

PARASHAT YITRO

(JETHRO)

EXODUS 18:1-20:23 (26)

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

Isaiah 6:1-7:6; 9:5-6 (6-7)

Testimony of Yeshua

On leadership in the Hebraic congregation: **Ephesians 4:11-13; Titus 1:5; 1 Timothy 3:1-13**

On Yeshua marrying his bride, redeemed Israel (the saints): **Revelation 19:6-9; 2 Corinthians 11:2**

On being kings and priest of Yeshua: **1 Peter 2:9-10**

Mount Sinai compared to spiritual Mount Tzion: **Hebrews 12:18-29**

Yeshua on the commandments of the Torah: **Matthew 5:17-19; 19:16-30; John 14:15**

Paul on the importance and validity of the Torah: **Romans 7:7-12; 13:8-10**

James on the Torah: **James 2:8-13**

John on the Torah: **1 John 2:3-6; 3:4-10**

Outline of This Week's Parashah (Torah Portion)

- **18:1** Jethro (Yitro), Moses' Father-In-Law, Arrives
- **18:13** Jethro Advises Moses on Establishing Leaders/Judges Among the Israelites
- **18:21** Requirements for Righteous Leadership
- **19:1** The Israelites Arrive at Mount Sinai Prior to Shavuot/Pentecost
- **19:3** YHVH's Loving (Marriage) Proposal to Israel; The Leaders and People of Israel Accept the Proposal
- **19:10** Israel Prepares Herself to Receive the Torah/Enter into Covenantal/Marital Agreement With YHVH
- **19:16** YHVH's (the Bridegroom's) Arrival: A Day of Thunder, Lightening, Clouds, Smoke, Shofar Blasts
- **20:1** The Giving of the Cornerstone of the Torah: The Ten Words (*Devarim*)/Commandments

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

- 1** **18:2-3**, *After he had sent her back*. There is an indication here that Moses divorced his wife after their altercation over the circumcision of their sons in 4:24-26. The phrase *sent away/back* in verse two is *shilluach* שילוח (*shin-lamed-lamed-vav-chet, shil-loo'-akh*), which according to *Strong's Concordance* and *Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon* can refer to divorce. *Shilluach* is from *shalakh* שָׁלַח (*shin-lamed-chet*), a basic verb meaning "to send" where in Isaiah 50:1 and Jeremiah 3:1 the prophets use it referring to YHVH's divorce from the

house of Israel or Ephraim. Though rabbinical commentators Rashi and Hirsch fail to note the possibility of Moses' divorce (Jewish Torah commentators tend to gloss over the faults of their great biblical heroes), Baal HaTurim notes this possibility in his commentary. Yet in Exodus 18:2, YHVH still views Zipporah as Moses' wife. What's going on here? Zipporah seems to have evidenced reluctance at obeying YHVH's command to circumcise their sons (Exod 4:25), so did Moses put her away (divorce her) as a result? Was Moses, the human "savior" of Israel from Egypt and an antetype (or prophetic forerunner) of Yeshua the Messianic Savior (Deut 18:15–19), having to deal with a rebellious wife even as Yeshua (in his preincarnate state as YHVH of the Tanakh) had to deal with his rebellious wife Israel and eventually had to put her away? Zipporah is never again mentioned in the Torah and, in fact, we see the possibly divorced Moses marrying another woman (Num 12:1)—apparently a black woman from Ethiopia. Is this a prophetic picture of Yeshua remarrying his former wife (Israel) during the time of the Renewed (Marriage) Covenant who has adulterously mixed herself with the nations and returns to him in a mixed racial (spiritually-speaking) condition? If Moses led Israel as a divorced and remarried man, does this change your perspective about him? How about divorced and remarried people in present-day ministry? (By the way, this author is not divorced and/or remarried and so has no pony in this race, so to speak, on this issue.)

- 2 18:13**, Here we see Moses choosing elders or judges over the congregation of Israel. These were "able men of accomplishment" in Israel. Compare this with Paul's instructions about the qualifications of an elder in 1 Timothy 3:1–13 and Titus 1:5–9. If Moses was divorced at the time of his choosing the elders of Israel, does this clarify Paul's statement that an elder must be "the husband of a (mistranslated as *one*) wife" (1 Tim 3:2)? It would appear that the Scriptures don't prohibit divorced and remarried people from holding leadership positions in the household of faith as some churches teach. Think about this. (Again, the author has no ulterior motives here, for I am happily married to my first and only wife.)
- 3 19:1**, *In the third month*. What *moed* or divine appointment occurs in the third month (hint: 50 days after the Feast of Unleavened Bread, see Acts 2:1 for the answer)? We saw in Parashat Va'eira (in Exod 6:7) that YHVH is expressing his intent to marry Israel (see Ezek 16). This occurred at Mount Sinai, again on what festival?
- 4 Exodus 19:4**, *On eagles' wings*. There is some question as to whether this reference to an eagle carrying its young on its wings is literal or poetic metaphor. In searching for an answer to this question in the writings of ornithologists, I could find little evidence to support the idea that an eagle teaches its young to fly in this manner. In fact, most eagle experts called this notion folklore. Therefore, I assume that the expression "on eagle's wings" is to be taken symbolically and not literally. As such, regarding YHVH's care of the Israelites, it can be taken to mean several things. "On eagles' wings" can indicate YHVH's great tender and protective care of the Israelites as they were escaping the clutches of their Egyptian masters. YHVH brought the Israelites out of "the nest" of the iron furnace of Egypt with strength and swiftness, and he raised their status from that of slaves to that of soaring with dignity and prowess like eagles as a free nation and as servants of the Most High Elohim. This he did by extricating the Israelites from the clutches of the world's greatest nation, and then defeating that nation as an eagle swoops down upon its prey. YHVH also brought the Israelites across the Red Sea on dry land as if they were flying over that body of water.
- Will YHVH cause his people Israel to come out of end-times Babylon on "eagles wings" again as he leads them into the wilderness en route to the Promised Land? (Read Rev 18:4 cp. Rev 12:14; Ezek 20:33–44; Hos 2:14–23.)
- 5 Exodus 19:5**, *Peculiar treasure*. This term or *treasured people* (Heb. *am segulah*) is used several times in the Torah. Here (Exod 19:4–6) YHVH betrothed himself to and married the people of Israel and they became his *am segulah* or *treasured possession among all the peoples of the nation, a kingdom of priests and a kadosh/set-apart nation*. Later Moses restates this same idea to the younger generation Israelites about to enter the Promised Land (Deut 14:2); and finally in Deuteronomy 26:18 (see also 7:6) he again calls Israel his "treasured people" and admonishes them to keep his Torah-commands that he might "make you high above all the nations that he has made, in praise, and in name, and in honor, and that you may be a set-apart people unto YHWH your Elohim." In the Testimony of Yeshua, this theme is again picked up by

Peter in his first epistle (1 Pet 2:9) when he refers to the saints as “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a set-apart nation, a peculiar people.”

Am segulah/hllgso means “possession, treasure, valued property, peculiar treasure.” The basic meaning of the word is *personal property*. Well attested in Hebrew, Ugaritic, and Aramaic, the Akkadian *sakalu*, ‘to acquire property’ and *sikiltum* ‘personal property’ are also doubtless related. While the word occurs only eight times, it is filled with theological and spiritual treasures. The preacher in Ecclesiastes reports that the accumulation of the finest of personal possessions is sheer vanity. Those who fear the Lord become his peculiar possessions whom he will never forget, even in that time of great judgment (Mal 3:16–18, see *TWOT*).

“Israel was God’s personal possession (Ps 135:4). Moses reminded Israel that God chose her and redeemed her from bondage not because of her goodness, but solely because he loved her and was faithful to the promises given to the patriarchs. Israel should reflect God’s holiness and live out his commandments (Deut 12:2ff), reflecting his standards in a life of wholehearted compliance with the terms of the covenant made at Sinai (Exod 19:5–6) and renewed at their entrance into Canaan. Then would they have good success (Deut 26:16–19). So it should be with all believers. These verses are doubtless alluded to in Titus 2:14 and 1 Peter 2:9” (Ibid.).

The word *segulah* occurs elsewhere in the Tanakh as well (1 Chron 29:3; Ps 135:4; Eccl 2:8; Mal 3:17).

How do you view yourself spiritually? How does Elohim view you? How are these two views different from each other? How you view yourself should be determined by what the Scriptures say about you. What does Elohim’s Word say, and do you believe it?

- I am complete in Yeshua who is the head of all principality and power. (Col 2:10)
- I am free from the law of sin and death. (Rom 8:2)
- I am alive with Yeshua. (Eph 2:5)
- I am far from oppression, and fear does not come near me. (Isa 54:14)
- I am born of Elohim, and the evil one does not touch me. (1John 5:18)
- I am holy and without blame before him in love. (1Peter 1:16; Eph 1:4; Col 2:10)
- I have the mind of Yeshua the Messiah/the Anointed One. (Phil 2:5; 1Cor 2:16)
- I have the peace of Elohim that passes understanding. (Phil 4:7)
- I have the Greater One living in me, greater is he who is in me than he who is in the world. (1John 4:4)
- I have received the gift of righteousness and reign as a king in life by Yeshua HaMashiach. (1John 4:4 Rom 5:17)
- I have received the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Yeshua, the eyes of my understanding being enlightened. (Eph 1:17–18)

(For a complete list of what the Scriptures say about you, please see http://www.hoshanarabbah.org/pdfs/who_i_am.pdf.)

6 **19:6, Kingdom of priests.** From the beginning it has been the heart of the Father to form a nation of priests who would teach the world his ways of life and truth (Deut 4:6). (Compare Exod 19:6 with 1 Peter 2:9 and Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6.) Discuss the spiritual implications. Could a priest fulfill his duties if he did not know and practice the Torah? How could the Levites, who would later be scattered throughout the land of Israel, be able to teach the ways of YHVH to the nation of Israel and fulfill their duties if they did not have an intimate working understanding of YHVH’s instructions in righteousness (i.e., the Torah)? Are you now preparing for fulfilling your commission as a member of YHVH’s royal priesthood (1 Pet 2:9) during Yeshua’s Millennial reign by learning about and living out YHVH’s Torah (Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6)?

7 **19:8, (see also Exod 24:3 and 7) We will do.** As noted just above, YHVH was entering into a spiritual marital relationship with his people at Mount Sinai. (For a brief overview of YHVH’s courtship and marriage to Israel, read Ezek 16:1–16.) The phrase, “we will do” is reminiscent of what well-known phrase in the modern marriage ceremony? What did Israel promise to do? Did Israel make the promise only

for themselves or also for their descendants? (See Deut 29:14–15.) Who are the modern descendants of Israel? (Note Gal 3:29; Rom 4:16; 9:8–11; Eph 2:11–19.)

8 19:10, Consecrate. How did Israel, as a bride-to-be, prepare herself to meet with YHVH? How are YHVH's people now to be preparing themselves for their spiritual marriage with Yeshua? (Compare Exodus 19:10 with Revelation 19:7–9.) What is the *righteousness of the saints* (mentioned in Rev 19:8)? *Righteousness* is defined in Psalms 119:172 as, "... all thy [Torah] commandments are righteousness." If what the Scriptures define as righteousness (i.e., the Torah) was "nailed to the cross," as is popularly taught, then who is in error? Scripture or those who teach against YHVH's Torah laws?

9 19:11, The term *the third day* is mentioned twice here. What is the prophetic significance of this scriptural phrase as it relates to the work of Messiah among his people? For two days (verse 10) the people were to wash and prepare themselves for the third day when YHVH would appear and marry them in covenantal relationship. If a day is as a thousand years (Ps 90:4; 2 Pet 3:8) then what is this a prophetic picture of? (Read Hos 6:1–3 and Luke 13:32; compare also with Gen 22:4 and John 2:1.)

10 19:16–19, Compare YHVH's visitation with his people at Mount Sinai and Yeshua's second coming or "the day of the LORD/YHVH" (see Matt 24:29–30; Acts 2:19–20; 2 Pet 3:10; Joel 2:30–31). Marriages occur at both events.

11 Exodus 19:16, 19 Voice of the trumpet [shofar]. In Jewish thought, the Scriptures speak of three great shofar blasts that have historical and prophetic significance: the first, last and great or final shofar blasts. These are:

- ☞ **The First Trump** (or shofar blast) occurred on *Shavuot* at the giving of the Torah (*Matan Torah*) at Mount Sinai (Exod 19:16, 19). This shofar blast was of heavenly origin and is the first time the Bible records the sound of the shofar being heard.
- ☞ **The Last Trump** (or shofar blast) occurs on *Yom Teruah* (the Day of Trumpets/Shofar Blasts, commonly called *Rosh Hoshana*) is the day of the awakening blast calling the saints to prepare their spiritual garments in preparation for the coming Messiah or Bridegroom. This shofar blast corresponds to the last trumpet blast of Revelation 11:15 after which the resurrection of the righteous occurs (1 Cor 15:51–53).
- ☞ **The Great Trumpet or Final Trumpet** (or shofar blast called the *Shofar HaGadol*) is sounded on *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement) signifying Elohim's day of judgment and the return of Messiah Yeshua as the King and Judge of the earth. At this time, it seems likely that he will destroy Babylon the Great with its new world order religious, political and economic system (Rev 19:1–21 cp. Rev 18) just before the establishment of his millennial kingdom (Rev 20:1–10). Historically on the Day of Atonement, the jubilee trumpet sounded in Israel on the fiftieth year. At this time, the captives were set free, debts were forgiven and all land was returned to its original owners. Matthew says that Yeshua the Messiah will return with a great sound of a shofar (trumpet, Matt 24:30–31; 1 Thess 4:16). Perhaps this is a reference to the *shofar ha-gadol* when Yeshua returns to earth and sets the spiritual captives free from enslavement to the enslaving economic, religious and political tentacles of end-time Babylon the Great.

When did you first hear a shofar blast? How did it impact and change your life spiritually? As noted above, Yeshua's second coming will be announced with the sound of a shofar blast. Under the right circumstances, a shofar blast can be heard over a long distance. Is it possible that currently the sound of the shofar is going out over a sleeping church, which is slowly awakening from its spiritual sleep? Many are awaking to the Jewishness of Yeshua our Bridegroom, and to the Hebraic and Torah roots of the Christian faith. The sound of the shofar, which the Scriptures liken to the voice of Elohim, can pierce the heart of men and help bring them back to Elohim. Embrace the truth about the shofar, and learn how and when to use it for the glorious advancement of YHVH's spiritual kingdom!

12 19:16–19, Compare the supernatural manifestations that occurred on *Shavuot* (Pentecost) at Mount Sinai with what occurred in the upper room in Acts 2. What are the similarities? Here is some food for thought in this regard:

- ☞ The commandments of Elohim were originally written on tablets of stone by the finger of Elohim at *Shavuot* (Exod 24:12; 31:18); on Pentecost (as *Shavuot* is called in the Testimony of Yeshua) YHVH's commandments were written by the *Ruach* (Spirit) of Elohim on our hearts (Jer 31:33; Pss 37:31; 40:8; Isa 51:7; Ezek 11:19–20; 36:22–27; 2 Cor 3:3; Heb 8:10).
- ☞ Three thousand were slain at the golden calf incident (Exod 32:1–8, 26–28); on Pentecost the reverse happened: three thousand were saved (Acts 2:38–41).
- ☞ The letter of the Torah was given at Sinai; in the Testimony of Yeshua, the spirit of the Torah was given (Matt 5–7; Rom 2:29; 7:6; 2 Cor 3:6).
- ☞ The Torah-law was originally given on Mount Sinai (Exod 19:11); at Pentecost the Torah was written into the hearts of men in the “upper room” of the temple in Jerusalem, or Mount Zion (Rom 11:26; Heb 12:22; 1 Pet 2:6).
- ☞ Thunderings, fire and tongues of various languages occurred at both *Shavuot* at Sinai (according to rabbinic tradition) and on Pentecost at Jerusalem.

An Overview of the Ten Words (Commandments)

Remember that the Ten Words are but the mighty cornerstone of the 613 commandments of the Torah. The Jewish sages teach that all 613 are implied in the Ten; or that the Ten can be expanded into 613. The Hebrew Scriptures and Jewish writings contain a number of phrases that express the quintessential essence of the Torah. One of these best-known passages naming several of these phrases is in the Jewish Talmud: “Rabbi Simlai said, ‘613 commandments were given to Moses—365 negative *mitzvot* (commandments), the same as the number of days in the year, and 248 positive *mitzvot*, the same as the number of parts in a man’s body. David came and reduced them to eleven (Ps 15), Isaiah to six (Isa 33:15), Micah to three (Mic 6:8), Isaiah again to two—“Observe and do righteousness” (Isa 56:1). Then Amos came and reduced them to one, “Seek me and you shall live” (Amos 5:4)—as did Habakkuk, “The righteous one will attain life by his trusting [or by faith] faithfulness (Hab 2:4)” (*Makkot* 23b–24a, abridged, from the *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, by David Stern, p. 565).

We see some of these same Torah summation-type statements in the Testimony of Yeshua. For example, the phrase, “the just shall live by faith” is found in three passages of the Testimony of Yeshua (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38); In Leviticus 19:18, we find the phrase, “you shall love your neighbor as yourself,” which is the summation of the last five of the Ten Commandments. This in itself is a summation of all of the 613 Torah commandments that relate to human relationships, which we see in Yeshua’s famous “Golden Rule” passage of Matthew 7:12, “Therefore all things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets.” Paul echoes this concept in Romans 13:8, “Love does not do harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fullness of the Torah.” Love is the foundation and quintessential concept behind the Torah-law of Elohim. Yeshua states this in Mark 12:29–31,

“And Yeshua answered him, “The first of all the [Torah] commandments is, Hear, O Israel; YHVH our Elohim is one Master: And you shall love YHVH your Elohim with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is none other commandment greater than these.”

Love must be the motive behind all our righteous deeds or else our actions count for nothing (1 Cor. 13:1–13). The concept of love and the keeping of YHVH’s Torah-law are codependent actions. One cannot exist without the other. John, in his epistle, discusses this idea at length in 1 John 2:7–11; 3:11–24; 4:7–21 where he states that “Elohim is love” (4:8, 16) and that one’s love of Elohim and man is linked to obedience to the Torah commandments (2:3–11; 3:11–18). As YHVH first loved us, we should love our fellow man (4:7–11) in word, deed and in (Torah) truth (3:18). This relates to Yeshua’s admonition to his disciples in John 14:15, “If you love me, keep my Torah-commandments.”

Lest one recoil at the thought of having to keep 613 commandments of the Torah please be advised of the fact that there are approximately 1050 commandments in the Testimony of Yeshua!

13 **20:2, *I am YHVH your Elohim.*** In Jewish reckoning, the first “commandment” (better translated: “word”) is found in 20:2 with verses 3 through 6 forming the second word and verse 7 the third and so on. YHVH wrote the first five words on the right side of the two tablets of stone and the last five words on the left side. The Jewish sages teach that the first word (commandment) corresponds with the fifth, the second with the sixth and so on—the first set of words governing our relationship with YHVH and the second parallel set of words governing our civil relationships. The two are related and linked. One can’t be fulfilled without the other. (Discuss this.) Relate this to what John the apostle wrote in 1John 2:3–7, 9–11; 4:7–11, 19–21; 5:1–3. Also look at Mark 12:30 and John 14:15 in this regard. Love for Elohim must always be our primary motivation for keeping his commandments!

14 **20:3, *Before me.*** Lit. “before my presence” or “in my face.” When *anything* in our lives (a belief, a person, something we do, something we own) becomes more important to us than Elohim and his word, we are creating a false god, and are literally throwing that false god into the face of the Living Creator of the universe. Is YHVH Elohim a part of everything we do, say and think? Is the love of Elohim the chief aim of every aspect of our life? Or do we have some dark closet in our heart or mind from which we have excluded him? It is there that we need to begin our search for idols!

15 **20:6, *Those who love me.*** Read the last part of this verse, then compare it with what Yeshua said in John 14:15. In Yeshua’s statement, with whom is he comparing himself? Is he claiming to be the deity who gave the Torah to the Israelites at Mount Sinai?

16 **Exodus 20: 7, *In vain.*** The third commandment shows man what his demeanor should be toward the use of the Hebrew names of the biblical deity. We read,

Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD [YHVH] thy God [Elohim] *in vain* [desolation, devastation, ruin, destruction, emptiness of speech, worthlessness, vanity, or falsehood]; for the LORD [YHVH] will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. (Exod 20:7; see also Deut 5:11)

What is it to take YHVH’s name in vain? *In vain* is the Hebrew word *shav* (שׁוּן/שׁוֹן) meaning “emptiness, vanity, falsehood, nothingness, emptiness of speech, lying.” The root of this word means “ravage, devastate, ruin, waste, desolate, destroy.”

Not only do we learn here that man should not profane YHVH’s name through improper use such as empty, lying and vain speech, but it should not be profaned by falsifying, devastating or ruining it through substituting it with false names or euphemisms.

Additionally, the name of YHVH should not be forgotten. If it had been YHVH’s intention to have his name not used or forgotten, as Jewish tradition teaches, then why is the tetragrammaton (the four letter name of Elohim, which is *YHVH*, and is pronounced as *Yehovah* or *Yehowah*) found some 6800 times in the Tanakh? That the non-use of his name among his people was not his intention is clear in the Scriptures, which records that the name of YHVH was so prolific that it was even used as a common greeting by the ancient Israelites (Ruth 2:4; Ps 129:8; Jer 31:23).

What does Yeshua have to say about religious teachers who obviate the clear teachings of Elohim’s word with their man-made traditions, of which the prohibition of using the Hebrew names for Elohim is but one example? (Note Matt 15:6–9 cp. Mark 7:6–9.)

17 **20:8, *Remember the Sabbath.*** Interestingly, this is the only commandment YHVH specifically told the Israelites “to remember.” Why is this? What is the only one of the ten commandments that traditional Christians fail to keep? Did YHVH prophetically envision a day when his people would fail to remember the seventh-day Sabbath? Why do people have such a hard time keeping the Sabbath set apart? Why will some Christians extol unendingly the virtues of keeping the “Ten Commandments,” but when it comes to keeping the fourth one, excuse after excuse is given to get out of it? What are the deeper spiritual implications of this? Why are so many redeemed Israelites, who upon having been exposed to the truth of the Sabbath, still struggling with keeping the Sabbath *kadosh* (or set-apart) unto YHVH?

In Exodus 20:8, the Hebrew word for *remember* is *zakar*, while in the parallel passage to this verse (Deut 5:12) it says to *observe* (Heb. *shamar*) or literally “keep, guard, or protect” the Sabbath. In comparing the

slight word differences between these two Sabbath commandment passages, what is YHVH telling us our heart attitude should be toward the Sabbath?

18 Discuss the spiritual/prophetic implications of the Sabbath. (See Heb 4:1–11.) For more information on this subject, see my article entitled, “The Sabbath: Spirit and Truth” available at <http://hoshanarabbah.org/pdfs/shbt.pdf>.

The Giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai

AS ALREADY NOTED, THE GIVING OF THE TORAH AT MOUNT SINAI occurred on *Shavuot*/Pentecost. YHVH gave his people the words of life to live by, but because of the hardness of their hearts they were not able to be faithful to him. Like a wife who says “I do” (and the Israelites actually did say “I do” three times: see Exod 19:8 and 24:3, 7) in response to her wedding vows, but cannot remain faithful to her marriage covenant agreements, so the Scriptures liken Israel to such a woman (Ezek 16:1–29). On Pentecost in the book of Acts, however, Yeshua betrothed the descendants of ancient Israel and this time gave to ancient Israel’s spiritual daughter (that’s you and me) a heart of flesh to replace the heart of stone of her mother. YHVH filled his new bride with his Set-Apart Spirit, thus empowering or enabling her to keep his Torah-commandments. In other words, Yeshua, the Living Torah or Word of YHVH, came to take up residence within the very hearts and minds of believers through the indwelling and empowering presence of the *Ruach HaKodesh* (the Set-Apart Spirit), thereby living out Torah from within each born-again believer even as he lived out the Torah-Word of YHVH when he walked this earth. Isn’t this a beautiful picture of YHVH’s love and care for his bride, his people? This is all part of the wonderful plan of salvation or redemption that YHVH laid out thousands of years ago to bring people into a life-giving relationship with himself through his instructions in righteousness, the Torah, and all through Yeshua the Messiah, the Living Torah, who now leads and guides his people through the wilderness of life not via a pillar of fire over a physical tabernacle, but through the fire of the Spirit of Elohim living in the spiritual temple of each individual believer’s life as Elohim spiritually guides them from within.

On Pentecost the first century believers were empowered from on high through immersion in the *Ruach HaKodesh* (Acts 1:5, 8). As a result, we see Peter being transformed from a spiritual mouse (compare John 20:22–23 with John 21:3) into a spiritual lion or dynamo (Acts 2:14–41). The immersion or saturation in the *Ruach* (a different and subsequent occurrence than being simply “saved,” “converted,” “redeemed” or “born again”—all are expressions used to convey the idea of the initial spiritual salvation of the believer) is for the purpose of being empowered with supernatural gifts or divine enablements (the gifts of the Spirit, see 1 Cor 12) in order to be equipped to go out into the harvest field of human souls spiritually empowered ready to bring in the spiritual harvest of souls. On the Day of Pentecost, YHVH wrote the Torah into the hearts of the Messianic believers by the Spirit and then supernaturally empowered them to take both the message of Torah (YHVH’s instructions in righteousness)—the light of his truth—coupled with the good news of the Redeemer, Messiah Yeshua, the Living Torah-Word of Elohim to a lost and dying world. This is the fundamental message and purpose of Shavuot in the Book of Acts, and it was all foreshadowed at the foot of Mount Sinai 1500 years before the book of Acts.

Did the Torah (“Law”) Exist Before Moses & Mount Sinai?

by Natan Lawrence

The Spiritual & Eternal Nature of Torah

DID THE TORAH (the laws, statutes, judgments, ordinances, precepts, commandments or, in brief, YHVH’s instructions in the ways of righteousness) originate at Mount Sinai with the giving of the “law” to Moses as many Christians have been led to believe? If so, the implication follows that YHVH instituted “the law” as part of the “Old Covenant” agreement with ancient Israel, and that since Christians are no longer “under” the “Old Covenant” but are in the “New Covenant” dispensation, the Torah-law is no longer applicable to us today. Is this a correct line of reasoning?

It is the intent of this brief study to show the reader that the Torah (a Hebrew word that is translated as “law” into most English Bibles, but more correctly means “teachings, instruction, precepts” [Strong’s H8451/*TWOT* 910d]) preexisted Moses and even preexisted the creation of this earth and that it is spiritual in nature and therefore exists outside of all the physical creation as well as time itself. In fact, we believe that the Word of

YHVH Elohim, over-arches everything and is the very character and nature of YHVH himself and is the pathway of truth, righteousness and light which, if followed (obeyed) will lead humans to an eternal (never-ending) and spiritual relationship with YHVH Elohim (their Heavenly Father).

Article continued at http://www.hoshanarabbah.org/pdfs/torah_b4_moshe.pdf

HAFTORAH READING—ISAIAH 6:1-7:6; 9:5-6 (6-7)

It Is Darkest Before Dawn—

Before the Day Star Arises—Messiah, the Sun of Righteousness!

BOTH THE PARASHAH AND HAFTORAH PORTIONS RECORD humans experiencing a revelation of the glory of YHVH. In the former instance, this event marked the beginning of Israel becoming a set-apart (*kadosh*) nation before YHVH, while in the latter case it marked the beginning of the end for the nation of Judah. Yet despite the imminent demise of the southern kingdom, Isaiah's vision, which seems to have launched his prophetic ministry, stressed the fact that regardless of the sinfulness of Judah, YHVH sovereignly ruled from his throne in glory.

Some commentators believe that Isaiah saw his vision while in the temple in Jerusalem, but such a view does not explain why or how he was allowed in there (*Soncino Pentateuch*). Others say that he was only shown a vision (similar to the vision of Ezekiel) of the *Merkavah* or the heavenly court where the angels pay homage to Elohim (*ArtScroll Chumash*).

1 6:1, *In the year that king Uzziah died.* Uzziah was the king of Judah who imperiously marched into YHVH's temple (*hekal*) and profaned it when he illegally offered incense therein—something only the priests were allowed to do. YHVH immediately struck him with leprosy. He remained a leper until the day of his death (2 Chr 26:16–23). It was after this sordid desecration of the temple that Isaiah had his vision, which marked the beginning of his forty-odd-year-long ministry.

2 6:4, *The house was filled with smoke.* The Hebrew word for *smoke* is *ashan*/אֶשׁן/*ayin-shin-nun sofit* (*Strong's* H6227) and derives from a root word (*Strong's* H6225, same Hebrew spelling) meaning “to fume, to be angry, furious or wroth.” The *ArtScroll Chumash* states that this was a sign to Isaiah from YHVH that the Kingdom of Judah was going downhill toward destruction and exile (p. 1155). Although Jotham, Uzziah's son, was a righteous king who reigned for 16 years, Ahaz, his son, was another corrupt and idolatrous king for which words of rebuke were not long in coming from the lips of Isaiah. From Isaiah 6:1 to 7:1,16, years pass, and no mention is made of Jotham.

YHVH expresses his anger in the temple vision, then begins to speak about a spiritually hard-hearted people who refuse to see, listen or comprehend the error of their ways. As a result, their enemies would soon afterwards ravage their land and take them into captivity (Isa 6:8–13), but there is no mention of Jotham and the short interlude of this righteous king. Why was this not worthy of mention? Despite being a righteous king (2 Chr 27:2), did much really change spiritually in the land of Judah? Can a leader of a nation, although professing to be a Bible-believing and “God-fearing” man, be in reality vapid and vacuous, lacking in real fruits of righteousness? Are America and other so-called Christian nations spiritually in this place right now? Is YHVH fuming over the state of our “Christian” in name only nation that has all but turned its back on YHVH from the church houses, to the state house, to the courthouse all the way to the house of Congress and the White House? Furthermore, what foreign elements are beginning to take over our land, culture and religion today in this nation so that Bible-believing and YHVH-fearing individuals are becoming strangers in their own land?

3 Despite the wickedness of Ahaz, YHVH still gave him ample opportunity to repent and to acknowledge the Creator's involvements in the affairs of men. Is YHVH presently giving our “Christian” nation, and perhaps even the nation of Israel, that same opportunity before he “lowers the boom” of his judgment on us—or is this just the idle speculation a fringe element of folks who are obsessed with end-time prophetic and apocalyptic scenarios and who take Bible prophecy too seriously?

4 Though judgment was (is) coming upon Judah (America and Israel?), YHVH through the prophet Isaiah gives a message of hope, restoration and redemption through his Messianic prophecies that follow. Read the rest of Isaiah chapter seven, along with portions of chapters eight and nine and identify the prophetic Messianic passages found therein and relate them to Yeshua.

Although the latter part of Isaiah chapter seven is not part of this week's Haftorah portion, we will nevertheless discuss this section, which is one of the great Messianic prophecies in the Bible. It is referenced in Matthew's Gospel (Matt 1:23) as having been fulfilled in the Person of Yeshua the Messiah. Please note that this excerpt (below) is part of a larger work available on our web site entitled "The Incarnation and Virgin Birth of the Messiah—Propheesied in the Hebrew Scriptures." (<http://www.hoshanarabbah.org/pdfs/vbirth.pdf>)

Isaiah 7:11

Ask thee a sign of YHVH thy Elohim; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above.

Commentary:

The word *sign* is the Hebrew word **אוֹת** *owth/aleph-vaav-tav* (*Strong's* H226) meaning "sign, token, signal, a beacon, a monument, evidence, prodigy or omen." Some who are opposed to the virgin birth interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 will say that *owth* is never used in Scripture in reference to a miraculous sign. To this contention we produce the following Scriptures which show evidence to the contrary. *Owth* is indeed used in reference to a miraculous sign: Exodus 4:8, 9, 17, 28, 30; 7:3; 8:23; 10:1, 2; Numbers 14:22; Deuteronomy 4:34; 6:22; 7:19; 11:3; 2 Kings 20:8-11; Nehemiah 9:10; Isaiah 20:3; Jeremiah 32:20, 21. These Scriptures describe the following supernatural occurrences using the word *owth*: rods becoming serpents, the Nile turning to blood, the death of Egypt's first born, the splitting of the Red Sea or time moving backward ten degrees on Hezekiah's sundial. So when Isaiah 7:11 uses the *owth* to describe a virgin miraculously giving birth to a child such an interpretation is not a biblical hermeneutical twist on Scripture.

The word *depth* is the Hebrew masculine noun **עֲמֻקָּה** *aymek/ayin-mem-qof* (*Strong's* H6009 from H6010) meaning "valley or depression." This same Hebrew word in its adjective form (same spelling, different vowel points) refers to the "depths of *sheol*" or hell (Prov 9:18; Job 11:8). In Psalm 139:15, David in reference to his formation in his mother's womb (verse 13) says, "I ... was curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth (*aretz/eretz*). **אֶרֶץ** *Aretz/aleph-resh-tzadik sofit* (*Strong's* H776) is the commonly used word for *earth* or *land* in Scripture. A valley or depression is the lowest part of the earth. Here David figuratively likens his mother's womb to a low place or depression in the earth. Though the Hebrew words for *depth* in Isaiah 7:11 and *lowest parts* in Psalms 139:15 are different, the Hebraic concepts seem connected and analogous.

The word *height* is the Hebrew word **גְּבוּהָה** *gababb/gimel-bet-hey-hey* (*Strong's* H1361) and means "to soar, to be lofty, to exalt." This root word in its adjective form is also *gababb* (*Strong's* H1362) with the only difference between the two words being a slight vowel pronunciation difference in the second syllable. This word means *lofty* or *high*. We see this adjective used in Job 35:5 as a poetic reference to heaven (*shamayim*) as well as in Isaiah 55:9, and in Psalm 103:11, which says "For as the heaven/*shamayim* is high above the earth ..." or "according to the heights of heaven" (alternate Hebrew rendering, *kjv* marginal notes).

The word *above*, which is opposite the word *height* in the passage under analysis, is the word **מֵעַל** *ma'al/mem-ayin-lamed* (*Strong's* H4605) meaning "upward, above, overhead, from the top, exceedingly." Thus, the phrase in this verse could be rendered as "highest heaven" (where YHVH abides). The word *ma'al* can be used as an adjective to refer to *heaven above* where YHVH dwells (Deut 4:39; Josh 2:11).

What is the point we are trying to make here? YHVH prophesies, through Isaiah, that he will give a supernatural, miraculous sign to the house of Judah from both the depths (womb of a woman) and the highest heavens. In verse 14, Isaiah speaks of "the [the Hebrew uses the definite article *the*] virgin or the young maiden" (depending on your Bible translation) giving birth to a son named *Immanuel* or *El With Us*. Now great controversy has raged as to the meaning of the word *virgin* (Heb. *almah*). Does it refer simply to a young maiden or to an actual virgin? Much has been written by scholars on both sides of this hotly debated issue and it is not the scope of this work to

deal with this particular subject. Both sides (the pro-virgin birth side versus the anti-virgin birth of Messiah side) have valid points to their credit. This author maintains that if Isaiah 7:14 were to stand alone it would be difficult, if not impossible, to prove the virgin birth either way. However, with the context of verse 11 considered (not to mention the other references in the Hebrew Scriptures referring to the virgin birth of the Messiah which we are considering in this work) it seems that Isaiah had one thing in mind in penning verse 14: the Messiah would be born of a virgin. He would be formed in the womb of a woman (without the seed of a man—see Gen 3:15) and at the same time have origination from the highest heaven. This seems to be a clear reference to the incarnation that YHVH would miraculously fuse (by the Set-Apart Spirit [Matt 1:20]) with the physical egg of a woman to form the Yah-Man (God-Man)—a miraculous act referred to in Christian theology as the incarnation or the hypostatic union.

In Isaiah 9:6–7 (The Closed Mem: ם)

6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government/dominion shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor/Advisor, the Mighty El, The Everlasting/Eternal Father, the Prince of Peace/Sar Shalom. 7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of YHVH of Hosts/Legions will perform this. (Emphasis added.)

Commentary:

In this very clear reference to the forthcoming Messiah of Israel, the prophet Isaiah utilizes a literary device found nowhere else in the Tanakh (Hebrew Scriptures) to convey a hidden, prophetic message concerning the nature of the Messiah.

This hidden message is found in the Hebrew word *l'marbeh*, (translated as “of the increase”) found in verse seven above. The word *l'marbeh* written in Hebrew letters would normally look like this: למרבה. The second letter in from the right (Hebrew reads from right to left) is the Hebrew letter *mem* (מ) corresponding to the letter *m* in our English alphabet. According to Hebrew grammatical rules, there are several letters in the Hebrew alphabet which when they occur at the beginning or inside of a word have one form, but when they appear at the end of a word they have another form, or final form (*sofit*). The final letter actually looks different. For example, when the *mem* appears at the beginning of or inside of a word it looks like this: מ (called an *open mem*); however, when it appears at the end of a word in its final form it looks like this: ם (called a *closed mem*). According to Hebrew grammar rules (which originated in antiquity), a closed *mem* is to be used only at the end of a word. Yet the prophet Isaiah uses a closed *mem* at the beginning of the word *marbeh* (למרבה). (The Hebrew letter ל which proceeds ם is simply a word-prefix meaning “to” or “for”).

The word *marbeh* (*Strong's* H4766; *TWOT* 2103) simply means “abundance, increase, increasing” and originates from the Hebrew root word *rabbah* meaning “to be or become great, many, numerous, make large, increase, multiply.” Isaiah 9:7 is one of only two places where this word occurs in the Tanakh (the other one is Isaiah 33:23).

One must remember that the Hebrew language is ideographic (i.e., the use of pictures or symbols in a system of writing to represent an idea or a thing) or pictographic (i.e., characterized by picture writing) in nature. The letters, especially in their ancient form, called paleo-Hebrew, were even more pictographic than the more modern square script with which everyone is familiar. Each letter was a picture of a concept, not unlike Egyptian hieroglyphics. The Hebrew letter *mem* in its ancient Hebrew script (from which the modern script is derived) means “water or waves of water like an ocean.” The Hebrew word *mayeem* is spelled with two *mems*: מים *mem-yud-mem sofit* (*Hebrew Word Pictures*, by Frank T. Seekins, Living Word Pictures, Inc., Phoenix, AZ: 1994). In Hebrew mystical thought, the letter *mem* is not only connected to water, in accordance with its ancient pictographic origins, but with the Hebrew word מם *em/aleph-mem sofit* (or *mother*), as well as a woman's belly or womb from which flows water at the time of birth. The open and closed *mem* both have pictographic implications as well. A closed *mem* represents a closed womb and therefore can connote the masculine gender, which is incapable of giving birth to a child, or to a woman who is barren and incapable of giving birth. Likewise, a virgin has a closed womb until she gives birth to her first child. We see some of these ideas in some ancient Jewish mystical writings below:

The open *mem*. What is the open *mem*? It includes both male and female. What is the closed *mem*? It is made like a belly from above. But Rabbi Rahumai said that the belly is like the letter *teth* [ט *tef*]. He said it is like a *teth* on the inside, while I say that it is like a *mem* on the outside. (*Sepher HaBahir* 84)

What is a *mem*? Do not read *mem*, but *mayim* (water). Just like water is wet, so is the belly always wet. Why does the open *mem* include both male and female, while the closed *mem* is male? This teaches us that the *mem* is primarily male. The opening was then added to it for the sake of the female. Just like the male cannot give birth, so the closed *mem* cannot give birth. And just like the female has an opening with which to give birth, so can the open *mem* give birth. The *mem* is therefore open and closed. (*Sepher HaBahir* 85)

Three Mothers, *a[leph] m[em] sb[in]*, in the Soul are fire, water, and breath. The head is created from fire, the belly is created from water, and the chest, created from breath, decides between them. (*Sepher Yetzirah* 3:4)

Messianic Jewish Hebrew roots scholars who are schooled in Christian theology as well as the Hebrew language, Hebrew Scriptures (Tanakh) and Jewish mystical writings have studied and written on the significance of the *closed mem* in Isaiah 9:7. For example, Avi ben Mordechai has noted this in his book, *Messiah Vol. 3* where he writes:

The closed Hebrew *mem* refers to a “belly,” and a “womb” in Hebrew mysticism. This is highly significant that a *closed mem* (meaning a *closed womb*) would be hinted at in a context-specific prophecy about the coming of HaMashiach, at least according to the Targum [Aramaic translation of the Hebrew Scriptures] (p. 522).

Ben Mordechai then poses the question: “Is this closed *mem* supposed to mean that the Messiah would be born in a womb that was ‘closed?’” In attempting to answer this question, he relates Isaiah 9:6 to its larger Scriptural context of which Isaiah 7:11–14 is a part. He relates this verse (9:7) to 7:11 where the mention is made of a sign from both the highest heaven and the lowest depths of the earth (i.e. the womb) would be given, and that sign would be that *the* young maiden or virgin would conceive and bear a child (7:14) and his title-name would be *Immanuel* meaning *El with us* (Ibid. p. 523).

Ben Mordechai sees a link between the womb of a woman, a child being formed in the depths of the earth (in its mother’s womb) (see Ps 139:15–16), a child being “hidden” deep in the “subterranean” caverns of its mother’s womb and a hidden subterranean fountain of water. He believes that Yeshua was hinting at this allusion in Matthew 7:38 where he said (Ibid.):

He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, “From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water” (NASB).

Another Messianic Jewish scholar who sees the connection between the Messiah who would be born of a virgin/young maiden (Isa 7:14), would be *Immanuel* (*El with us*), would be a “Son” with divine titles (i.e., Counselor, the Mighty El, the Everlasting/Eternal Father, and Prince of Peace) (9:6) and the closed *mem* prefiguring the virgin birth is Dr. Daniel Botkin. He writes, “A closed *mem* is a closed womb; an open *mem* is the womb opening to give birth (*Bahir* 84). What does this tell us about this Child in prophecy? It tells us that this Child will be concealed inside a closed womb, i.e., the womb of the Virgin spoken of in Isaiah 7:14” (*Gates of Eden* magazine, May-June, 2003, p. 5). Botkin goes on to write,

It is also interesting to note that the Virgin Mother ... had a name that begins and ends with the letter *mem*. Christians know her as Mary, but her Hebrew name is Miriam.

Of course, the rabbis do not see any hints of Miriam in Isaiah’s prophecy, but they are aware of this mysterious closed *mem* and of its Messianic implications. The rabbis teach that when it is time for the Redemption, the closed *mem* of Isaiah’s *l’marbeh* will open for the coming Messiah (Radak, Isa. 9:6). (Ibid.)

The understanding of the open *mem* has been noted in Christian circles as well. Early nineteenth-century Christian Bible scholar, commentator and disciple of John Wesley, Adam Clarke commenting on Isaiah 9:7 noted the closed *mem* and concluded the following:

This is an illustrious prophecy of the incarnation of [Messiah] ... He shall appear as a child, born of woman, born as a Jew ... but not in the way of ordinary generation. He is a Son given—the human nature, in which the fullness of the Godhead was to dwell, being produced by the creative energy of the [Spirit of Elohim] in the womb of the Virgin (See Matt 1:20, 21, 23, 25 and Luke 1:35; Isa 7:14)” (*Clarkes Commentary*, vol 4, p. 65).