, the Church as you think of it did not yet exist). As a Jew, as an Apostle and as a Rabbi, Paul had the authority to betroth people to Messiah, just as Abraham sent his servant to pick a bride for Isaac (see Gen 24), Yeshua had sent out His apostles as servants to find His Bride. Yeshua Himself said others besides the Jews would join the marriage covenant who at that time were not part of Israel in verse 23 of Hosea 2, **“I will also have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion, and I will say to those who were not My people, You are My people! And they will say, you are My God.”** Who are these people who will join the marriage Covenant between Yeshua and His Chosen people? **(The Gentiles, See Eph 2:11-17, Rom 9:24-29)**, but did they need a Jewish Rabbi like Paul to betroth them to Messiah like Abraham sent his servant to betroth Rebecca to Isaac? Apparently or it would not have been in the Scripture. If the Corinthians needed Rabbi Paul to betroth them as a bride (like Rebecca) in order to bring them into God’s covenant with Israel, then perhaps all the assemblies from Rome to Antioch needed the same? Comparing it to Abraham’s servant, it makes sense that the Father would send an a highly esteemed servant to seek out a bride for His Son, Yeshua!

However, for some seventeen hundred years we’ve been gone, expelled from the fourth century Church by Emperor Constantine at Nicea. Only now are we back in nearly every city as James said. Perhaps God sent us to bless the Christians with betrothal just as Paul did? For we know as Hosea prophesied above, that God will not only save Gentiles, but that some will even be part of His Bride!

The Sign of the Sabbath:

Why is keeping the Sabbath so important for Jew or Gentile to be part of the Bride? Exodus 31:12-17, **“The Lord spoke to Moses saying, “But as for you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, You shall surely observe My Sabbaths; for this is a sign (“Ot” in Hebrew, as in an engagement ring, a token of promise) between Me and you throughout your generations that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you... So the sons of Israel shall observe the Sabbath, to celebrate the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever.”** Marriage is Holy right? Holy means belonging to the Lord; so when God says something is Holy, it belongs to Him. Marriage is Holy in the sight of God. Many will be judged for defiling the sanctity of marriage on the judgment day.

What covenant is the weekly Sabbath talking about? The marriage covenant between Yeshua and His Bride; as I said, it is the **“Ot”, the engagement ring that testifies to the world that we are the Bride!** Throughout history the rabbis referred to the term **“The Sabbath Bride”** (google it and see for yourself); In the Talmud the rabbis taught that the Sabbath was God’s



Bride (incorrect, but they were onto something). Other rabbis taught that the Sabbath was the sign of God's marriage to the Jewish people (See "Sabbath Bride" My Jewish Learning.com). These folks had it mostly right, they just didn't get the part that the Bridegroom is not only God, but the Messiah as well and that Jews would have to be born again and Sabbath keepers in order to be the Bride. I will explain about Christians and the Sabbath.

The Law of the Sojourner:

"If an alien/foreigner sojourns with you, or one who may be among you throughout your generations, and he wishes to make an offering by fire, as a soothing aroma to the Lord, just as you do so he shall do. As for the assembly, there shall be on statute for you and for the alien who sojourns with you, a perpetual statute throughout your generations; as you are, so shall the alien be before the Lord. There is to be one law and one ordinance for you and for the alien who sojourns with you," Numbers 15:14-16. This law applied in the New Testament age as well, only the curse of the law (death for not keeping the Sabbath) no longer applied, but the blessings of Shabbat still do. We see this in Acts 15; there was a controversy amongst the Apostles over Gentile circumcision. James decided that Gentile believers only be required to avoid fornication, eating blood or meat that has been strangled, and that they abstain from things contaminated by idols; then James goes on to say, *"For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath," Acts 15:21.* Here we see James offering non-Jewish believers the opportunity to be sojourners, to dwell amongst the Jewish community, particularly the believing Jewish community and to keep Shabbat! Remember, there was no Church yet at this point and the only Canonized Bible was the Old Testament, so if you wanted to hear the Word preached, you had to go to a synagogue. James was also offering Gentile believers the chance to be Sojourners (Num 15:14-17, Lev 16:29, Ezekiel 47:21); this is God's way of grafting Gentiles into Israel and the Jewish people. Remember, you have a choice to say yes or no, but when I explain Isaiah 56 you might want the blessing of Shabbat/Sabbath. The Jewish Sabbath is Friday night at sundown to Saturday at sunset. That is why the Resurrection is celebrated on Sunday, the day after the Sabbath, (See Matthew 28:1, Luke 4:14-21).

Isaiah 56: Moving from Sons and Daughters to Bride!

"How blessed is the man who does this, and the Son of man who takes hold of it; Who keeps from profaning the Sabbath, and keeps his hand from doing any evil. Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord say, "the Lord will surely separate me from his people." ... For thus says the Lord to the Eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths and choose what pleases Me, and hold fast My Covenant, To them I will give in My house and within My walls a memorial and a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name which will not be cut off. Also to the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to Him, and to love

the name of the Lord, to be His servants, everyone who keeps from profaning the Sabbath and holds fast My covenant...Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar," Isaiah 56 2-7. Notice a couple things here: First, foreigner is pleading with God (700 or so years before the birth of the Messiah) not to cut him off from the Lord's people, the Jews. Second, the only place a foreigner/non-Jewish proselyte could keep Shabbat/Sabbath was in the synagogue, There were no Churches 700 years before the birth of Yeshua or later when James told the Gentile believers to go to the synagogue on the Sabbath by choice in Acts 15. The Third and most important point is that God promises these Sabbath keeping Gentile believers a name better than sons and daughters, not better than corporal or sergeant, congressman or senator, **but better than a son or daughter.** God was talking about family here; and the only name better than son of daughter in a family is Bride or Groom, Husband or Wife. In this case I believe Yeshua is promising the Messianic Gentile Believers who keep Shabbat together with Jewish believers in a Messianic Jewish Synagogue the name Bride! He is certainly promoting them from sons and daughters (son ship we get automatically by faith in Yeshua, Gal 3:26) to Bride. Read the chapter for yourself; these are not my words, this is the word of God friend.

Conclusion:

Folks the Jews were the Chosen people for several reasons, not that we are better than anybody, but we were entrusted with the Oracles of God, (See Romans 3), and we are a priestly nation with responsibility to teach the nations all that God commanded us, (see the Great Commission in Matthew 28). We are the people of the Messiah and it was always our job to bring the Gentiles into the family, like Paul (Read Acts 15). So it would make sense that God would choose us to go out and find His Bride, like Abraham's servant in Gen 24. Most if not all teaching on the Bride in the thousands of churches I have visited has centered completely on the Church, never Israel. In fact, I have never before heard teaching that included the Messianic Jews as the Bride or even that the wedding may be Jewish. The purpose of my teaching is to challenge you, to help you get out of the box. Luke 21:24 tells us that the times of the Gentiles will end. Does that mean the Church age will end too? Are we going back to the Jewish Sabbath (see Isaiah 66:23); Are we going back to Biblical Feasts? (See Zechariah 14:16, Lev 23:33-41, John 7) When Yeshua gave the Great Commission, it was to teach the nations to do only what he and the disciples did: Shabbat (Luke 4:14-21), Passover (Luke 22:7 on) Sukkot/ the Feast of Booths (John 7) and etcetera. As I write it is the Last and greatest day of the Feast, John 7:37-39.

Yes, I fully understand being saved by grace through faith and not of works. Yes, I fully understand that the letter kills and the Spirit gives life; so as a Messianic Jew I teach Biblical things recognizing that all have sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God; that is why we needed a

Savior. That said, does anybody pay attention to Matthew 5:17-19? All is not fulfilled; has the Anti-Messiah come? Do you know who He is, or the two witnesses? There are still prophesies to be fulfilled.

I back up everything I say with Scriptures. Those who know me know that I welcome all sincere believers and sincere seekers into our congregation, regardless of background. Friend this is not about me or Messianic Jews being better than anybody, this is about the truth of God's Word and what God's word requires of us to be the Bride!

I have much more to say, but no room to say it (such as the law of the Kinsman Redeemer). In the New testament age it is the Messianic Jew like Paul who is the kinsman redeemer to the Christian. It was Joseph who gave the title of heir to the throne of David to Jesus in Matthew 1 because the Holy Spirit (vs 18) was not a descendant of David and therefore could not pass the inheritance. In Ezekiel 47:21, it is the Jew who gives the non-Jewish sojourners who dwell in the Messianic Jewish community an inheritance in the land of Israel; it is God who commands the Jew to give that inheritance. Perhaps it was God's intention all along for us all to be together on Shabbat (Isaiah 66:23, Lev 23). *One day we will all celebrate Shabbat, God says so. Last, but not least, who are the guests at the wedding? Revelation 19:7 says, "For the Marriage of the Lamb has come and His Bride has made herself ready. It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then He said to me, Write, Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb."* So there is the Bride and then there are guests at the marriage, but who are the guests? Is it possible that they are the sons and daughters of God (Jew and non-Jew alike) who did not do what God required to receive a better name (see Isaiah 56). Friend, I want you all to be the Bride. And when I go back to the beginning of this or part one of this newsletter I see the language of a Jewish wedding being used by the Messiah Himself as He addresses the people of Jerusalem, Israel. Esther spent a whole year preparing to be a Bride. What are you doing to prepare to be the Bride of Messiah oh son or daughter of God?

Love,
Rabbi Joe

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