

Forgiveness

By Matthew Day

Once there was a man—we'll call him Adam. This man took to himself a wife that he loved dearly. But his wife was not content. She wanted to spend her time out in the world. One day, she met a stranger by the name of Nachshon. Nachshon was smooth with words and very handsome. He called the woman away from her first love. She did not remain faithful, but committed adultery. Adam became furious and rose up against Nachshon and killed him. The woman feared greatly for her life and ran. She ran until she could run no longer. Alone and thirsty in the desert she collapsed. "This is what I deserve," she thought, "Better to die alone in the desert than by the hand of my husband." She lay her head down on the sand, ready to give up. She woke feeling a gentle hand caressing her head. A bowl of water was set in front of her. She rose to drink but was surprised when she found herself face to face with her husband. He simply smiled and said "I will never leave you nor forsake you. Come home."

This is love. This is forgiveness. This is what our Husband has done for us.

When our King delivered us from Egypt 3500 years ago, He brought us to the Mountain to betroth us to Himself. He gave us the marriage Covenant—the Ketubah. He said "I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me." He said "You shall be my treasured possession among all peoples." He promised to treasure us as a man treasures his wife. What did we do? We said the calf is the God who brought us out of Egypt. We built an altar and served other gods before our Husband. We committed adultery in plain sight—right in front of our Husband. We broke the Covenant. Our Husband rose up in anger and struck down those who led Israel astray. Yet, two chapters later, our Husband proclaimed to Moses:

The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.

(Exodus 34:6-7 ESV)

Our Husband forgave the sins of our fathers and renewed the marriage Covenant with them. It is because of His mercy that we are alive today.

As the Bride of Messiah, we take on His Name. Exodus 33:19 says that the passage quoted above is His Name—"The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin..." This is the Name we are to take on ourselves. If we reject it, He will reject us (Matt. 6:14-15, 18:21-35). But if we are willing to uphold it, our King will place His Name on us and make us His Bride.

Yeshua was asked by Peter, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Did Peter really think he should count his brother's sins? I do not think so. Seven means "complete." Peter was suggesting to forgive completely as the answer. Indeed, it seems like a wise answer—to always forgive your brother completely. But Yeshua wasn't satisfied. He said,

“not seven, but seventy times seven.” What is the significance of this? It could be seen as an allusion to the seventy years Jerusalem went into exile (one year for each Sabbath year or seventy X seven):

*Then the angel of the LORD said, 'O LORD of hosts, how long will you have no mercy on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, against which you have been angry these **seventy years?**' And the LORD answered gracious and comforting words to the angel who talked with me. So the angel who talked with me said to me, 'Cry out, Thus says the LORD of hosts: I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion. And I am exceedingly angry with the nations that are at ease; for while I was angry but a little, they furthered the disaster. Therefore, thus says the LORD, **I have returned to Jerusalem with mercy**; my house shall be built in it, declares the LORD of hosts, and the measuring line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem. Cry out again, Thus says the LORD of hosts: My cities shall again overflow with prosperity, and **the LORD will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem.**'"*

(Zechariah 1:12-17 ESV)

Remember the mercy that our Husband showed to us and show the same to your brother. Our Shepherd left the ninety-nine to bring back the one that went astray—we should welcome him back with joy.

Consider this also: we are to treat our brothers in Messiah like brothers. That means they're in you family and you have no right to throw them out. Remember Joseph who forgave his brothers even though they tried to murder him. We are a family—the house of God. When a brother sins against us and repents, it is our duty to make every effort to restore the relationship. Just like our Husband restored the relationship between Himself and His bride.

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