

Law and Love in Jewish Theology

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The Holy One, blessed be He, said, "When you stood at Mount Sinai and received the Torah, I wrote that I love you, as it is written, 'it was because the Lord loved you'" (Deuteronomy 7:8).
Exodus Rabbah 32:2.

JEWISH theology is a palace of faith and conviction grounded in revelation, molded by speculation, and forged by tradition. Engendered by divine providence and love, carefully crafted by human intuition and intellect, and honed by history and experience, the theological edifice of Judaism rests upon three firmly planted pillars: God, Torah and Israel (see Heschel 1970: 71–90). The underlying foundation which supports and which binds these three fundamental theological non-negotiables of Judaism is the awareness of the commitment to an eternally binding covenant between God and the people of Israel (see Hillers 1969 for an introduction to the idea of covenant).

According to the Talmud, the covenant compacted between God and Israel at Sinai is the *raison d'être* not only for the creation of the people of Israel, but also for the creation of the world. The Talmud reports that, "the Holy One, blessed be He, stipulated with the Works of Creation and said thereto: If Israel accepts the Torah (at Sinai) you shall continue to exist, but if not, I shall revert you back to chaos and to void" (Shabbat 88a; Fackenheim 1968: 66–82). Without the revelation at Sinai, creation is revealed to be a purposeless venture. Without the covenant, Jewish existence is a conclusion without a premise, a fallacy. At Sinai, the three foci of Jewish theological concern converge at one time, in one place. At Sinai, *God* gives the *Torah* to *Israel*.

Rabbinic tradition analogizes the theophany at Sinai to a wedding. According to one tradition, the people of Israel were married to the Torah at Sinai.¹ According to a second tradition, at Sinai, God, the bridegroom, is wedded to Israel, His bride:²

"On the day of his espousals" (Song of Songs 3:11). This alludes to the revelation at Sinai which, was, as it were, a wedding ceremony (between God and Israel), as is born out by the text, "Betroth them today and tomorrow" (Exodus 19:10).

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The Torah serves as the “marriage contract” which eternally binds the bridegroom and the bride together.³

As a *contract*, the Torah is a legal document which states the mutually accepted duties and responsibilities of the two parties to the agreement. However, as a *marriage contract*, the Torah is a document which attests to the love which obtains between God and Israel. Thus, while it embodies a legal element, the Torah is not simply law; rather it embraces a polarity of love *and* law.

To the dispassionate reader a marriage contract might appear a dry legalistic document, but to the bridegroom and the bride it represents an expression of their love, a concretization of their commitment. To those who attend a wedding, the liturgy may sound unduly encumbered by legalistic jargon. However, the bridegroom and the bride hear the legal wording of the marriage service as a song echoing their mutual love. At Sinai, the Torah, the marriage contract between God and Israel, was presented. Some read it and hear its melody of love; others, however, see only law but are deaf to its message of love.⁴ Commenting on the biblical account of the giving of the Torah at Sinai, the founder of Hasidism, the Baal Shem Tov, offered the following analogy in the form of a story (Ephriam of Sedilkow 1963, 111):

A musician was playing at a wedding celebration at a local inn. His music so enraptured the people that they were driven to dance. Then a deaf man who could not hear the music happened to pass the inn. As the fiddler stood in the corner, the man did not see him. As he was deaf, he did not hear the music. Looking through the window, all he saw were people jumping up and down. “Madmen, all madmen,” he muttered and went his way.

Those who have identified the Torah with law alone, those who portray Judaism as a religion obsessed with law to the exclusion of love and emotion, fail to hear the music. Like the deaf man in the tale, they perceive acts of celebration as acts of madness. But, to those who hear the music, observance of the laws of the Torah is an expression of not simply obedience to God, but also of love for the Giver of the Torah.

Observance of the law is a free expression of joy and not a spiritually crippling manifestation of servitude. Observance of the commandments is not a curse from which the Jew needs to be redeemed, but a blessing which makes one worthy of being redeemed.⁵

Though made at one time, at one place, the covenant is binding upon all Jews for all time, at all times in all places. As a husband and wife must perpetually renew their love, must continually recommit themselves to the pledge made on their wedding day, as love must be continually revitalized lest it be taken for granted, lest it dissolve into habit, so must the original covenant between God and Israel be continually reaffirmed both in the life

of the people of Israel as well as in the life of each member of the people of Israel. Scripture reports occasions at which Israel renewed the covenant with God originally made at Sinai.⁶ The liturgies of various Jewish festivals of the year offer opportunities for the renewal of the commitment to the covenant (Ringgren 1966:193). Events in the life-cycle of the individual Jew such as circumcision (called in Hebrew, *brit*, or covenant), bar/bat mitzvah, marriage, etc., offer opportunities for the individual Jew to renew the pledge his ancestors had made long before. Each day, with each prayer service, an opportunity for reaffirmation is offered. In this vein the Hasidic master, Rabbi Mendel of Kotsk once said:

The liturgy refers to the Pentecost festival (Hebrew: *Shavuot*) as “the time of the giving of the Torah.” Why is it not called “the festival of the receiving of the Torah?” For if Israel had not accepted the Torah, there would be no occasion to celebrate.

And, as is the wont of Hasidic masters, he answered his own question, saying:

The reason is because the Torah was given only once—at Sinai. But, it cannot only be received only once; otherwise, it would be forgotten. It must be received continually, every day.

Festivals in the Jewish calendar, liturgies recited throughout the year give expression to the fact that the events of the past, such as Sinai, have an undiminished importance for each generation. Through his daily re-acceptance of the Torah, the Jewish past becomes the Jewish present; Jewish history is reaffirmed as Jewish destiny. Events in the life of one generation become contemporary events in the lives of each subsequent generation (Ringgren 1966: 193, quoting von Rad).

Describing the arrival of Israel at Sinai for its wedding with God, Scripture records, “In the third month after Israel had departed Egypt, on *this* day they came to the wilderness of Sinai” (Exodus 19:1). Should not the verse read “on *that* day” rather than “on *this* day?” asked the rabbis. The commentaries observe:⁷ “‘On this day’ was written rather than ‘on that day’ (to teach) that the words of the Torah should be new to you, as if He gave them to you today.” In a similar vein, the Hasidic master, Abraham Joshua Heschel of Apt once observed (in Buber 1948: 116):

Everyone is told to consider himself to be standing at Mount Sinai, to receive the Torah. For to human beings, there are past and future events, but not for God; day in and day out He gives the Torah, and day in and day out one may receive the Torah.

Before beginning his recitation of the daily morning prayer, the observant Jew dons his prayer shawl and phylacteries (Hebrew: *tefillin*). As he does so he recites a verse from Hosea (2:21–22) which recalls the espousal of Israel to God at Sinai:

I betroth you to Me forever
 I betroth you to Me in righteousness, with justice,
 with lovingkindness and with mercy
 I betroth you to Me with faithfulness and
 you shall love the Lord.

The liturgy of the daily morning service commences with an assurance of God's endless love. The liturgy of the evening service reconfirms that theme while providing a reminder of the nexus between love and law. God's law is a token of His love. The evening liturgy reads: "With great love have You loved the people of Israel, teaching us your Torah and Your commandments, your statutes and your judgments. Blessed are You, O Lord, who loves your people Israel."

Each act the observant Jew performs in the course of the day is accompanied by a blessing, e.g., rising from sleep, eating, etc. Many of these blessings take the following form: "Praised are You, our God, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us (Hebrew: *kidshanu*) with His commandments and commanded us to. . . ." A Hasidic rabbi once observed that the Hebrew work *kidshanu*—"who sanctified us"—can also be translated as "who betroths us to Himself." Thus, by observing the commandments, by obeying God's laws, each person, in each act, may become betrothed to God.

As was noted above, one tradition compares the revelation at Sinai to a wedding between God and the people of Israel. However, a second tradition analogizes the Sinaitic theophany to a marriage between God and the people of Israel. Rabbinic literature as well as Jewish mystical tradition describes the Torah as the betrothed of Israel: "Moses commanded us the Torah, an inheritance (Hebrew: *morashah*) of the congregation of Jacob (Deuteronomy 33:4)." The rabbis comment (*Exodus Rabbah* 33:7): "Do not read the word as *morashah*—as an inheritance—but as *me'orasah*—as a betrothal."

God, the father, gives His daughter, the Torah, as a bride to the people of Israel.⁸ The presence of the Torah in the life of Israel guarantees the perpetual presence of God in the life of Israel. In this regard, the rabbis offered the following parable (*Exodus Rabbah* 33:1):

Once there was a king who had an only daughter whom another king married. When the latter wished to return to his country and take his wife with him, the father said, "My daughter whom I have given you in marriage is my only child. My love for her is great. I cannot depart from her. Yet, I cannot ask you not to take her to your realm. It is now her proper home. Permit me this one request. To whatever distant place you take her now to live, always have a chamber ready for me that I may dwell with you and with her. For I can never consider really leaving my daughter." So God said

to Israel: "I have given you a Torah from which I cannot really part. I cannot tell you not to receive it in love. Yet, I request only this. Wherever you go with it, make Me a house wherein I may sojourn." As it is written, "Let them make Me a sanctuary so that I may dwell among them" (Exodus 25:8).

As the "daughter" of God, the Torah is both apart from and a part of its parent. In God's giving the Torah to Israel, part of the Giver is given with the gift.⁹ The Torah is Israel's beloved, Israel's spouse, the touchstone of meaning for Israel's life. As the rabbis put it, "When a man loves the Torah, he loves life itself. Thus Scripture says, 'Enjoy life with the wife you love'" (Ecclesiastes 9:9; *Midrash on Psalms* 119:40).

The place of the Torah in the life of Israel guarantees the perpetual presence of God in the history of Israel. The presence of the Torah binds God to Israel and Israel to God.

It is through his or her observance of the commandments of the Torah that the Jew binds himself or herself to God through the Torah. God's Torah is the law of His love. Israel's obedience to God's will manifests their love of His law.

The observance of God's law is the Jew's primary way of manifesting his or her love for God. Both the words "religion" and "legal" derive from the identical Latin root *ligo* which means "to be bound." According to a Hasidic master, observance of the law binds us to God. Observance of the commandments is religion in action, "practical theology." Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev once said (Dresner 1958: 33; also see Kullman 1956: 10:34–36): "The word *mitzvah*—commandment—means 'to bind,' which is to say, he who properly performs a *mitzvah* binds himself to the Creator."¹⁰

The law is a means of establishing the bond between God and Israel, and not an end in itself. The law is a path, not a destination. Jewish law—*halakhah*—comes from the root "to go" and not from the root "to arrive."

As God cannot be separated from Israel, and as neither can be separated from the Torah, the Torah cannot preserve its nature either without love or without law. Without love, the Torah is a body without a soul. Without law, the Torah is a bodiless, vagabond spirit.

The portrait of Torah which equates Torah with law alone paints only half a face of its subject. The Septuagint's translation of "Torah" as "nomos"—law—gave rise to a tradition of misunderstanding both of the nature of the Torah in Judaism, and, consequently of the nature of Judaism in its entirety. Despite the claims of Christian theologians and Western philosophers who equate Judaism with legalism, Judaism has never been exclusively a religion of law (see Heschel 1955: 320–330).

The claim that Judaism is totally a religion of law to the exclusion of love, faith and morality is simply not historically or theologically defensible. The claim found in Christian theology that the laws of the Torah are

superseded and therefore obsolete has helped engender tragic results throughout Jewish history. Kant's equation of Judaism with law alone, led him to the conclusion that Judaism was at best a-moral, at worst immoral. This conclusion led Kant to call for the "euthanasia of Judaism," an idea which was translated into a social and political policy by Nazi Germany during the European Holocaust.¹¹

The supersessionist idea found in Christian theology in effect denigrates both the people of Israel and the Torah of Israel.¹² Consequently, such notions denigrate the God of Israel. To insult one's wife is to besmirch her husband. To insult a child is to insult its parent:¹³

Once a king had a daughter. He built her palaces with many halls. His decree went forth: Whosoever is granted an audience with my daughter is considered as being in my presence. Whosoever dares to insult my daughter, it is as if he insulted me.

In Jewish tradition the Pentecost is celebrated as the anniversary of the giving of the Torah at Sinai.¹⁴ It is therefore not surprising that liturgical texts for that festival reflect a vision of Sinai as the occasion at which the people of Israel became eternally wedded to the Torah. Nor is it surprising that the liturgy articulates the view that celebration of the Pentecost provides an opportunity for renewing that marriage, for reaffirming that commitment.

In many Sefardic congregations, before the Torah is read during the morning liturgy for Pentecost, a *ketubah le-shavout*—a marriage contract for Pentecost—is read. This document is modeled after the traditional Jewish marriage contract, the *ketubah*. The various versions of this document describe the solemnizing of a marriage between the Torah, the bride, and the people of Israel, the bridegroom. As father of the bride, God gives as dowry the six hundred and thirteen commandments of the Torah. As "best man," Moses presents a gift to the groom of the Sabbath and the festivals. Some versions describe God and Moses as signators to the original marriage contract while others have the heavens and the earth as witnesses to the original document. A second practice developed under the influence of the late medieval mystics provides for the reading of a marriage contract which describes God as the bridegroom, the people of Israel as His bride, and the Torah as the dowry presented to the bride on the wedding day (see Goodman 1974: 96–101, 156–157).

Following the text of the traditional Jewish marriage contract, these liturgical versions of the marriage contract between God and Israel do not simply purport to attest to the love between God and Israel. They also—as does any contract—unequivocally state the legal obligations attendant upon the two parties to the agreement. The people agree to express their love for God by observing the commandments of the Torah, by upholding

God's law. God, in turn, agrees to extend His perpetual providential care over the people, and commits Himself to be bound by the promises He has made to His people.

When the two parties enter into a legal agreement there is an expectation that each party will uphold its respective obligations under the agreement. However, as is often the case, parties to an agreement violate stipulations of the agreement. Initial expectations are tempered by mutual disappointments. When Israel violates its duties and obligations under the covenant, God invokes His justice upon them. By transgressing the conditions of its marriage contract with God, by violating the law, Israel becomes liable to divine justice and judgment. For example, as the Talmud compares Sinai to a wedding between God and Israel, so it extends the analogy to compare the building and worshiping of the golden calf to harlotry, to a blatant disregarding of Israel's marriage vows. "Shameless is the bride that plays the harlot within her bridal chamber," observes the Talmudic text (*Shabbat* 88b). Under such circumstances the law might require divorce, the annulment of the marriage, the cancellation of the covenant. But, such is not the case. Because the covenant is eternal, and because God is bound to the covenant, the covenant endures, the marriage remains in force. Because the covenant embraces love as well as law, God's mercy tempers His justice. The spirit of God's love hovers over God's law. At first, God wishes to enforce His law to the letter: "I will judge you as women who break wedlock and shed blood are judged and I will bring upon you the blood of fury and jealousy" (Ezekiel 16:38). But, in the end, God's love prevails over His law; His mercy subdues His justice:

For thus saith the Lord God, I will deal even with you as you have done, who has despised the oath in breaking the covenant. Nevertheless, I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish with you an everlasting covenant. And I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the Lord, that you may remember . . . that I have forgiven you all you have done, saith the Lord God (Ezekiel 16:59-63).

According to the Talmud, God obeys His own laws, even the laws regarding prayer. God prays. "And what does God pray?," the Talmud asks (*Berachot* 7a):

May it be My will that My mercy may suppress My anger, and that My mercy may prevail over My (other) attributes, so that I might deal with my children in the attitude of mercy, and on their behalf, stop short of the limit of strict justice.

As was just noted, rabbinic sources depict God as obeying His own laws. In other words, God is considered to be a "person" in Jewish law,

“enjoying rights, being subject to obligations, heeding His own precepts, and entering as a subject of civil jurisdiction, as it were, in the complex of relations between Himself and His creatures” (Silberg 1973: 1–8). This rather startling notion—that God is a “person” under the law—is established in the Talmud (*Jerusalem Talmud, Rosh Ha-Shanah, 1, 3a*):

Rabbi Lazar said: A human king issues a decree and he may choose to obey it or he may choose to have only others obey it. Not so the Holy One, praised be He. When He issues a decree, He is the first to obey it, as it is stated, “And they shall observe My observances, I am the Lord,” i.e., I am He who is first to observe the commandments of the Torah.

As a person under the law—albeit His own—God may be called to account for His apparent failure to honor the legal obligations to which He committed himself. As Israel is liable to God for its violations of the covenant, so is God liable to Israel for His violations of the pact He made with His people.

Throughout the massacres and pogroms which punctuate Jewish history, Jews have deigned and have dared to suggest and to claim that God has failed to uphold His duties and His obligations under the covenant. Human suffering may be justified by human sin, and punishment may be the price Israel pays for its failure to fulfill its part of its pact with God. Nevertheless, so much suffering, so many tragedies, so many hosts of martyrs, so many oceans of blood, so many streams of tears, so many stacks of corpses, could not possibly be the products of divine justice. The nightmare of Jewish history seems to conflict the the promise of divine providence, with God’s proclivity toward justice, with God’s attribute of mercy. Abraham’s cry: “Will the Judge of all the earth not do justice?” (Genesis 18:25)—echoed throughout the centuries. The rabbis of the Talmud read the verse in Exodus (15:11): “Who is like unto You among the mighty (*elim*) O Lord?” and commented, “Read not *elim* (mighty) by *elmim* (silent). Who is like unto You among the silent, O Lord—seeing the suffering of His children and remaining silent?” (Horowitz and Rabin 1960: 142).

The tradition of Jewish protestantism was begun by Abraham, the first Jew, and was perpetuated by his descendants.¹⁵ The covenant requires, the law demands, that God act with justice. For Him to act otherwise, means that He is in breach of contract.” When He acts otherwise, He may be called to account. The prophet Jeremiah questions God’s justice: “Why does the way of the wicked prosper?” (12:1). The prophet Habakkuk indicts God for perverting His own justice, for misusing his judgment, for manifesting apathetic silence instead of providential concern:

Lord, how shall I cry and You will not hear, even cry out to You of violence and You will not save . . . The wicked encompass the righteous, wrong judgment proceeds. . . . Wherefore do You hold Your tongue when the wicked devours the person more righteous than he? (Habakkuk 1:1–3).

When did Habakkuk say this? The midrash offers this response (*Midrash on Psalms 77:1*):

Habakkuk drew a figure of a circle and stood in the middle of it and said to the Holy One, blessed be He, “Master of the Universe, I shall not stir from this place until You declare to me how long You will continue to show forbearance to the wicked in this world?” The Holy One, blessed be He, replied, “You have cried to Me but you have not doubted Me. As you live, I shall answer you and cause you to understand. I show forbearance to the wicked in this world so that they may come back to Me in repentance and their willful sins will then be reckoned as unwitting sins. . . .” When the Holy One lets the righteous envision the trials that are to come upon Israel, the righteous stand up and protest to Him.

As one is required to bear witness before God, so may one bear witness against God. Only after Jacob struggles with the divine is he called “Israel,” which means “to wrestle with God.” Israel is a people by virtue of its eternal struggle with God to make Him remain faithful to His law, to His covenant.

Of those in the annals of Jewish history, the individual most closely identified with reminding God to be faithful to His own justice is the Hasidic master, Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev.¹⁶ In this regard Rabbi Barukh, the grandson of the Baal Shem Tov, is reputed to have said, “According to Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev the Holy One, blessed be He, has not done justice to even a single Jew.”

Reflecting on the analogy of Sinai with a wedding between God and Israel, Levi Yitzhak once observed:

Master of the World, the sages and prophets of old speak of the covenant at Mount Sinai as a marriage between God and Israel. But what kind of marriage is it? Israel brought great *yihus* (nobility, family status, genealogy) to the marriage, for are we not the children of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? But what *yihus* did You bring Lord? Who were Your ancestors? You brought wealth to the marriage—that was Your part of the bargain, as it is written of You, “Mine is the silver and the gold.” Therefore, Master of the World, open up Your vast treasure house for us, ease our dreadful needs, and act like the one to whom all the world belongs!

On another occasion, commenting on the verse, “they stand this day for Your judgments, for all things are Your servants” (Psalms 119:91), Levi Yitzhak explained:

“They stand this day for Your judgment,” that is, the children of Israel, the people You have chosen, the people who fulfill Your law, they stand this day—if one may utter it—to judge You! . . . they judge You for that which they bear—wicked and cruel decrees, pogroms and persecutions, poverty and sorrow—all of which has come upon us because “we are your servants” . . . (Therefore) our judgment is that You must redeem us without delay.

God is bound to observe His own law. The law is “You shall not afflict the orphan” (Exodus 22:21). Levi Yitzhak prayed, “Master of the World, law after law, prohibition after prohibition You have given in Your Torah that one should not afflict an orphan. And we have observed Your laws all these years, caring for orphans with tender mercy and with great sacrifice. But, Lord, are we too not orphans? Is Israel not an orphan today? Is it not written, “We are become orphans with no father” (Lamentations 5:3)? Where then is Your mercy? Why do You not obey Your own law and care for us, and redeem us?”

It was Levi Yitzhak who brought God to trial:

Good morning to You, Lord, Master of the Universe, I, Levi Yitzhak, son of Sarah, of Berditchev, I come to serve You with an indictment (*din Torah*) on behalf of Your people, Israel.

Bringing God before the bar of justice was not uncommon amongst the Hasidic Jews of nineteenth century eastern Europe (e.g. Langer 1961: 130–132). Nor was it uncommon among Jewish inmates of the Nazi death camps during the Holocaust. An account of one such trial is related in Elie Wiesel’s novel, *Gates of the Forest* (1966: 197):

In a concentration camp, one evening after work, a rabbi called his colleagues and convoked a special court. Standing with his head held high before them, he spoke as follows: “I intend to convict God of murder, for He is destroying his people and the Law he gave them from Mount Sinai. I have irrefutable proof in my hands. Judge without fear or sorrow or prejudice. Whatever you have to lose has long since been taken away.” The trial proceeded in due legal form, with witnesses for both sides with pleas and deliberations. The unanimous verdict: “Guilty.”

Though details of the covenant are violated throughout history—both by Israel and by God—the covenant remains intact; the marriage endures. Like a human husband’s anger against his spouse, God’s anger against his spouse, God’s anger against Israel flows from His disappointment with Israel. Divine anger is an expression of frustrated love. Similarly, the Jew’s protests against God emanate from a need to believe in God in spite of God. Such protests are expressions of frustrated faith and disappointed love. One should not confuse momentary tensions within a relationship with a cancellation of that relationship. Friction between true lovers cannot last. The passion of anger is inevitably replaced by the passion of mutual devotion. Israel repents of its transgressions and God repents of His indiscretions, and transmutes His wrath into love:

The Lord repented. Concerning this it shall not be, said the Lord
(Amos 7:3).

For a small moment I have forsaken you, but with great love I shall gather you

In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment;
But with everlasting love will I have mercy on you, says the Lord, your redeemer . . . My love will never depart from you, neither shall My covenant be removed (Isaiah 54:4, 5–10).

Memories of past association dissolves disappointment and rage. “I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride,” God says to Israel (Jeremiah 2:2). And in his daily prayers, the Jew reminds himself, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might” (Deuteronomy 6:5). God promises to “remember His covenant forever, the word He pledged for a thousand generations” (I Chronicles 16:15). And in gratitude, the Jew prays to God, “Blessed are You, O Lord, who remembers the covenant.”¹⁷

The covenant between God and Israel is eternal. Though it may be breached, it cannot be abrogated. Though its stipulations may be violated, the marriage contract cannot be annulled. Despite tensions, the marriage persists; despite strains, the covenant endures; despite times of mutual dissatisfaction, the devotion is unyielding.

According to the rabbis, God the lover, God the redeemer, is not Himself truly redeemed until final redemption has been achieved for His beloved. God the bridegroom is unredeemed until His bride is granted redemption. Linked to Israel by law, bound to Israel by love, God and Israel wait together for the final redemption which both have faith will one day come (*Midrash on Psalms*, 14:6):

A parable:

Once a prince was betrothed to a princess. A certain day was appointed for festivities before the wedding. The prince was looking forward to his wedding joy, and the princess was looking forward to her wedding joy . . . So does the Holy One, blessed be He, look forward for redemption for Israel, and Israel awaits redemption for the Holy One, blessed be He.

NOTES

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¹ On the analogy of Sinai with a wedding between Israel and God’s “daughter,” the Torah, see: *Exodus Rabbah* 30:5, 33:7; *Song of Songs Rabbah* 8:11; *Pesikta de Rav Kahana* 12:11, 19. The medieval Jewish mystics analogized Sinai to a wedding between God and the Torah. See *Zohar* 8a. The mystic who studies the Torah the entire night of the Pentecost festival is compared to the “best man” at the wedding. On the festival of Pentecost as a celebration of the “sacred marriage” between God and Israel and between Israel and the Torah, see below. On “sacred marriage” rituals practiced by the medieval Jewish mystics, see Scholem 1965: 138–146.

² *Numbers Rabbah* 12:8. Also see: *Taanit* 26b, *Songs of Songs Rabbah* 3:11, *Exodus Rabbah* 52:5, *Numbers Rabbah* 12:8, *Midrash Tanhuma*, Exodus “Pedkuday” 8, and Numbers “Bamidbar” 5. *Pesikta de Rav Kahana* 1:3, 22:5, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, Chapter 41. For Scriptural roots of the portrayal of Israel as God’s bride, see e.g., Isaiah 62:5, Jeremiah 2:1–3, Hosea 2: 16–18, Ezekiel 16, 23. Some scholars understand certain biblical festivals as having been observed

originally as celebrations of a sacred marriage between God and Israel. See e.g., Ringgren 1966: 190, 198–199. See 197 on the Song of Songs as being rooted in the idea of a sacred marriage. This was the interpretation of the Song of Songs ascribed both by subsequent Jewish and Christian exegetes.

³ See *Deuteronomy Rabbah* 3:12 where the Torah is described as the marriage contract between God and Israel written by Moses. See also Petuchowski 1961: 1–25, and Dresner and Sherwin 1978: 103–125. The question of the eternity of the covenant, of the marriage between God and Israel, is a theological nonnegotiable in Jewish theology. This issue was a point of dispute between Jews and Christians in medieval polemics, Jewish theologians claiming that the marriage is eternal; Christian theologians claiming that God had divorced Israel for faithlessness and had divorced her and married another wife, the church. For some discussion of these matters in sixteenth century Jewish literature, Sherwin 1975: 56–59, and Sherwin 1982: 85–88.

⁴ On the Torah as a song, see for example, *Midrash on Psalms* 119:97: “David said, ‘Oh how I love Your Torah’ (Psalms 119:97). It is always with me. I have not neglected it at all. And because I have not neglected it, it has been to me not a burden, but a song.”

⁵ On observance as joy, see Schechter 1909: 148–170. Paul’s denigration of the Torah as the law of slavery and as a curse is in direct contradiction to the Jewish view of the Torah and its laws.

⁶ On biblical sources on the renewal of the covenant, see, e.g., Joshua 24:22–27, II Kings 23:3–4, Nehemiah 9:32–37, 10:1. The term “before the Lord” when discussing the covenant means a renewal of the covenant in biblical parlance.

⁷ Rashi to Exodus 19:1 paraphrasing *Berakhot* 63b, “the Torah is as beloved every day to those who study it as the day it was given from Mount Sinai.” See also Rashi to Deuteronomy 11:13, “the commandments which I command you this day—that they should be new to you as if you heard them this day.” Also see Rashi to Deuteronomy 26:16, *Midrash Tanhuma* “Ki-Tavoh,” 3.

⁸ See *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, Chapter 41 which compares God to the father of the Torah, the Torah to a bride, and the people of Israel to the bridegroom who is wed to his bride at Sinai.

⁹ “Ordinarily, when a man buys an article in the market, is he then able to acquire its owner, too? But the Holy One, blessed be He, gave the Torah to Israel and said to them: You are taking Me, as it were! Hence the verse, ‘that they take Me an offering’ (Exodus 25:2).” *Exodus Rabbah* 33:6.

¹⁰ *Kedushat Levi*. Jerusalem: Mosad l’hotzaat sifrei musar va-hasidut, 1958: 33. Also see Kullman 1956: 10:34–36.

¹¹ Note Samuel Sandmel’s observation, “It is somewhat strange to Jewish ears to hear Catholics with their elaborate canon law, or Anglicans with theirs, or Methodists with their Discipline, ascribe to Jews exclusively a tendency equally persistent in themselves . . . Denomination after denomination in Protestantism has extolled Paul for breaking the shackles of narrow legalism; and denomination after denomination has felt compelled to devise its own, equally necessary legalism.” See Sandmel 1974: 167.

Space does not permit a full discussion of these matters. On Kant, for example, see Ayinn, “Kant on Judaism,” 1968: 59:9–23; and Fackenheim, “Kant and Judaism,” 1963: 460–467. On Kant, Hegel and Toynbee, see Rotenstreich 1963.

¹² On the supersessionist idea and its social and historical implications, see Ruether 1974, especially 150–156, and Littell 1975, especially 24–44. Space does not permit adequate discussion of this idea. One may suggest briefly, however, that an adoption of a “double covenant” theology would be a viable alternative to the supersessionist position. See, e.g., Mc Garry, and Sherwin 1979: 28–35, 424–435.

¹³ *Midrash Tanhuma*, Exodus, “Pekuday,” 4. This is not found in S. Buber’s edition of the *Tanhuma*, but rather in the *Tanhuma Ha-Nidpas* (Jerusalem: Levin-Epstein, 1964), 134a.

¹⁴ In Scripture, Pentecost is only a harvest festival unrelated to the theophany at Sinai, see Exodus 23:16, 34:22, Numbers 28:26. It seems that after the destruction of the Second Temple in the first century, it became more closely identified as the anniversary of the revelation at Sinai. On the Pharaonic identification of Pentecost with the time of the giving of the Torah, see Louis Finkelstein 1968: 1:115–118. In Maimonides’ succinct words, “The Pentecost is the day of the giving of the Torah.” See, Moses Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, 3:43.

¹⁵ On the Jewish tradition of protest against God, see, Sherwin, “The Impotence of Explanation and the European Holocaust,” 1972: 99–107, and Sherwin, “Wiesel’s Midrash,” 1978b: 121–128.

¹⁶ The citations regarding Levi Yitzhak are drawn from Dresner 1974: 77-90.

¹⁷ Jewish Liturgy for the New Year. For a good introduction to the theme of the love of God in Judaism, Jacobs 1960: 50-73, and his work on Jewish Theology (1973: 152-173).

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