

PARASHAT MISHPATIM

(ORDINANCES/CIVIL LAWS)

EXODUS 21:1-24:18

ETZ CHAYEEM HOO (HE IS A TREE OF LIFE)

Yeshua is a tree of life to those who take hold of Him, and those who support Him are praiseworthy. His ways are ways of pleasantness and all of His paths are shalom. Bring us back YHVH to You, and we shall come, renew our days as of old.

As we begin to study the Torah let us never forget that YESHUA THE MESSIAH is the Living Torah, the Torah-Word of Elohim made flesh. He is the way, the truth and the life — the Living Manna sent from heaven. Without Him living in our lives through the indwelling Presence of his Set-Apart/Kadosh Spirit (Who leads us into all truth and revelation) the Written Torah can become the dead letter of the law!

Haftorah Reading

Jeremiah 34:8–22; 33:25–26

Testimony of Yeshua

On the penalty for violating the law: **Hebrews 10:28–31**

On retaliation: **Matthew 5:38–42; 26:52**

On restitution for thievery: **Luke 19:8**

On loving our enemies and helping the poor: **Luke 6:35**

Lawbreakers will be excluded from the New Jerusalem: **Revelation 22:15**

Caring for the helpless and abandoned: **James 1:27**

On being honest and truthful: **Ephesians 4:25**

The fate of those who take advantage of others: **Revelation 12:10; James 2:5–6**

On avoiding all evil or sin: **1 Thessalonians 5:22; 1 Corinthians 5:7–8; Galatians 5:20–21**

On the misuse of the tongue: **Matthew 12:37; Luke 6:45; Ephesians 4:22, 25, 29; James 3:2–12**

On the feasts of Pentecost and Tabernacles: **Acts 2:1; 20:16; 1 Corinthians 16:8; John 7:37**

On Yeshua at Sinai: **Acts 7:38; Hebrews 12:25–29**

On not entering into covenantal agreements (e.g., business, marriage) with the heathen: **2 Corinthians 6:14–17**

On the blood of Yeshua ratifying the Renewed Covenant: **Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:20; 1 Peter 1:2, 19**

On the Renewed Covenant with Israel: **Hebrews 8:7–13; 9:15–22; 12:24; 13:20**

On the glory of YHVH-Yeshua: **1 Timothy 6:16; Revelation 4:2–6; Matthew 17:5; Acts 1:9**

Outline of This Week's Parashah

—21:1 The Civil Laws / *Mishpatim*

—21:2 Israelite Bondsmen

—21:7 “Sale” of a Daughter to a Fellow Israelite as a Bondswoman

—21:12 Murder and Manslaughter and Killing a Slave/Servant

—21:22 Penalty for Bodily Injury and the Humane Treatment of Servants

- 21:26 Death Caused by One’s Animal—An Owner’s Responsibility
- 21:33 A Pit—An Owner’s Responsibility
- 21:35 One’s Animal Injuring Someone Else
- 21:37 One Who Steals Livestock/Someone Else’s Property to Restore Several-fold
- 22:1 Self Defense; Payment for Theft
- 22:4[5] One’s Livestock Damaging Someone Else’s Property
- 22:6[7] Laws of *Shomrim* (Custodian of Other People’s Property)
- 22:13[14] The Responsibilities of a Borrower or a Renter When Damage Is Caused to Property
- 22:15[16] Penalties For Seduction of a Virgin (Premarital Sex)—Premarital Sex Consummates and Establishes a Marriage
- 22:20[21] Sensitivity to the Helpless and Abandoned—Care of Widows, Orphans and Strangers
- 22:24[25] The Commandment to Extend Interest-Free Loans
- 23:1 Integrity of the Judicial Process and Fair Dispensation of Justice
- 23:10 The Sabbaths of the Land and the Week
- 23:14 The Three Pilgrimage Festivals: the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Festival of the Harvest of First-fruits/Pentecost, the Feast of Ingathering/Tabernacles
- 23:21 The Promise of Swift Passage to, and Conquest of, the Promised Land
- 24:1 Moses Ratifies the Sinaitic/Mosaic Covenant
- 24:7 Israel Vows to Do and to Obey
- 24:9 Prophecy at the Mountain; Moses Ascends Mount Sinai to Receive the Stone Tablets

Study Questions for This Week’s Midrash (Torah Discussion)

1 **Exodus 21:1**, *These are the judgments [mishpatim]*. Most of these laws are civil in nature and relate to our relationship with our fellow man (as summarized by the phrase, “you shall love your neighbor as yourself,” Lev 19:18). These laws would correspond to the second half (the fifth through tenth) of the Ten Words or Commandments of Exodus 20. Can you see how these civil laws are an expansion or elucidation of those foundational principles given in chapter 20? For example, death by someone’s animal is an expansion of the “thou shalt not murder” command. The charging of usury on loaned money is an expansion of the commands not to covet or steal. The land sabbath and annual sabbaths (appointed times or *moedim*) are an expansion of the weekly Sabbath. What other commandments spring from the original ten? Is it possible to see how all of YHVH’s Torah commands spring from the original ten, which form the foundation for the rest of the Torah? How do the approximately 1056 imperative commands found in the Testimony of Yeshua relate to the 613 found in the Torah? Would YHVH’s Word be consistent if any of the 1056 were to contradict or nullify the 613? If they did, would that make YHVH into a liar and his word inconsistent with itself (Mal 3:6; Heb 13:8; John 10:35)?

2 **21:6**, *Bore his ear*. The servant who of his own freewill and out of love for his master chose to remain in his household forever was permanently marked in this manner to signify that he was willing to hear and obey all his master’s commands punctually. This is a spiritual picture of the disciples of Yeshua who chose to become his bond servants (e.g., Rom 1:1; Gal 1:10; Col 4:12; Tit 1:1; Jas 1:1; Jude 1; Rev 1:1; 15:3).

3 **21:22**, *Hurt a woman with child*. This passage is one of the strongest pro-life, anti-abortion verses in the Scriptures. Clearly, this passage teaches that life begins in the womb. What was the penalty for a man who was responsible for the death of an unborn child? (See verse 23.) Could any clearer statement be made about how the Creator feels about the sanctity of life? Here are some statistics about abortion:

- 42 million abortions occur worldwide each year (that’s 115,000 per day).
- In 2008, 1.21 million abortions occurred in the U.S.
- From 1973 to 2008, 50 million legal abortions occurred in the U.S.

- 22 percent of all u.s. pregnancies end in abortion.
- In 2007, 84% of all abortions were performed on unmarried women.
- At current rates, nearly one-third of American women will have an abortion.

(Sources of information: abortionno.org/Resources/fastfacts.html; gutmacher.org/pubs/fb_induced_abortion.html; abort73.com/abortion_facts/us_abortion_statistics/)

The murder of the innocent children is perhaps the greatest sin that a nation can commit. Abortion is a form of child sacrifice, which is something many ancient cultures practiced (the Aztecs, Incas, Phoenicians, pre-Islamic Arabs, and the biblical Canaanites). In the Bible, YHVH condemns the practice of heathens and apostate Israelites who made their children pass through the fire in worship of the demon-god Molech (See Lev 18:21; 20:2–5; Deut 12:30–31; 18:10.) What judgment did YHVH place on the Jewish nation for sacrificing its children to Molech? (See Jer 7:30–34; 32:35–36.)

- 4** **23:1**, *You shall not raise up a false report.* The technical term for this is “the evil tongue” or in Hebrew, *lashon hara*. How often do we spread untruths through gossip and slander when we are not eyewitnesses, or we have not heard eyewitness accounts of a situation? And then even if we do have our facts straight, is it really necessary to speak derogatorily of someone else? In most cases, is it not better to just let it go and say nothing to anyone about it? Scripture says hatred stirs up strife and that love covers all sin (Prov 10:12). In 1 Peter 4:8 we read, “And above all things have fervent love among yourselves, for love shall cover the multitude of sins.” There are certain things YHVH hates and calls an abomination. What does Proverbs 6:16 and 19 say about the misuses of the tongue? In this passage, what does YHVH call this, and how does he feel about it?
- 5** **23:10–12**, The sabbath-rest principle relates to more than just the weekly (seventh day) Sabbath or *Shabbat*. Here we see the commands relating to the land sabbaths and annual sabbaths or appointed times (*moedim*). What are the blessings in store for us today when we obey YHVH’s sabbath principles? What are the spiritual implications of these sabbaths for those of us in the Renewed Covenant time period?
- 6** **23:13**, *Make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of your mouth.* What does this mean and how does it apply to us today? (Compare this verse with Deut 12:3; Ps 16:4; Hos 2:17; Zeph 3:9.) If we are to be a truly set-apart (*kadosh*) people, then how far should we go in keeping our lips pure by not letting the names of pagan deities come upon them? Is it possible to do so and live in this world? Is it acceptable to use the names of these pagan deities (such as the names of some of the days of the week and months) in our daily life, but exercise care in not using them in the house of worship? Some may say that obeying this command is impossible and ignore it. Others may refuse to say a word that contains the name of a supposed pagan deity thereby making day-to-day communication nearly impossible with those around them. What does YHVH expect from us? How can we live out these commandments today?
- 7** **23:14–19**, *Three times you shall keep a feast.* The Jewish sages understand that on these three pilgrimage festivals all the individuals of the nation are to appear out of all isolations personally in the Presence of the one God of Israel in the festival circle (or *chag*) around the common sanctuary (where YHVH has chosen to place his name, Deut 16:2, 11, 15), thereby becoming conscious that each one is connected to all the other members of the nation, with YHVH Elohim, and with the Torah (*The Pentateuch—Deuteronomy*, p. 310, by S. R. Hirsch). But there is *much* more, for we must add Yeshua the Messiah of Israel into the picture. Each of the three feasts point directly to him. How do Passover/the Feast of Unleavened Bread (*Pesach/Chag HaMatzot*), the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost (*Chag Shavuot*), and the Feast of Tabernacles (*Chag Sukkot*) point to Yeshua? Remember, the spring feasts point to Yeshua’s first coming, while the fall feast points to his second coming. Each of these feasts represent milestones in the spiritual walk of the redeemed believer. (If you need help answering these questions, please review my articles on the seven biblical feasts of YHVH that are available at <http://www.hoshanarabbah.org/teaching.html#feast>.)
- But it gets better. There were three sections in the Tabernacle of Moses: the outer courtyard, the holy place and the holy of holies. These correspond with the three parts of man (1 Thess 5:23): body, soul and spirit. Passover/Unleavened Bread is the first feast one will celebrate in the spring and represents the first steps

in a new believer's spiritual walk. This corresponds with the Outer Courtyard and the body. It is here that one begins their spiritual walk and relationship with Yeshua, who is the Word of Elohim. Pentecost is the next step one takes in their spiritual walk. The Holy Place speaks of the soul (the mind, will and emotions) of man as one is advancing in their spiritual walk learning about the fruits and gifts of the spirit, who they are as redeemed Israelites, and about worship and praise. Finally, the Holy of Holies corresponds to the Feast of Tabernacles and relates to the spirit of man and the New Jerusalem. (Discuss these steps and how they relate to our spiritual walk as we progress toward our Father in heaven and his eternal kingdom.)

- 8 **23:17**, *Three times in the year all your males*. This command is repeated in Deuteronomy 16:16. Do you follow the command to give an offering three times yearly at the three pilgrimage festivals (Passover/Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles) above and beyond your regular tithes as YHVH has blessed you? Many believers struggle with obeying YHVH's tithing commands much less those pertaining to offerings. They then wonder why they aren't under YHVH's blessing financially. Is this your case? (Read Mal 3:6–14.)
- 9 **23:19**, *The first of the firstfruits*. This is the first place that giving to YHVH is commanded in the Torah. Though the word *tithe* is not mentioned here, giving a tenth of one's increase is assumed. The question is this: does the tithing principle still apply to us today? This verse specifically mentions giving of the firstfruits of one's *agricultural* products. Some assume that if one is not a farmer who lives in the land of Israel, then tithing doesn't apply to them. Did Abraham only tithe the increase of his agricultural produce? (See Gen 14:18–20.) Did Jacob tithe only agricultural produce, or on all that YHVH had blessed him with? (Note Gen 28:22.) What did Solomon instruct about giving to YHVH? Does he limit giving to YHVH to just agricultural products? Why do we give to YHVH, and what are the benefits of it? (See Prov 3:9–10.) (For more information on this subject, see my article, "Is Tithing for Us Today?" at <http://www.hoshanarabbah.org/pdfs/tithing.pdf>.)
- 10 **23:20–21**, *Behold, I send a Messenger before you to keep you in the way*. Who is this *Messenger* [Heb. *Malak*] from YHVH Elohim? (Read and compare this with 1 Cor 10:4 and Acts 7:37–38.)
- 11 **24:1**, *Worship you far off*. This verse clearly tells us that man can approach to worship YHVH *only* on the basis of the blood of the Passover lamb, but not on the basis of his own works of the law, since YHVH had not yet given the full Torah to the Israelites (that would occur later at Mount Sinai in chapter 24). That is not to say that the works of the Torah are not essential in one's spiritual walk. Rather, they simply are not the basis of our salvation, but rather a guide to lead us in the paths of righteousness *once we are saved*. Furthermore, Yeshua taught that our works will determine our level of rewards in his kingdom (Matt 5:19). Some have misunderstood Paul's teachings to mean that since we are not saved by keeping the law, we therefore no longer need to keep the law. **This is not what Paul taught!** In numerous places in Paul's writings, he upheld the validity of the Torah in the life of the redeemed believer, and even confessed that he was obedient to the law in his own life. (See our teaching articles on this subject on the teaching page of our ministry web site under the heading "Paul" at <http://www.hoshanarabbah.org/teaching.html#paul>)
- 12 **24:2**, *Moses alone shall come near YHVH*. How does this passage show that Moses was acting as a prophetic shadow-type of Yeshua's future ministry? Moses was acting as a mediator between YHVH and the Israelites. Similarly, Yeshua acts as our Mediator. (Read Eph 2:18; 1 Tim 2:5; Heb 7:25–26; 8:1–2, 5–6; 9:11–22; 10:19–22; 1 John 2:1.)
- 13 In **24:7** Israel says, "I do" once again to YHVH. They said it a total of three times (see also 24:3 and 19:8). How does this relate to their entering into a marriage covenant with YHVH? What is the significance of three times? (See Num 35:30 and Deut 17:6; 19:15. According to the Torah the Israelites were witnessing against themselves in a legally binding agreement or contract.) Also, the word *obedient* (κτν) in verse seven is the Hebrew word *shema* (*Strong's H8085*). Compare the usage of *shema* in this passage with the well-known *Shema* Prayer passage of Deuteronomy 6:4–9 where the word *hear* in verse one is *shema*. What does this word mean and why is it so important here? Discuss why the word *shema* means to both "hear" and "obey." What is *obedience*?

- 14** In **24:8**, Moses sprinkled blood on the people and called it “the blood of the covenant.” What are the spiritual ramifications here (relating to Yeshua)? (Read Heb 9:18–20.)
- 15** **Exodus 24:10**, *Body of heaven*. Body in Hebrew is *estsem/עצם* meaning “bone, essence, substance, body, limb, members, external body, substance, self.” It appears that the elders of Israel were given a vision of the “Godhead” in heaven.
- 16** In chapter 24, we see YHVH finalizing a contractual agreement with the Israelites. What are the component parts of a modern contract? What aspects of that do we see in this chapter? This contract was also a marital contractual agreement or *ketubah*. YHVH was marrying his people (See Ezek 16:1–14). But there were terms and conditions. What are the aspects of a modern contract?

A contract is an agreement made by two or more persons that is enforceable by law. It consists of voluntary promises to do or not to do certain things. When persons make a contract, their promises become legal obligations.... The making of a contract usually involves two important acts, (1) making an offer and (2) accepting the offer. The acts may be verbal or in writing. ... Before a contract is formed, the parties usually negotiate terms of the agreement. One party makes one or several offers. As soon as the other party accepts an offer, the negotiations are over. ... Most contracts are enforceable only if all parties get something out of the agreement. ... A contract is said to be discharged after the obligations of the agreement have been fulfilled. If either party violates the agreement, a breach of contract occurs. In that case, a court ordinarily awards money, called damages, to the other party. (*The World Book Encyclopedia*, vol. 4, article entitled “Contracts,” 1969)

After reading this, compare a modern contractual agreement with the covenantal agreement between YHVH and his people. Modern contracts have parties who agree, terms are established, a contract or covenant is ratified (there is a signature, handshake, or an oral agreement), and there are witnesses. There is a penalty clause if there is a breach of contract. Discuss these things in light of what we read in this Parashah concerning the agreement between Israel and YHVH. Who were the parties, what were the terms, how long were the terms binding, what would happen if there was a breach of contract, what were the parties to gain from the fulfillment of the contract?

- 17** With whom did Israel make a marital covenant or *ketubah*? With Moses or YHVH Elohim? Is that covenant still binding today? If not, did it get broken, and if so, how and by whom? Who stayed faithful and who did not? Let’s dig into this issue a little deeper as we delve into the study below about the marriage of YHVH to Israel, her unfaithfulness and her marriage covenant and what YHVH did about it.

Exodus 19–31

An Overview of YHVH’s Marriage to Israel as Fulfilled in the Lives of Redeemed Believers

Y^{HVH} MARRIED ANCIENT ISRAEL at Mount Sinai.

Read Ezekiel 16:1–14

Redeemed believers are preparing to be the spiritual bride of Yeshua.

For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Messiah. (2 Cor 11:2)

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, “Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he saith unto me, “These are the true sayings of Elohim.” (Rev 19:7–9)

What are the prophetic implications of and spiritual parallels between YHVH’s first marriage to ancient Israel and YHVH-Yeshua’s upcoming marriage to his bride—the saints who keep his (Torah) commandments and have faith in him (Rev 12:17; 14:12)? In his Parable of the Ten Virgins, Yeshua likens his bride to the five wise virgins who had oil in their lamps. Oil is a Hebraism for the Spirit of Elohim and the Torah. In other words, the prospective

bride of Yeshua will walk in the Spirit of Elohim and the truth of Torah, which Yeshua tells us is a mandatory requirement if one is to have a relationship with YHVH (John 4:23–24; 1 John 2:3–6). From Matthew 25:1–13 we learn that there were five foolish virgins who weren't allowed into the wedding supper, which shows us that not all believers will be the bride of Yeshua. Some believers will be the least in YHVH's kingdom and some will be the greatest (Matt 5:19). According to Yeshua, how obedient one is to the Torah will determine one's level of rewards in his eternal kingdom (Matt 5:19).

Between Exodus 19 and 24, we find recorded the steps Israel took to enter into a marital or covenantal agreement with YHVH. In chapter 19, we discover what pre-marital preparations YHVH required of Israel before he would marry her. In Exodus 20–23 are recorded the terms of the marriage covenant. These were the marriage vows or *ketubah* that Israel agreed to live by, and that would determine the nature of Israel's and YHVH's spiritual marital relationship. In three places (Exod 19:8; 24:3,7), Israel agreed to these terms when she said "I do." Finally, in Exodus 24, we find the covenant or marriage contract committed to writing and ratified or signed.

Now let's review the specific details of this marriage agreement between YHVH and ancient Israel, and see how this relates to us as redeemed believers.

Exodus 19

- ☞ **Verse 1**, YHVH gave the Torah to Israel at Mount Sinai most likely at the Feast of Weeks (*Shavuot* or Pentecost, Lev 23:15–21). On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit of Elohim wrote the Torah on the hearts of redeemed believers in fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy (Jer 31:31–33).
- ☞ **Verse 2**, Mount Sinai symbolized the exalted Presence and heavenly government of Elohim. Israel camped before the mount positioning themselves to receive a spiritual blessing from YHVH. Likewise, Yeshua instructed his disciples to tarry or position themselves in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high (Luke 24:49). Once empowered by the Spirit, they would be able to walk out the Torah and to be a spiritual light to the nations (Acts 1:8).
- ☞ **Verse 3**, Moses acted as YHVH's intermediary to prepare the Israelites for their marriage to him. Malachi prophesied that in the last day YHVH would send his forerunners in the spirit of Elijah to turn the hearts of the children back to the foundations of their faith including the Torah before the return of Yeshua, thus preparing the saints to be the bride of Yeshua (Mal 4:1–6).
- ☞ **Verse 5**, YHVH presents the terms of the marriage covenant (*ketubah*) to Israel. Those conditions are the Torah. If they chose to accept YHVH's terms, they would be his treasured possession (*am segulah*), and would be above all people of the earth.
- ☞ **Verse 6**, They would become not only his wife, but kings and priests to lead the rest of the world into relationship with YHVH. That will be the role of the resurrected saints or bride of Yeshua during the Millennium according to the Book of Revelation (Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6).
- ☞ **Verse 8**, The people said "I do" to YHVH. This was the bride of Israel accepting YHVH's *ketubah* or Torah and their promise to be faithful to the Torah. On the day of Pentecost, 3000 new believers said "I do" to YHVH-Yeshua when they repented (Acts 2:38) of their sins (i.e., Torahlessness; see 1 John 3:4), put their faith in Yeshua the promised Messiah, and were baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:41). In so doing, they became the betrothed to Yeshua, and began preparing for marriage.
- ☞ **Verse 9**, YHVH indicated that he would come in thick clouds. Yeshua ascended in the clouds and will come back in thick clouds (Acts 1:9–11).
- ☞ **Verse 10**, Until the coming of YHVH, Israel was to prepare or sanctify herself by washing her clothes. YHVH is not coming back for a bride with spot and wrinkle (Eph 5:27), but one who will be wearing pure white robes of righteous deeds of the Torah (Rev 19:8 cp. Matt 5:19), and the righteousness of Yeshua (Rom 5:21; 8:1–4, 10; 1 Cor 9:21; Eph 2:6, 10; Gal 2:20; 2 Cor 5:17; Eph 4:22–24; Phil 1:11; Tit 2:14; Heb 13:21).
- ☞ **Verse 11**, As the Israelites were given two days to prepare for YHVH's coming on the third day, so the bride of Yeshua has been given 2000 years to prepare for his second coming, and he will come in the third millenia after Yeshua's first appearance.
- ☞ **Verse 15**, In preparation to meet YHVH, the Israelites were to abstain from all carnal relations with their

spouses. Similarly, the end-times saints must be preparing to wed Yeshua by keeping themselves spiritually pure from any carnal activities that might take their focus and attention off him. Additionally, YHVH is presently calling his bride out of spiritual fornication with the world system or Babylon the Great (Rev 18:4; 2 Cor 6:17).

- ☞ **Verse 16, 19**, As there were lightnings, thunderings, clouds and smoke at YHVH's Presence when he came down from the mountain, so there will be at Yeshua's second coming when he comes down from heaven for his bride (Matt 24:29–30; Rev 11:14–19). As the shofar blast announced YHVH's arrival at Mount Sinai (Exod 16, 19), even so, the shofar will also sound at Yeshua's second coming for his bride (Matt 24:31; 1 Thess 4:16; 1 Cor 15:51–53; Rev 11:14–19). This speaks prophetically of the shofar blast signaling the new moon of the seventh month (*Yom Teruah*) when the saints or the bride of Yeshua will be resurrected (changed in the moment of a twinkling of an eye at the last or seventh shofar blast) to meet Yeshua in the air (1 Cor 15:51–53; Rev 11:14–19).
- ☞ **Verse 17**, Moses brought the people out to meet YHVH. Those coming in the spirit of Elijah are presently preparing the bride of Yeshua to meet him, and then they will present her to Yeshua at his second coming.

Exodus 20–23

The ketubah, which is the terms of the Mosaic or Sinaitic Covenant (i.e., Israel's marriage vows, i.e., the Torah) is presented in these chapters.

Exodus 24

- ☞ **Verse 1**, The leaders of Israel (Moses and the 70 elders) and the priests (Aaron and his sons) went up to meet YHVH. This group prophetically represents the wise virgins and saints who keep YHVH's commandments and have the testimony of Yeshua (Rev 12:17; 14:12), who will be the bride of Yeshua, and who will also rule as kings and priests in Yeshua's millennial kingdom (Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6).
- ☞ **Verse 3**, Israel the bride agreed to the terms and conditions of the *ketubah* (the Torah) that YHVH offered her.
- ☞ **Verse 4**, The *ketubah* was written out. This marriage agreement involved all 12 tribes. YHVH made no agreements with Gentiles. Similarly, the Renewed Covenant is made only between YHVH and redeemed Israelites from the houses of Israel and Judah (Heb 8:8). Only redeemed Israelites from the 12 tribes of Israel will be allowed into the New Jerusalem, for that city contains no Gentile gate (Rev 21:12). Strangers and sojourners from the nations (the Gentiles) are welcome to join (or be grafted in to) Israel if they agree to follow YHVH Elohim, keep his Torah-commands, and follow and put their faith in the Redeemer of Israel (Exod 12:49; Rom 11:16–32; Eph 2:11–19).
- ☞ **Verse 5**, The firstborn of each family were originally the priests of their homes (before YHVH instituted the Levitical priesthood in Exod 32:26–29). Presently, fathers and husbands are the priests over their homes with Yeshua as the Great High Priest over all (1 Pet 2:9 cp. Eph 5:23).
- ☞ **Verse 6**, Moses sprinkled half the blood of a sacrificed animal on the altar, which prophetically pointed to Yeshua shedding his blood on the cross that we might enter into covenantal relationship with YHVH. The wine Yeshua drank at the last supper thus ratifying the Renewed Covenant signified the blood he was about to shed at the cross (Matt 26:26–28). When we as redeemed believers drink of the third cup at the Passover Seder, we are signifying our marital commitment to YHVH-Yeshua. We are accepting the terms or *ketubah* of the covenant—the Renewed Covenant, which includes the Torah being written on our hearts by the Spirit of Elohim (Jer 33:31–33; Heb 8:8–10).
- ☞ **Verse 7**, Israel agreed to the terms of the *ketubah* the third time. As Israel pledged loyalty and obedience to YHVH, even so we also must confess with our mouths and believe in our hearts that Yeshua was raised from the dead, and then walk in righteousness, which is obedience to the Torah (Rom 10:9–13; Ps 119:172).
- ☞ **Verse 8**, Moses sprinkled the blood of an innocent animal over the people, which is a prophetic picture of Yeshua shedding his blood at the cross for the redemption of sinners from the penalty of sin, so that they might enter in a sinless state into a covenantal relationship with YHVH (Heb 9:18–22).
- ☞ **Verses 9–12**, Only after the blood of the sacrificed animal was shed and sprinkled over the people were the

elders permitted access into the Presence of Elohim. Only through the shed blood of Yeshua and through the veil of his flesh are we able to come boldly to Elohim's throne of grace (Heb 10:19–20; 4:16).

☞ **Verse 11**, The elders eating and drinking in the Presence of Elohim is a prophetic picture of the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:9).

☞ **Verse 12**, The Torah-law or *ketubah* was written on tablets of stone then. Now it is written on the tablets of the hearts of redeemed believers by the Spirit of Elohim (Jer 31:31–33; Heb 8:8–10).

Exodus 25–31

YHVH instructed the Israelites to build a house for the newly married couple where, once married, they could live together in a peaceful marital relationship. The saints are now the temple of the Set-Apart Spirit, and YHVH wants to dwell in the set-apart temple of our hearts and minds. We stay set-apart by following YHVH's Torah, by loving Yeshua and keeping our eyes on him through the empowerment of the Spirit of Elohim in our heart, thoughts and actions. If we do these things, we will be the chaste, virgin and righteous bride ready to meet Yeshua at his second coming.

The Saga of YHVH's Divorce and Remarriage to Israel

YHVH Marries the Nation of Israel at Mount Sinai

THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES ARE THE HISTORY OF YHVH choosing a spiritual virgin bride from out of the nations of the world, preparing that bride for marriage and then entering into a spiritual, marital and covenantal relationship with his bride. That bride was the nation of Israel whom YHVH married at Mount Sinai. The Torah-law was the marriage agreement or *ketubah*. Ezekiel describes the marriage between YHVH and Israel succinctly and poetically in the following way:

“And when I passed by you, and saw you polluted in your own blood, I said unto you when you were in your blood, ‘Live’; yes, I said unto you when you were in your blood, ‘Live.’ I have caused you to multiply as the bud of the field, and you have increased and grown up, and you are come to excellent ornaments. Your breasts are fashioned, and your hair is grown, whereas you were naked and bare. Now when I passed by you, and looked upon you, behold, your time was the time of love and I spread my skirt [*kanaph* which is the corner of a Hebrew cloak carrying the blue fringes or *tzitzit*, which now takes the form of the modern *talit* or prayer shawl] over you, and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore unto you, and entered into a covenant [i.e., a marriage covenant or *ketubah*] with you,” said YHVH Elohim, “and you became mine.” (Ezek 16:6–8; read verses 1–43 for context)

One Nation (Wife) Becomes Two Nations or Houses

At the foot of Mount Sinai, YHVH married the nation of Israel who was a spiritual woman comprised of several million Israelites in twelve tribes who were descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Those twelve tribes remained as a single national entity for 500 years until the death of King David's son, Solomon. When Solomon's son Rehoboam became king over the nation of Israel the northern ten tribes of Israel revolted against Rehoboam and under the leadership of Jeroboam seceded from Israel and formed a separate nation whose capital was Samaria. In countless places, Scripture refers to this nation as the House of Israel, or Ephraim, named after the largest and most prominent tribe of the Northern Kingdom.

Those Israelite tribes (Judah, Benjamin and part of Levi) that remained loyal to Rehoboam were named the House of Judah after the most prominent tribe of the Southern Kingdom.

Whereas YHVH had married the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai, 500 years later that nation split into two. It was still the nation of Israel, but it was like a woman with a split personality who acts like two people. Indeed, Scripture treats her as if she were two separate women, not unlike the patriarch Jacob who intended to marry one woman (Rachel) and through no fault of his own ended up with two wives (Rachel and Leah).

Both Houses Forsake Their Marital Covenant With YHVH in Favor of Foreign Lovers

Eventually both the Houses of Judah and Israel forsook their spiritual marriage agreements they had made earlier

with YHVH and committed spiritual adultery by whoring after foreign gods and lovers. They broke their promises and failed to live up to their marital agreements they had made with YHVH at Mount Sinai where they said “I do” three times to YHVH’s marriage covenant (Exod 19:8; 24:3,7). YHVH sent prophet after prophet as recorded in the pages of the Tanakh (Hebrew Scriptures) pleading with Israel to turn back to him. Jeremiah was such a prophet. As YHVH’s prophetic agent, he proclaimed the following in Jeremiah 6:16–19,

“Thus says YHVH, ‘Stand you in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and you shall find rest for your souls. But they said, “We will not walk therein.” Also I set watchmen over you, saying, “Listen to the sound of the shofar.” But they said, “We will not listen.” Therefore hear, you nations, and know, O congregation, what is among them. Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my Torah, but rejected it.”

Both Houses of Israel Are Unrepentant: YHVH Divorces Them

Yet Israel’s heart was hardened toward YHVH and she refused to repent of her spiritual adulteries; therefore, YHVH was forced to do that which he hates and dissolve the marriage and divorce both houses of Israel, as recorded below:

“**Judah** has dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for **Judah** has profaned the holiness of YHVH which he loved, and **has married the daughter of a strange god. YHVH will cut off the man that does this**, the master and the scholar, out of the tabernacles of Jacob, and him that offers an offering unto YHVH of Hosts.” (Mal 2:11, emphasis added)

We see above that the House of Judah (the Southern Kingdom) prostituted itself to foreign lovers, forsaking YHVH Elohim, resulting in YHVH having to “cut Judah off” or divorce Judah. Although Malachi refers to Judah in the masculine gender here, in many other places in Scripture, Judah is referred to as a woman, as we see in the Jeremiah passage above. Judah was not unique in this, for the House of Israel (the Northern Kingdom) did likewise and YHVH similarly divorced her. This is recorded in Isaiah 50:1,

“Thus said YHVH, ‘Where is the bill of your mother’s divorcement [called a *get*], whom I have put away or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have you sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.”

YHVH is not asking whether there is a *get* or not, but rather asking to be shown the *get* that he had previously written. How do we know this is the correct interpretation? If he had not put her away (divorced her) why would he have to make a renewed covenant (or renew his marriage vows) with her (in Jer 31:31–33)? Furthermore we read in the following Scriptures:

And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had **put her away, and given her a bill of divorce**; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also.” (Jer 3:8)

Then said [Elohim], “Call his name Lo-ami: for you are **not my people, and I will not be your [Elohim].**” (Hos 1:9)

Plead with your mother, plead, for **she is not my wife, neither am I her husband**. Let her therefore **put away her** whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts. (Hos 2:2, emphasis added on all)

We ask the question again, after Israel and YHVH formulated a covenantal agreement *who* broke that marriage covenant, YHVH or Israel? The writer of Hebrews answers this question.

For if that first [covenant] had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. **For finding fault with them**, [Who was at fault? YHVH or the people? The covenant or agreement failed because one of the covenanting parties failed to keep their end of the agreement. Torah—the terms of the agreement—did not fail, the people did!] he says, “**Behold, the days come, says YHVH, when I will make a renewed covenant with the House of Israel and with the House of Judah:** [This statement is based on Jeremiah’s prophecy in Jer. 31:31–33.] Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because **they continued not in my covenant**, and I regarded them not, says YHVH. For this

is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says YHVH; I will put my Torah into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them an Elohim, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know YHVH,' for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." In that he says, "A renewed covenant," he has made the first old. Now that which decays and waxes old is ready to vanish away. (Heb 8:7–13, emphasis added).

This sounds like good news for YHVH's people, but what is the good news that is really behind the gospel message?

It is the good news of the unquenchable love that YHVH-Yeshua has for his people Israel who have been dispersed and exiled among the Gentiles. They were cut off from their Maker, who was their Husband. They became aliens from the covenants of promise and from the commonwealth of Israel, without Elohim and without hope, but who have been brought near and redeemed by the blood of Messiah Yeshua, the Suffering Servant. Yeshua paid the price for the sin of their spiritual adultery and for breaking their marriage agreements with YHVH. As a result of the Father's love, they are no longer strangers and aliens, but like the prodigal son in Yeshua's parable, are coming back into their Father's household (Eph 2:11–19).

Scripture likens Israel to an olive tree and clearly states that because of sin not only were the rebellious northern ten tribes (Ephraim) broken off of the olive tree of Israel, but so were the Jews of the Southern Kingdom broken off, as well (Jer 11:16–17). These same Israelites have to be grafted back into the olive tree of Israel through faith in Messiah Yeshua, the Redeemer and Savior of Israel (Rom 11:13–24; Gal 3:29; Rom 9:8, 11).

Yes, YHVH has provided the way for wayward Israel to return to him. He is holding out a cup of wine to Israel, his bride, called the Cup of Redemption—the third cup of the Jewish Passover Seder, which corresponds to the Cup of Acceptance that a Jewish maiden drinks at her betrothal ceremony to show her Israelite suitor that she accepts his marriage proposal. This same cup of wine corresponds to the one Yeshua drank on the night of his Passover with his disciples. On that momentous night, he drank from the cup, and passed it around for them to drink from it, as well. When they did this, they were accepting, as representatives of the spiritual bride of Israel, Yeshua's marriage proposal to Israel. This corresponds to a new believer in Yeshua confessing with his mouth Yeshua as Master and believing in his heart that Elohim has raised him from the dead. At this point, one believes unto righteousness and accepts the redemption of Messiah Yeshua and is saved (Rom 10:9–10), which corresponds to being grafted into the olive tree or tree of life, which is a picture of Yeshua who is the Tree of Life of which he said, "I am the vine and you are the branches ... (John 15:1–6; see also Rom 11:13–24).

HAFTORAH READING—JEREMIAH 34:8-22; 33:25-26

YHVH Rebukes Judah for its Greedy Disregard for Torah

AS THE NAME OF THE PARASHAH INDICATES, *Mishpatim* (meaning "judgments, ordinances or civil laws"), YHVH is greatly concerned with human dignity. That dignity is determined by how members of a society treat one another. A large section of YHVH's Torah delineates laws that govern human relationships to insure that dignity, peace, freedom and order are preserved in a society. Both the Parashah and the Haftorah portions deal with the subject of Israelites who, when faced with economic hardships, could sell themselves into servitude to another Israelite in order to pay their debts. But after six years of repaying the debt through service to the lender—in the seventh year—the servants were to be set free and all debts were to be forgiven. This was an amazing economic mechanism that insured that the poor would never fall so low as to become permanently impoverished becoming like serfs, and that the rich would never become so wealthy off the backs of the impoverished that they would become permanent feudal lords, so to speak. So every seven years there was a sort of partial wealth redistribution or equalization, but not in the manner that punished or killed incentive, as was/is the case in modern non-capitalistic communistic societies (e.g., the ex-Soviet Union and Cuba). The wealthy were taught to care for their poor brethren, while the poor were given a fresh start economically and a fresh dose of human dignity every seven years. Our modern bankruptcy laws no doubt originate from this concept in YHVH's Torah, namely, that one can declare bankruptcy only every seven years.

Many of the world's super wealthy are ripe for judgment for their enslavement of people for their greedy purposes. In fact, this is a major component of the end-times Babylon the Great world economic system (Rev 18:11ff, especially note verse 11, which says the rich merchants of end-time Babylon have used human slaves to enrich themselves. Compare this with what YHVH's Word says in James 5:1-6.)

The rich Jews of Jeremiah's day were about to bring the guillotine of YHVH's judgment down upon their necks for their years of disobedience to YHVH's Torah commandments, not to mention their idolatry, through their greedy exploitation of their poor Jewish brothers. In fact, their careless disregard for their brethren seems to have hastened YHVH's judgment against Jerusalem, according to what we read in this week's Haftorah passage.

- 1 According to the commentary in *Soncino Pentateuch* on this passage, in the face of disaster threatening Israel at the hands of the Babylonian besiegers, the last king of Judah had induced the ruling classes to bind themselves by oath to release their slaves, so that no Jew should any longer be a bondman to a fellow Jew. They did so, but subsequently, when the danger had passed, they impiously broke their oath, and forced their emancipated brethren back into bondage. Jeremiah is outraged at this base conduct, and announces that the enemy will soon return. Then fire, war, hunger and pestilence will rage in the city (Ibid. p. 323). What lessons can we learn from this? How often have we individually, or collectively as a family, congregation, or nation been walking in sin only to have YHVH send us a 9/11, a hurricane Katrina, or a major economic downturn as a wake-up call in hopes of getting our attention? As a nation, we shed a few tears and collectively sigh, but once the disaster is passed, in pride we rise up, determined to continue in our old ways, as before, failing to learn any lessons from our past mistakes. In the absence of life-changing repentance, we may be leaving YHVH with no choice but to use on us a stronger spiritual paddle the next time.
- 2 **34:8-10,18**, Zedekiah was a wicked king, and as the Jewish sage, S. R. Hirsch, points out in his commentary, his act of getting the wealthy Jews to promise to set their Jewish slaves free in accordance with the Torah was "a beautiful ray of light in the dark night, a nobler nature shining through" courtesy of the king. "But alas, it was only a passing impulsive emotion on the part of the king, and a frivolous farce on the part of the great ones, the priests, and the people. For those who had just been given their freedom were immediately violently forced back into the old slavery! It was the most brazen-faced mockery which they dared sling into the face of their [Elohim], paired with the most heartless cruelty towards the unhappy slaves so horribly deceived" (*The Pentateuch/Haftoroth*, p. 183). Nationally, (speaking to Americans) can we recollect in our lifetime the occurrence of such superficial tokens of spiritual recrudescence? A national disaster occurs that at some level may seem like a wake-up call from the Almighty, and our political and spiritual leaders give a quick mention of "God," say a quick prayer, have a moment of silence, have a prayer meeting, hold a candlelight vigil, sing *Kumbayah*, and maybe even lead the nation in a "national day of prayer." But when all is said and done, the religious platitudes and rituals aside, nothing changes in the life of the nation or the individual and afterwards it is business as usual as if nothing happened. What is the lesson in this for us in our own lives?
- 3 Are we ever guilty of "enslaving" people to work for us in contravention of YHVH's Torah? In our careless and sometimes spiritually lax modern lifestyle, we may be guilty of unwittingly sinning in this area. For example, do our actions ever require people to serve us on the Sabbath? Do we own a company where we require people to work for us on the Sabbath? Do we go to a restaurant and require people to cook and to wait on us on the Sabbath? Do we buy and sell on the Sabbath? When we stay in a hotel, do we require people to clean our rooms on the Sabbath? (Read Exod 20:10.) The Torah's land Sabbaths, seven-year release of servants and forgiveness of debts and observance of the Jubilee years spring forth from YHVH's Decalogue commands to keep the Sabbath and to not steal.
- 4 One of YHVH's character attributes and covenant names is "El of truth [Heb. *emunah* meaning also "faithfulness"], without injustice [Heb. *eval* meaning "wickedness, unrighteousness, injustice"], righteous [Heb. *tzedaqah* meaning "just, lawful, right"] and upright [Heb. *yasher* meaning "straight, level, correct"] is he" (Deut 32:4). In Jeremiah 33:15, we read a prophecy concerning the Messiah, "In those days and at that time I will cause to grow up to David a Branch of righteousness; he shall execute judgment [*mishpat*] and righteousness [*tzedaqah*] in the earth." Then in the next verse we read, "In those days shall Judah be saved,

and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, YHVH our righteousness [*tzidkaynu*].” What we see from this brief study is that the name and character traits of YHVH are linked—they are the same. Does he want his people to be like him? How does he treat us? The same way *we* treat others, or much better than that? Now relate this to the overall spiritual issues for which Jeremiah was taking the Jews of his day to task—issues that because the people refused to take to heart brought ultimate judgment upon that nation. What is the summation of YHVH’s Torah? (Read Deut 6:4; Lev 19:18 and compare with Mark 12:30–31 and 1John 2:3–6, 9–11; 3:7–10, 14–18.) As a popular American radio personality likes to say, “Now go do the right thing!”