

Hine Ze Ba

A LOVE LETTER --- Signed in BLOOD!

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Rachel, my daughter, was thrilled recently when she found love notes all through the day- in her car, in her books, in her dresser drawers. When she got home, she found a trail of notes leading to a bouquet of flowers. She was elated. In college, Nathan prepared a giant heart "candy" box (each piece the size of a large coffee paper strainer, decorated it, and put it outside her dorm room with a big "I love you" on top. When he proposed to Cathy, he first gave her a "storybook" telling their story. At the end was a built in "nest" housing her diamond ring. Cathy was thrilled!

How wonderful to get love letters, or hugs or expressions of affection from our loved ones! But the greatest love letter of all times was the one written by God through the breath of verbal inspiration. But it was a *love letter signed in blood*. Theologians call it the "scarlet thread of redemption". From Genesis to Revelation, it is the blood covenant that unifies the whole book into one. Only through a blood sacrifice could the Old Testament saint approach a holy God. And when Jesus (Hebrew name is Yeshua- meaning salvation) died on the cross, he became that once-for -all Lamb of God that became our substitute paying the price for our sin and enabling us to be forgiven and have a relationship with him- a relationship that is to be like a marriage where we become as one with Him.

But **why the blood?** We are told in Leviticus 17:11: *For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul."* Only the price of blood will pay for the price of sin. **But why?**

Blood covenanting was present in every culture but began in the East where the human race began. The essence of blood covenanting is alluded to in the scriptures but isn't fully explained because it was so well understood in the Mideast but has been lost in our western culture. A blood covenant between a two men or parties was a bond that could not be broken. The two parties became as one; sharing blood was the sharing of the life of the other. The word "friend" in the Mideast meant a covenant partner. Ten steps usually accompanied the blood covenant ceremony between two Hebrew males:

1. Exchanging of garments- The garments represented their characters and personalities. They were becoming one. (This can be seen in the story of David and Jonathan.)

2. Exchanging belts and weapons- The belt was used to hold their weapon. To give one's belt was to give one's strength. Each one was saying, "I'll fight your enemies and you'll fight mine!"

3. Cutting the covenant- The word *beriyth* translated covenant means a compact by passing between the pieces. **Made** covenant is from *karath* which means to make an alliance by cutting the flesh and passing between the pieces.

The partners would cut an animal in half and place each half on a structure with walking space in between. They would start on opposite ends, walk between the pieces making a figure 8 (representing eternity) and then face each other. They were saying to God: Do to me as this animal if I break this covenant! It was considered a walk of death- death to independent living to take on the life of the other. (See Genesis 15)

4. Raising arms and mixing blood- They would make an incision in their wrists or arms (usually bound by a rope) and co-mingle their blood. They would wipe the blood on covenant papers. These papers were sewn up in a leather case and suspended around the neck and bound on the arm¹

5. Make a scar- Each partner would put dirt into their incision causing a permanent scar. It reminded them of their covenant bond. In the Old Testament, remember translated from *zakar* means to mark- a reference to the blood covenant.

6. Exchanging of names- They exchanged names representing authority (sometimes giving the other a white stone)

7. Exchanging gifts- They exchanged gifts but the commitment was greater than that. Those covenanting were ready to not only give their lives to another but give that which was dearer than life itself. To give up one's son to a covenanting partner would be the highest devotion to covenant. (See Genesis 22 when Abraham was willing to sacrifice Issac. God gave up his only son for us.)

8. Ratified by oaths- The promises and penalties of the covenant were written on a document sealed with a token of blood.

9. Celebrate a memorial feast- They would celebrate the covenant with a meal including bread (representing the body) and unfermented wine (representing the blood). Participating in covenant was referred to as "drinking the covenant".

10. Planting a memorial- They would plant a tree or set up a stone memorial to again help them remember the covenant.

In John 6:53-56 Jesus said, "...*Verily, verily, I say to you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eating my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh, is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me, and I in him.*" What was he saying to this Hebrew audience? He certainly was not talking about a literal eating of blood which was forbidden. The Lord's Supper had not been instituted yet. To every Hebrew the meaning was perfectly clear: he was talking of participating in a blood covenant with him. He was saying: No other relationship is more important than your relationship with me! I want you to become as one with me. Give me your

¹ Trumbull, Clay, *The Blood Covenant*, Impact Books, 1975, p. 5-6

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garments (character) and I will give you mine! Give me your strength and I will give you mine! Fight my enemies and I will fight yours. Die to your independent life so you can take on mine! He was talking of a divine exchange! And in this exchange, he would give them his name- his authority. He would give his life for them but he was asking them to give their life and even those things that are dearer than life itself to him. He was extending to them his promises but along with those promises would be penalties imposed on those that would be disobedient to that covenant. When Jesus talked on believing on him what was meant was a total commitment or giving of one's life for the other. Is it any wonder that most walked away? They were not ready to give that degree of commitment.

In Genesis 15, when Abraham covenanted with the Lord cutting up pieces of animals, only a smoking furnace and burning lamp passed (symbolic of God the Father and God the Son) between the pieces. Abraham fell asleep. When Jesus died on the cross so we could have a blood covenant relationship with him, he paid it all. There is nothing we can add to that price.

Jesus' blood gave us HIS LIFE.

Jesus' blood gave us his character- his garment of righteousness.

Jesus' blood enables us to have victory over the devil and our flesh.

His wounds remind us of his everlasting commitment.

Jesus' blood enables us to have a relationship so close it is as we are one in Him.

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Jesus' blood enables us to use his name and authority.

Jesus' blood enables us to partake of his gifts.

Jesus' blood reminds us He is a friend that sticks closer than a brother.

But is this blood covenant with us completely one-sided?

No, if it were everyone in the world would be saved. In order to be a covenant, it requires a response from us not unlike a marriage covenant which isn't valid until; first of all, the bride accepts the proposal with "YES!"

Marriage- A Blood Covenant

From earliest times, the ancient Jewish wedding was considered to be a blood covenant. In the Hebrew, the word for bridegroom- **khatan** has the root idea of binding and severing, the covenanting of blood. Once a male child is circumcised, he is referred to as a bridegroom of blood².

The father of the groom would choose the bride for his son and send out a trusted servant to do so. (See Genesis 24)

The bride, however, had the right to accept or reject. She had to say, "I will!"

The word for bride- **kallah**- means perfect and refers to her faithfulness and consecration to the covenant and her purity

² Trumbull, The Blood Covenant, p. 222.

in waiting for the groom who leaves for a year after betrothal to prepare a home for her in his father's house.

According to Clay Trumbull in The Threshold Covenant³, Blood sacrifices in the East originated at the threshold of the home. Before welcoming a guest into the home, a blood sacrifice was offered at the threshold. If the guest stepped over or **crossed over** the blood, he was welcomed in as part of the family. If a King was the honored guest and a blood sacrifice was not prepared, an executioner would be sent to slay the household members. A blood sacrifice was offered on the threshold of the new bride and groom. The custom still persists today of the groom carrying his bride over the threshold (they were stepping over the blood). A bloody hand signature was put on the door and lintels of that home and a bloody hand signature affixed to the primitive marriage certificate. Flowing blood was essential where two were made one in marriage covenant. There was no binding covenant without blood in family relations. The threshold was hallowed as the place where God met and blessed the marital union where two were made one in a covenant of blood. The first altar was the threshold or doorway to the home⁴. The earliest temple was the door above the altar of the threshold⁵. The origin of this rite seems to have begun with Adam and Eve.⁶

Bride Chosen at Passover

On the first **Passover** (*Pesach*- meaning to pass over or cross over) God introduced what was familiar to them. When they put blood on the top of the sideposts of the door (in the form of a cross!) not only were they being protected from the death angel, they were covenanting with their Creator. It was this night that Jehovah chose "the Virgin of Israel" as his bride. Afterwards any idolatry or worship of any other gods was considered spiritual adultery.

Jesus (*Yeshua* in Hebrew) was our Passover lamb (1 Cor. 5:7). He died on the cross at 3:00 p.m. - the very time the Passover lamb for the nation was being offered. If you accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior by asking him to forgive you of your sins (repenting), and asking Jesus to live in your heart, you applied the blood of the Lamb to the doorpost of your heart. And now you have the authority to claim protection of that blood from any invasion of our enemy, satan. Through the Blood of the Lamb, both believing Jew and Gentile can be a part of the Bride of Christ.

The Bride Purchased

In the ancient Jewish wedding, a bridal price or *mohar* is paid by the groom. Again, this is associated with Passover

³ Trumbull, Clay, The Threshold Covenant.

⁴ Trumbull, Clay, The Threshold Covenant, p. 3

⁵ The Threshold Covenant, p. 92

⁶ " " p. 176

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and Jesus our Passover lamb. The last step of the Passover meal is called *nirtzah- all is finished*. When Jesus said, "*It is finished!*" on the cross, he probably said the Hebrew word **ka'lal** meaning to complete or perfect. It is the same root as the word for bride (**kallah**) meaning perfected or undefiled one. Jesus was saying, "Bride, I have paid the bridal price. You are mine! Ephesians 1:8 refers to this calling us "the redemption of the purchased possession".

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The Bride Cleansed

Prior to their wedding, the bride would undergo a *mikvah*-a ritual immersion which typified a separation from the old life (unmarried) and the new life (married). It was considered part of her physical and spiritual preparation for marriage

Passover week consists of three feasts: Passover (the first day called preparation day - the day of the killing of the lamb- the 14th of Nisan). It is symbolic of Jesus' crucifixion. The next feast which is part of the Passover celebration starts the next day and is called the Feast of Unleavened Bread (*HaMatzah*) and lasts for seven days. The first and last days of Unleavened Bread are called High Holy Days or Sabbaths. So there are actually three Sabbaths celebrated during the Passover eight day celebration.. This feast is symbolic of the burial of Yeshua (Jesus) which took place on the 15th of Nisan. No leaven (type of sin) is eaten during this week. This can be compared to the spiritual cleansing of the bride for seven days prior to her wedding.

Before Passover, the wife of every household would diligently clean the house and search for any sign of leaven. She would purposely leave ten pieces of leaven. The father takes the children along with a candle, a wooden spoon, a feather, a piece of linen cloth, and together they search for the leaven. By the day before Passover (*Pesach*) the search is complete. The father uses the feather to sweep the leaven onto the spoon. Then without touching the leaven, he takes the feather, spoon, leaven and wraps them in a linen cloth and casts them out of the door of the house. On the 14th of Nisan (Passover) he takes the linen cloth to the synagogue and the contents are burned. The candle represents the Word of God, the feather the Holy Spirit, the spoon the cross Jesus died on, and the leaven - sin. All leaven (sin) was swept on the spoon (the cross Jesus died on) -Jesus became sin for us. The leaven (Jesus on the tree who became sin for us) was wrapped in linen and cast out (Jesus was buried and went to hell).

Historically, Israel was to eat unleavened bread at the start of her journey and it is called the "bread of affliction". Jesus was called the "Bread of Life". He was born in Bethlehem which means "House of Bread". Matza (an unleavened cracker) used during Passover is made by beating the dough

which forms "stripes" which typify Jesus' stripes.

One of the steps of the Passover meal or seder is called *Yachatz*. A bag contains three pieces of matzot. The middle piece is broken, wrapped in linen and buried. This middle piece is called the *afikomen*. (representing *Yeshua*) It was hidden until the end of the service. During the *Tzafun* step of the Passover meal, the *afikomen* is redeemed and ransomed (representing the resurrection). The resurrection is also represented by the Feast of First Fruits (also in the Passover week) which occurs a day after the seventh day Sabbath or Sunday).⁷

Passover represented Jesus' death, Unleavened Bread represents his burial, and the Feast of First Fruits (*Bikkurim*) represents his resurrection. But for those who have entered into a marital blood covenant with him, it also represents the believers' death to self, being buried with Christ (putting off the old man- the sin nature), and being resurrected into newness of life. It is no longer I who lives but Christ lives in me. I am a new person! (2 Cor. 5:17; Rom.6-8)

The Bride Betrothed at Pentecost

In the ancient Jewish wedding, the first stage of marriage was called *the kiddushin or erusin*. The couple was considered married but did not physically live together. God betrothed himself to Israel on Pentecost (called *Shavuot*).

At betrothal, a written document called *ketubah* (meaning that which is written) is drawn up. In it are the provisions and promises of the bridegroom and the bride. Penalties for breaking the covenant were included too. The Ten Commandments was not given as a list of "do's" and "don'ts" but a loving marriage contract between God and his bride. The Word of God both Old and New are our *ketubah*-our love letter and written marriage contract.

Upon giving the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:3 we read, "*Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*" In Hebrew it is literally saying, Have no other gods face to face with you. Before my face in Hebrew is *al peney*. It means an intimate face to face relationship. It is like a marital relationship - eyeball to eyeball, cheek to cheek, arm to arm. He was saying don't enter into a spiritual intimate love relationship with anything or anyone except me! When I was in Israel, our tour guide was called Moshe

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meaning Moses. He had an Arab friend who was a Christian. One time I saw them talking. Each other had

⁷ Chumney, Eddie, The Seven Festivals of the Messiah, Destiny Image Publishers, PA, 1999, p.59-62.

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their hands on each other's shoulders. They were looking at each other eyeball to eyeball. As they were talking, they were delighting in what the other said. It was not what we might think- it was not impure. It showed me what it means to speak face to face. The closest thing God can relay to what he wants from us is an exciting marital relationship!

These first four feasts: Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits and Pentecost have been fulfilled at his first coming. The fall feasts: Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Feast of Tabernacles will be totally fulfilled at Jesus Yeshua's) second coming when he comes back to get his bride.

Do

you remember how passionate you were when you were first going with your spouse? Remember those love letters? Those animated discussions in which even his or her words seemed golden? Those special physical expressions? Those romantic moments? Jesus declares to the Ephesians Church in Revelation...."*I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.*" Rev. 2:4

Recently Wayne and I started watching a movie on the Christian channel. It was about a wife and mother. Her husband had cancelled their dinner date because of work and she was mad. At the office, she received a card inviting her to an expensive restaurant but it was signed *Jesus Christ!* Not a Christian, she thought her husband was playing a joke on her and went. Upon arriving, it was not her husband but another man who claimed to be Jesus Christ! She thought he was an actor from a church that had been contacting her. They talked about many things including her objections to Christianity. He answered those objections with gentleness, kindness, and empathy but presented the truth - that He is the WAY the only way. He kept bringing up things he couldn't possibly know. Finally, he got to the root. Her dad died when she was 13. She had asked God why and held anger in her heart toward God afterwards. At the end of their discussion, she saw the nail prints in his wrist and knew that it was Jesus. She went home totally changed.

Actually, the movie is not so far fetched. Jesus says in Rev. 3: 20, "*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*"

In Hebrew the word for love is *ahav*. It sounds like a husband in hot pursuit of his wife. We can run after him because he first ran after us!! And if you and I are not experiencing his love, guess who is turned the wrong direction! Let's fall in love again, ask the Lord to draw us into his love net and eat his Word! I want MORE! Do you?

Love,
Dr. Mom (Edith Saller)

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About the Author

Dr. Edith Saller graduated from Shalom Bible College located in Des Moines, Iowa with a master's in ministry and a doctorate in theology. She did her doctoral thesis on, "*The Law through Hebrew Eyes*" which presented the law/grace issue in Romans from a Hebraic perspective which is largely overlooked by most Christian theologians. This document was incorporated by Shalom Bible School (a Pentecostal school) into a Bible study which is now being used as a course of study by international as well as national students.

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In 2005 on the second day of *Rosh HaShana* (Feast of Trumpets), Dr. Edith Saller was awakened with the Hebrew song, *Kol Dode, Henay Ze Ba* (The voice of my Beloved, Behold He Comes!) running through her mind. She feels alerting believers to the soon coming of Jesus Christ is her mission. Jesus was our **Bridge** to God. As a believer in Him, she feels she is to also help bridge the gap between Gentile believers who have not been taught the beautiful and rich Jewish roots of our faith and Jews who have not yet seen the BRIDGE- *Yeshua HaMashiah*- Jesus Christ as their long awaited Messiah!

Dr. Edith Saller is committed to the whole body of Christ and is available as a speaker to any denomination or group subject to permission by the Holy Spirit. Such topics are of interest to her and will soon be available written on request:

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