

Yitro (Jethro) **Exodus 18:1 – 20:23**

Last week I mentioned that the time period we have been studying is the seven weeks between the crossing of the Red Sea and the giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai. Perhaps many of you picked up on this being the time of the “Counting of the Omer” (Leviticus 23), the 50 days which takes us up to the time of Shavuot (Pentecost). Yes, Pentecost and the giving of the Ten Commandments happened on the very same day of the month on the Hebrew calendar.

The group of people who had gathered in Acts were being obedient to the Torah command of Leviticus 23 to go to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Shavuot. They were “in the right place at the right time” and because of it they were blessed with the Presence of יהוה (Yahwey) and the filling of the Holy Spirit. Today many of us are again celebrating the Feast as best we can, including the “Counting of the Omer”, although I would venture to say that many of us are still not totally sure “why” we do this.

Since we know that what has happened in the past is there for our instruction and learning for the future, what can we learn from these two 50 day time periods that might help us with a future “Counting of the Omer”?

Last week we looked at the **transformation of character** that יהוה was bringing about in both the **individuals** and **the nation of Israel** as He moved them in the direction of Mt. Sinai. Fifteen hundred years later in Jerusalem, He would be moving them through another fifty days (resurrection to Shavuot) which would culminate with the giving of the Holy Spirit. So....is there a fulfillment of another Shavuot yet to come?

Consider these verses:

Joel 2:28 " And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions.²⁹ And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.³⁰ "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke.³¹ The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, **Before the coming of the great and awesome day of יהוה**.³² And it shall come to pass *That* whoever calls on the name of יהוה shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as יהוה has said, among the remnant whom יהוה calls.

Peter quotes these verses in Acts 2, but the **complete fulfillment** of this is definitely a **tribulation** event. We know that these extraordinary signs in the heavens did not occur on this 1st century Shavuot. Verse 31 says that signs will happen “**before the coming of the great and awesome day of יהוה**”...this is an end times event. So....let’s get back to the reasons **WHY** we might be wise to count these fifty days.

This 50 day period also marks the passage of time from **the beginning of the barley harvest** (associated with Passover and the spring feasts) **to the beginning of the wheat harvest** (associated with Shavuot). We can tie it in with the “**wave sheaf offering**” in Leviticus 23:

Leviticus 23:10 "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring **a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest** to the priest. ¹¹ He shall wave the sheaf before יהוה, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.

Now how does the **omer** tie in to this? The omer is part of the weights and measures of Scripture. The **Hebrew word for sheaf is “omer”**. An omer is about two quarts and was the amount of flour required to make **daily bread**. We also read last week about the omer as the amount of manna to be **gathered daily**:

Exodus 16:16 "This is the thing which יהוה has commanded: 'Let every man gather it according to each one's need, one omer for each person, *according to the* number of persons; let every man take for *those* who *are* in his tent.' "

The manna was the **bread of life** for the people as they travelled through the desert. And we know who that bread of life was pointing to:

John 6:33 "For the bread of Elohim is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

So...Leviticus 23 has the Israelites waving their **omer, the first fruits of their crop**, before יהוה. Could it symbolize something else?

Jeremiah 2:3 **Holy is Israel** to יהוה, the **first-fruit** of His increase.

Two things to point out from this verse in Jeremiah:

- **Holy is Israel**
- **Israel is the first fruit**

As we take part in the “Counting of the Omer”, could **we** possibly be the **first fruits of the wheat harvest** that could be offered to יהוה on a **future Shavuot**? Have you found that when you “Count the Omer” that you are being **transformed** in your character and moving towards **holiness**? Is it preparation for a future **meeting** with the Almighty? One like prophesied in Joel?

Okay, we’re going to come back to this in a little bit, but for now let’s change directions a little. What is the **First Commandment** in Scripture? Do you know? Actually what most of us have probably been taught is that the First Commandment is:

Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Now, did you know that **NOWHERE** in the Hebrew Scriptures will you find the phrase “**Ten Commandments**”? You may be familiar with these verses:

Exodus 34:28 So he was there with יהוה forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the **Ten Commandments**.

Deuteronomy 10:4 "And He wrote on the tablets according to the first writing, the **Ten Commandments**, which יהוה had spoken to you in the mountain from the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly; and יהוה gave them to me.

However, what you actually see in the Hebrew is that the Ten are called the “**Ten Words**” (עֲשָׂרַת הַדְּבָרִים). Now, let’s take a look at what is actually the “**First Commandment**” or better translated, the “**First Word**”:

Exodus 20:1 And Elohim spoke all these words, saying: ² "I am יהוה your Elohim, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

How can we be sure that יהוה intended for this to be the “**First Word**”? In the oldest Hebrew manuscripts that we have, including the Dead Sea Scrolls, there is an “aleph” (the first letter, also the number 1) in the margin. Other commandments/words are also numbered.

In the early 300’s, the Roman Church **excluded** the 1st commandment and instead began with the 2nd which they also divided into two. Why? Because they wanted no **connection** between things that were considered **Jewish** and **Christianity**. It was an anti-Semitic decision.

By virtually ignoring the **First Word** for thousands of years, we have missed a cornerstone of our faith. The First Word impresses on us that “**we must know**” this Elohim **before we can even go on** to the rest of the Words/Commandments. First, what is **His personal Name**? The personal name of יהוה was given to Moses **on this very mountain** 40 years earlier when he was **shepherding sheep**. Now Moses the **shepherd** has returned with **the Father’s flock** and **they will hear for themselves His holy Name**.

This **First Word** is the way יהוה has chosen to define who He is. Why did He choose this description as “**your Elohim who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage**”? Why didn’t He say, “I am the Elohim who created the heavens and the earth?” Or, “I am the Elohim who has ultimate power on the earth?” Think about how someone may introduce themselves to you. They could say, “I am a teacher, named Ellen.” Or instead they might say, “I am your teacher named Ellen who taught you as a child.” You would immediately feel a personal connection with this teacher. The introduction that יהוה made was intended to point to **the personal involvement He wanted with Israel**. What else could He have been saying?

- By referring to their **bondage in Egypt**, He was referencing that He was their **covenant Elohim**. The experiences they had had leaving Egypt pointed them back to the fulfillment of the **covenant promise made to Abram**. Knowing this would give them a sense of connection with the **patriarchs and the promises given to them**:

Genesis 15:12 Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror *and* great darkness fell upon him. ¹³ Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that **your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them**, and they will afflict them **four hundred years**. ¹⁴ "And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward **they shall come out with great possessions**.

- **יהוה had delivered them from serving Pharaoh** and now it was **Him** they were to be serving:

Exodus 9:13 Then **יהוה** said to Moses, "Rise early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh, and say to him, 'Thus says **יהוה** Elohim of the Hebrews: "**Let My people go, that they may serve Me**,"

- He says, "I am **YOUR** Elohim"...**your** Master. He had redeemed them from slavery in order that they might become His **bride**.

One of the most interesting pictures painted here is that of a **Hebrew wedding**. If we can see **Israel as the bride** and **יהוה as the Bridegroom** it will put a whole new perspective on the Mosaic covenant and perhaps even our attitude about the Torah, itself. Here are the steps:

- We have already read of the **intentions** made by the Groom (**יהוה**) in the "**I wills**" - **Exodus 6:6** "Therefore say to the children of Israel: 'I *am* **יהוה**; **I will** bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, **I will** rescue you from their bondage, and **I will** redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. ⁷ **I will** take you as My people, and **I will** be your Elohim. **Then you shall know that I *am* יהוה your Elohim who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians**.
- The **bride is separated** in order **to prepare for the wedding**. In Israel's case, this was accomplished by being brought into the wilderness (place of the Word) where we have studied the **transformation of her character** by the various trials. This could also be seen as the process of sanctification. This comprises most of the "**Counting of the Omer**" period.
- Next we have a **formal proposal**: **Exodus 19:5** 'Now therefore, **if** you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, **then** you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth *is* Mine. ⁶ 'And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These *are* the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."
- This is the **bride's answer** to the proposal: **Exodus 19:8** Then all the people answered together and said, "**All that יהוה has spoken we will do**." So Moses brought back the words of the people to **יהוה**.

- There is the **preparation for the special day**: **Exodus 19:10** Then יהוה said to Moses, "Go to the people and **consecrate them** today and tomorrow, and **let them wash their clothes**.
- Next, the Groom comes down first and stands beneath the canopy of thick clouds (chuppah – the wedding canopy). **Exodus 19:16** Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a **thick cloud on the mountain**;
- The **Groom presents the wedding proposal** through Moses, the friend of the bridegroom: **Exodus 19:17** And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with Elohim, and they stood at the foot of the mountain.
- A **shofar blast** will **announce** the special day: **Exodus 19:19** And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder...
- The **marriage contract**, called a ketuvah, is given to the bride. It includes all the conditions of the marriage covenant. These are the **Ten Words**.
- Then there will be **the token of the covenant**. We exchange rings; for them it would be **the sign of the Shabbat**: **Exodus 31:16** "Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations **as a perpetual covenant**.

Thus ends the first stage of the marriage covenant called **the betrothal**. During the betrothal you are **legally married** to your spouse but **you do not physically dwell with them yet**. Further evidence that this was a **betrothal** can be found in Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 2:1 Moreover the word of יהוה came to me, saying, ² "Go and cry in the hearing of Jerusalem, saying, "Thus says יהוה: "I remember you, The kindness of your youth, The love of your **betrothal**, When you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. ³ Israel *was* holiness to יהוה, **the firstfruits** of His increase.

We know that things did not go exactly as planned. Almost immediately there was **unfaithfulness** on the part of the bride with the golden calf. The Groom actually had the legal right to execute her. Instead Moses would intercede on her behalf and plead for another chance. We will see the results of this in later Torah readings.

We also are in the first stage of **betrothal** with our Bridegroom if we are in a personal relationship with **Messiah Yeshua**. We are **legally married**, yet **we do not yet physically dwell with Him**. Revelation speaks to the **consummation** of our marriage; however, there are a few more things that must happen first. After the betrothal, the bride would go home and **prepare her wedding dress**. The **Groom would go to His Father's home and prepare a dwelling** for them. Then they would be ready to **physically dwell together and consummate the marriage**. Does anything about this sound familiar?

We have a few points here to discuss further. We have:

- The bride
- Her wedding dress
- The groom preparing the dwelling

First, who is the bride? Jews would say it was them. The church would say they are the bride. Is יהוה/Yeshua a polygamist? Let's take a look at who the people were **who first entered into betrothal**:

Acts 7:37 "This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, 'יהוה your Elohim will raise up for you **a Prophet like me** from your brethren. Him you shall hear.' **38** "This is he who was in **the church in the wilderness** with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and *with our fathers*, the one who received the **living oracles** to give to us,

The **church/assembly/Israel** is the same in Acts as it was in Exodus! The "church" was not a separate entity that was "born" on Shavuot/Pentecost in Acts. And the "Prophet like me" becomes identified in Acts 7:38 as Yeshua! He was the One who spoke to the children of Israel on Mount Sinai. So the answer as to who is the **bride**...it is all who "hear" the "prophet like Moses" and who "receive the living oracles" which was the Word of Elohim spoken on Mt. Sinai.

Now, about her **wedding dress**....Ephesians 5 describes the **bride**:

Ephesians 5:26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with **the washing of water by the word**,²⁷ that **He might present her to Himself a glorious assembly, not having spot or wrinkle** or any such thing, but that **she should be holy and without blemish**.

Clothing is a description of our attitude and actions. Those who keep their **wedding garment unspotted and without wrinkle are spiritually mature before God**. Consider these verses:

Revelation 19:14 And the armies in heaven, **clothed in fine linen, white and clean**, followed Him on white horses.

Revelation 16:15 "Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed *is* he who watches, and **keeps his garments**, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."

We've also been told what our Bridegroom is doing as He awaits the bride:

John 14:3 "And if **I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you** to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also.

Much of what was written in the New Covenant Scriptures was to exhort believers to strive to overcome the desires of the flesh, be obedient, and **to seek to grow in the maturity that would clothe them in the proper wedding attire**. It is not unlike **the transformation process** that we've seen happening in Exodus. If believers do not seek **holiness** by serving the Father, they are described thus:

Jude 1:23 but others save with fear, pulling *them* out of the fire, hating even **the garment defiled by the flesh**.

Now consider Paul's words:

2 Corinthians 11:2 for I am zealous for you with zeal of Adonai, for **I did betroth you to one husband**, a pure virgin, **to present to Messiah**,

For this is the goal:

Revelation 19:7 "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for **the marriage of the Lamb has come**, and **His wife has made herself ready**." **8** And to her it was granted to be **arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright**, for **the fine linen is the righteous acts** of the saints.

And this is the **consummation** when Yeshua will dwell with His **bride**:

Revelation 21:1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. ² Then I, John, saw **the holy city, New Jerusalem**, coming down out of heaven from Elohim, prepared **as a bride adorned for her husband**. ³ And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "**Behold, the tabernacle of Elohim is with men, and He will dwell with them**, and they shall be His people. Elohim Himself will be with them *and be* their Elohim.

To summarize – the goal of a believer should not be to **just believe...but to move forward into a holy and set apart relationship with Yeshua**. The Torah explains the meaning of words like "holy", "righteous", "love", and "set-apart" for us so that we can be **properly clothed and ready for our Bridegroom**.

Now let's try to put some of this together by taking notice of a few details and **patterns** that run throughout Scripture.

This is **the 1st Shavuot** on Mt. Sinai:

Exodus 19:16 Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were **voices** and **lightnings**, and **a thick cloud** on the mountain; and **the sound of the trumpet** was very loud, so that all the people who *were* in the camp trembled.

This is the **Shavuot** in Acts:

Acts 2:2 And suddenly there came **a sound from heaven** as of a **rushing mighty wind**, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

Here's **another Shavuot** pictured in Scripture:

1 Samuel 12:17 "*Is* today not **the wheat harvest (Shavuot)**? I will call to יהוה, and He will send **voices and rain**, that you may perceive and see that your wickedness *is* great,

Shavuot seems to be a time in Scripture when the Father chooses **to make His Presence known** through **signs in the heavens**. It always comes after a period of **testing and preparation**. Could we say after a 50 day period known as the “**Counting of the Omer**”? If so, then it seems crucial that we keep the commandment to count these days in order that we might **be prepared to meet with Him**. For could the following, with its **heavenly signs**, be a **future Shavuot**?

Revelation 19:6 And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as **the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings**, saying, "Alleluia! For the **יהוה** Elohim Omnipotent reigns! **7** "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for **the marriage of the Lamb has come**, and **His wife** has made herself ready." **8** And to her it was granted to be arrayed in **fine linen, clean and bright**, for **the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints**.

Just one more thing.....as you consider the thought from Revelation 21:2 that **the bride is the New Jerusalem**, it kind of gives a new twist to this verse:

Psalms 122:6 Pray for **the peace of Jerusalem**: "May they prosper who love you.

The Hebrew word for **peace** is **shalom** (שָׁלוֹם). **Shalom** implies a state of **wholeness and unity....a restored relationship**. When you pray for the **peace of Jerusalem**, you are praying for **much more** than the physical well-being and prosperity of the city. I believe you are praying for **the restoration of the bride for her Bridegroom**. This thought is supported by another verse in Psalm 122:

Psalms 122:3 Jerusalem is built as a city that is **compact** together,

The word for **compact** is **chavar** (חָבַר). It is interpreted as **companion** in the well-known Ezekiel 37 prophecy:

Ezekiel 37:16 Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his **companions**: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and *for* all the house of Israel his **companions**:

Allow me to paraphrase Psalm 122:3:

Jerusalem is built as a city of companions in unity.

Amen! May it be so in our generation! Let us be in prayer for the **Peace of Jerusalem!**

Shabbat Shalom,
Ardelle