

# *The Bride of the King*

Drash on parashah 35; Naso

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In our parashah this week we read of suspected unfaithfulness on the part of a wife and the results if proven faithful, as well as the results if proven unfaithful. As much as this was a way to prevent unfaithfulness, the primary intent was to teach faithfulness to the wives of Isra'el. As with much of Torah, the historical significance of this practice doesn't have direct application today in the absence of the Temple, however, spiritually, we do have another phrespit for all of us to learn from. First, let's take a look at a New Covenant parallel.

*Wives should submit to their husbands as they do to the Lord; because the husband is head of the wife, just as the Messiah, as head of the Messianic Community, is himself the one who keeps the body safe. Just as the Messianic Community submits to the Messiah, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. As for husbands, love your wives, just as the Messiah loved the Messianic Community, indeed, gave himself up on its behalf, in order to set it apart for God, making it clean through immersion in the mikveh, so to speak, in order to present the Messianic Community to himself as a bride to be proud of, without a spot, wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and without defect. [Ephesians 5:22-27]*

*The bridegroom is the one who has the bride; but the bridegroom's friend, who stands and listens to him, is overjoyed at the sound of the bridegroom's voice. So this joy of mine is now complete. [Yochanan/John 3:29]*

So as we see, Believers today are part of a body, the body of Messiah. This you may have known, but have you stopped to think that the body were are a part of, whether male or female, is a female body? It is a bride to be exact. Notice that the Bible calls us the bride of Messiah, not the wife of Messiah. The bride refers to a special time of celebration and honor for the bride, as a result of the relationship she has with her husband. Pretty much any man who has been married knows that the wedding day is 90% for the bride. For us, however, a wedding and the joy it has lasts for one day. With Yeshua, the wedding "day" is something which describes the perpetual state of our relationship with Him.

Now I know that to our modern American ears, passages like the one in Ephesians rub us the wrong way, especially if you are a woman. There is a reason for this, and it is something we must come to terms with if we are to properly understand our relationship with God. Understanding this will also help with our marriage relationships as well. We also need to take a look at the historical context that the Bible was written and the created order of humanity.

*Then Adonai, God, formed a person [Hebrew: adam] from the dust of the ground [Hebrew: adamah] and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, so that he became a living being. ...*

*Adonai, God, took the person and put him in the garden of `Eden to cultivate and care for it.*

*Adonai, God, gave the person this order: "You may freely eat from every tree in the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. You are not to eat from it, because on the day that you eat from it, it will become certain that you will die." Adonai, God, said, "It isn't good that the person should be alone. I will make for him a companion suitable for helping him." So from the ground Adonai, God, formed every wild animal and every bird that flies in the air, and he brought them to the person to see what he would call them. Whatever the person would call each living creature, that was to be its name.*

*So the person gave names to all the livestock, to the birds in the air and to every wild animal. But for Adam there was not found a companion suitable for helping him. Then God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the person; and while he was sleeping, he took one of his ribs and closed up the place from which he took it with flesh. The rib which Adonai, God, had taken from the person, he made a woman-person; and he brought her to the man-person. The man-person said, "At last! This is bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh. She is to be called Woman [Hebrew: ishah], because she was taken out of Man [Hebrew: ish]." This is why a man is to leave his father and mother and stick with his wife, and they are to be one flesh. They were both naked, the man and his wife, and they were not ashamed.*

*[B'reshet/Genesis 2:7,15-25]*

We see in the first chapter that God created mankind in His image. Male and female He created them. This implies that God has both male and female qualities, which require both male and female people to properly image Him in the world. When God creates Adam, Adam has a perfect relationship with God. There are other asexual organisms in the world, and God could have made Adam with the means to reproduce himself and the human race without making women, but He didn't. Instead, He said that it was not good for the man to be alone and made a woman. The primary reason for this was Adam could not fully image His Creator. However, with Havah (Eve) as his bride (kallah - from a root word meaning "to complete") They became one (echad) and together imaged God's masculine and feminine qualities. They would also provide a model for the relationship between the body of Messiah and her Husband, Yeshua. In the relationship between Adam and Havah, there was equality, because they each played an equal role in imaging God. It is the presence of God in the relationship which makes the created order work, make sense, and be honoring to both God and people. It is sin, which has separated mankind from God, that makes the created order become something negative, rather than something positive. Through the cleansing that comes from a relationship with Yeshua, that relationship is able to be restored and the created order makes sense.

We have to consider the historical context at this point. Women, bear with me for a bit, because this will sound bad to your modern ears, but in a few minutes, hopefully it will get better. In those days, women for the most part, except for rare circumstances, lived either under the authority of their father, or once married, lived under the authority of their husband. A woman didn't own property or live on her own. Usually if a woman did, she was either a prostitute, or considered on the same status as such. When Kalev (Caleb) and Y'hoshua (Joshua) went to the Promised Land and stayed at the house of a "prostitute" in the Hebrew, an alternate translation is innkeeper. She owned and operated her own Jericho B&B in the wall of the city. She may not have ever actually sold her body sexually for profit, but to a Hebrew mind, the fact that she lived on her own and owned and operated her own business put her on the same moral level as a prostitute. She lacked the headship of either a father or a husband.

In that culture, everything about a woman was representative of the male headship over her. She owed everything about her to either her husband or her father. This was why adultery was so bad and why there was such harsh consequences for it as we see in our parashah. For a woman to take what her husband had given to her, which provided her with all she had and made her what she was, and then share herself with a different man, was betrayal. In the same way, as the bride of Messiah, everything we have and what we are has been given to us by Him. He has specially gifted each of us to live as His bride in the world and give those gifts back to Him in building His Kingdom.

I know that the men here will have a more difficult time relating to the concept of being part of a bride than the women, which is why God put Proverbs 31 in the Bible. Let's take a look at this chapter and see the context that it was written in, as well as some basic concepts for all of us to gain from.

*The words of King L'mu'el, the prophecy with which his mother disciplined him: No, my son! No, son of my womb! No, son of my vows! Don't give your strength to women or your ways to that which destroys kings. It is not for kings, L'mu'el, not for kings to drink wine; it is not for rulers to ask, "Where can I find strong liquor?" For they may drink, then forget what has been decreed, and pervert the justice due to the poor. Give strong liquor to one who is perishing, wine to the deeply depressed; let him drink, forget his poverty and cease to remember his troubles. Speak up for those who can't speak for themselves, for the rights of all who need an advocate. Speak up, judge righteously, defend the cause of the poor and the needy.*

Notice first, that this is a mom talking to her son, who would later become a king. So far, she gives him some advice on the kind of man he ought to be. Notice too that of all the advice she could give him, her two main instructions so far have to do with staying sober and caring for the poor and needy. Next, her third and biggest piece of advice relates to the kind of woman he should look for in a wife.

*Who can find a capable wife? Her value is far beyond that of pearls. Her husband trusts her from his heart, and she will prove a great asset to him. She works to bring him good, not harm, all the days of her life. She procures a supply of wool and flax and works with willing hands. She is like those merchant vessels, bringing her food from far away. It's still dark when she rises to give food to her household and orders to the young women serving her. She considers a field, then buys it, and from her earnings she plants a vineyard. She gathers her strength around her and throws herself into her work. She sees that her business affairs go well; her lamp stays lit at night. She puts her hands to the staff with the flax; her fingers hold the spinning rod. She reaches out to embrace the poor and opens her arms to the needy. When it snows, she has no fear for her household; since all of them are doubly clothed. She makes her own quilts; she is clothed in fine linen and purple. Her husband is known at the city gates when he sits with the leaders of the land. She makes linen garments and sells them; she supplies the merchants with sashes. Clothed with strength and dignity, she can laugh at the days to come. When she opens her mouth, she speaks wisely; on her tongue is loving instruction. She watches how things go in her house, not eating the bread of idleness. Her children arise; they make her happy; her husband too, as he praises her: Many women have done wonderful things, but you surpass them all!" Charm can lie, beauty can vanish, but a woman who fears Adonai should be praised. Give her a share in what she produces; let her works speak her praises at the city gates. [Mishlei/Proverbs 31]*

This is a woman who is hard working, wise, and knowledgeable in business and the affairs of her household. Her husband is known in the city and the marketplace because of the testimony of his wife. She possesses beauty, but as a testimony to the goodness of her husband, not the vanity of herself. She is a Godly woman, who honors her husband out of her relationship with God first, regardless of the merit of her husband. The same could apply to a daughter and her father. The meaning of this passage takes on a new life when we all see ourselves as the bride of Yeshua. Because of all He has done for us, we work as hard as we can to bring Him glory while going about the business of building His Kingdom. Notice that the reward for this is being exalted by Him who is our head. As we seek to build ourselves up, we can only do this as far as our own status brings us, which usually won't go very far. However, as we bring glory to Yeshua, He lifts us up according to His position as King of the Universe.

The imagery widens further. The natural result of any marriage covenant is offspring. It is no different with the bride of Messiah.

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, self control. Nothing in the Torah stands against such things. [Galatians 5:22-23]*

In Hebrew, the word for seed (zera) also means child or offspring. In the New Covenant, God said that as a husband of Isra'el, He would put the Torah, which is also our marriage covenant or ketubah, in her inward parts. The result of this is the fruits of the Spirit. The gifts are also part of this. Each member of the body of Messiah is gifted in particular ways to serve and benefit the rest of the body, however, these gifts and fruits are the result of our relationship with Messiah, not the substance of that relationship.

This brings us back to our parashah. The result of unfaithfulness to our husband is barrenness. After all He has done for us, how could we waste the gifts He has given to us and not bear the offspring He has destined for us? There may be accusers, but let them be proven false on the Day of Judgment. If we adhere to our marriage ketubah, we will remain faithful and be a beautiful bride, prepared and fit for our King of Kings.

As both men and women of God, we should have no problem being the bride of Messiah. As His bride, He has called us from all the peoples of the world, He has given us riches more valuable than all the gold and silver of all the kings of the world, He has clothed us in robes of righteousness and made us more beautiful than any treasure, He has destined us for a land flowing with milk and honey, He has made us His own and taught us how to live, He has empowered us and sent us into the cities and the marketplaces to glorify Him and advance His Kingdom with the work of our own

hands, and lest you think the Bride of Messiah is weak, He has also given her His armor with which to defeat all the forces of darkness from the deepest pits of hell!

*"Let us rejoice and be glad! Let us give him the glory! For the time has come for the wedding of the Lamb, and his Bride has prepared herself – fine linen, bright and clean has been given her to wear." ("Fine linen" means the righteous deeds of God's people.) The angel said to me, "Write: 'How blessed are those who have been invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb! [Revelation 19:7-9]"*