



Handout for week of 3/12/18 John 12:20-33 & Jer. 31: 31-34

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Jer. 31: 31 Behold, the days come, saith HaShem, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; 32 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; forasmuch as they broke My covenant, although I was a lord over them, saith HaShem. 33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith HaShem, I will put My law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their G-d, and they shall be My people; 34 and they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying: 'Know HaShem'; for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith HaShem; for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more.

COMMENTARY:

A Symbolic Marriage Contract

Instead of Akdamut, the Sephardim (Mediterranean) and Yemenite Jews read one of several versions of a ketubah (marriage contract) between Israel and God modeled on the traditional format for a Jewish bride and groom. It generally includes prophetic verses alluding to the covenant between God and Israel (Jeremiah 31:31; Hosea 2:21-22), substitutes the gifts between God and Israel (Torah, tefillin, tallit, Sabbath, and festivals and their observance) for what a bride and groom normally promise each other, and lists God and Moses or Heaven and Earth as witnesses. It's invariably dated 6 Sivan 2448 (the year Revelation occurred, counting from Creation at year 0).

Sephardim: One of the two major groups of Jewry. The word comes from the Hebrew Sepharad, originally the name of an area to which Jews were deported after the destruction of the First TEMPLE. It was first used in the middle ages of the Jews of Spain; after the expulsion from Spain in 1492 the Sephardim settled in North Africa, Italy, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, the Balkans and the Turkish Empire.

Ketubah: (Hebrew: ketubbah) Document which records the financial obligations undertaken by a bridegroom towards his bride. Written in ARAMAIC, it contains clauses which follow a stereotyped formula. The TRACTATE Ketubbot in the TALMUD deals with the document and its preparation. It was frequently written on parchment with illuminated borders. The art of illuminating ketubbot is particularly associated with Italy.

Covenant: Binding agreement between persons, nations or parties. In Scripture a covenant was established by a ceremony such as passing between two halves of a SACRIFICED animal (Gen. 15:9-11). The covenant between God and individuals or nations was accompanied by an external sign. Thus the covenant made with NOAH was symbolized by a rainbow (Gen. 9:13); the covenant with ABRAHAM by the act of CIRCUMCISION

(Gen. 17:10); and the covenant with the children of Israel by the SABBATH

Tefillin: EXODUS 13 and DEUTERONOMY 6, 11 teach that Jews must bind the commandments upon their hands and between their eyes. This duty is fulfilled by binding special boxes containing biblical passages with leather straps over the forehead and round the arm.

Tallit: Prayer shawl. It is a four-cornered garment, usually made of wool. Fringes are knotted on the corners in accordance with biblical law (Num. 15:37-41). It is worn by adult males during MORNING PRAYER, at the AFTERNOON SERVICE on the NINTH OF AV, and at all services on the DAY OF ATONEMENT.