

One or Two Brides?

♪ *I will betroth you to Me with righteousness, justice, kindness, and mercy. I will betroth you to Me and you shall know the Lord* ♪ (Hosea 2:21-22 {19-20 in English Bibles})

In Exodus 6:6-7, יהוה gave *Moshe* five promises, which He intended to carry out for Israel. Do you remember that four of these promises form the basis and names for the four cups of wine at the Passover Seder? The fourth of these promises (Seder Cups) is “*I Will Take You to Me – VeLakachti Etchem* (ולקחתי אתכם)” and is found in Exodus 6:7: “*I will take you* (4th cup – the cup of intimacy) *to Myself as a people and I will be your God. You will know that I am Adonai* (יהוה) *your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.*” The Hebrew word used in this last promise is the commonly translated “to take.” However, in the *TNK* there are other times when it is used in reference to someone taking a wife. An example of such is found in Genesis 24 where Abraham instructs his servant to take a wife for Isaac (See Gen. 4:19, 6:2, 11:29, 12:19). Based on this usage, it seems that when יהוה told Israel He wanted to take them to Himself. If this reasoning is correct, then this was Israel's moment of *betrothal* – the formal and legal engagement to their future Husband, יהוה!

Adonai was making a marriage proposal, and *Adonai*'s proposals are very difficult to resist. In Jewish terminology, an engagement is called a “*betrothal*” or *erusim* (אירוסים). In Biblical times, as well in some circles today, to break this betrothal would involve going through an official (rabbinic, not civil, although for all practical purposes in modern Israel it is now a civil matter as well) divorce procedure. The betrothal did not permit the couple to live together, but it did give *marriage* status to the couple. Often the betrothal ceremony was held one year before the actual wedding. In this regard, it is interesting to note that there was about a one-year period between the start of the plagues and the actual exodus.

This engagement, then, was a binding agreement between יהוה and Israel. As far as יהוה was concerned, it was as good as a marriage. However, as far as Israel was concerned, they seemed oblivious about it. This relationship from the start was initiated, carried out, maintained, and [will be] consummated totally by the Almighty – the Eternal Groom Himself. The prophet Hosea elucidates on this betrothal [as we listen to Messianic artist Steve McConnell's rendition of *V'erestikhli L'olam* in his *Hamoedim* album (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JIMOCiZErUY>)]

We face a dilemma when we talk about this marriage relationship between *Adonai* and His people. On the one hand, it is clear from the *TNK* that Israel was *Adonai*'s bride. However some say, “*God just let this unfaithful bride go and married another.*” They say this because Ephesians chapter five teaches us that *Adonai*'s *faith community* is His bride. Hence they say, God rejected Israel and married *the church* instead. BTW, when we see the English word *church* in the *B'rit Chadasha*, for the most part, it simply means literally, “*called-out ones.*” It does not carry with it the overtones of the anti-Semitic religious megalith, which it shortly acquired after the first century. These *called-out ones* are Jews *and* those from among the nations who believe in *Yeshua*.

This reasoning has quite a few problems. First, according to the prophet Malachi, *Adonai* says He “*hates divorce.*” And then *Yeshua* himself taught against divorce in the Gospel of Matthew. Since this is true, then it is inconceivable that He would go against His own nature to forgive, and instead divorce His unfaithful bride Israel. Accordingly, when Hosea spoke about the unfaithful bride, he also related how *Adonai* will make her faithful and mend their estranged relationship.

The second problem is that *Adonai* made other promises in both the *Torah* and the rest of the *TNK* where He guaranteed that, while Israel would indeed become unfaithful, He would bring them back to Himself and to their land, (see Deuteronomy 30). In addition, He solemnly promised that Israel would always exist as His covenant people, (Jeremiah 31:27-37). The prophet Isaiah also had some very strong words of encouragement for Israel: ♪ “*Hatishkach ishah ulah merachem ben-bitnah gam-elah tishkachnah ve'anochi lo eshkachech. Hen al-kapayim chakotich chomotayich negedi tamid – Can a woman forget her nursing child, or fail to have compassion upon*

him? She may forget, but know it or not, Israel you are always before Me. Behold I have engraved my people, on the palms of My hands. Your walls are always before me, Israel. How can I forget?" ♪ (Hatishkach, by Joel Chernoff, based on Isaiah 49:15-16 see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UK2Q44pmLus>)

If all of that is true, how, then, are we to understand *the bride church* terminology? Does *Adonai* have two brides? No! There is one bride, one olive tree, one flock, and believing Gentiles are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. It takes one who is thoroughly steeped in the Torah to properly explain this apparent dilemma. Rabbi Paul of Tarsus was such a man. He elucidated on the solution to this problem in Romans chapter 11. There, Paul makes it very clear that the *called-out* ones from among the gentiles are *grafted into* the olive tree of Israel. They are not a separate entity. They do not replace Israel. They are in some way, shape, or form, brought into Israel. This does not mean that being *grafted-in* to Israel makes them Jewish. But it does mean that they have become part of Israel, part of *the bride*. The *bride body*, as if it were, has been enlarged to include all who believe in Messiah, regardless of ethnicity or lineage.

Adonai does not give up one bride in place of another. This is called *Replacement Theology*. *Adonai* does not have two brides. This is called *Two Covenant Theory/Theology*. Instead, He has merely enlarged His eternal bride, Israel, by adding to her Gentile (non-Jewish) believers in *Yeshua*. The bottom line is that *Adonai* is our Husband and "*JI will betroth you to Me and you shall know the Lord*" ♪ The word *to know* is the Hebrew verb *yodea*, which means to have a conjugal/intimate relationship. The Lord desires for us to relate to Him in a close-intimate personal relationship—one that only a husband and wife can share. *What shall we say then? Amen & Amen!*