

The Purpose of our Weddings*(Letter to Deshe)*

This is from an old letter, but very timely for the present:

As Tamidah and Kephir are preparing themselves and looking ahead to marriage (granted, of course, the *amen* of Island Pond) something has surfaced in Tamidah which caused Yoneq to speak to all of us. He is concerned that our weddings are becoming so involved, requiring exhausting preparations, decorations, etc., that they might be taking away from the real significance of what God is doing — putting these two people together. The focus has become more on the *happening* itself, the spectacle of the wedding, than on the bride and groom. It is a holy event.

But our energy to produce sublime and beautiful songs and choreography of original dances, all requiring many weeks of preparation, can easily obscure this simple and wonderful deed that our Father is doing between these two people. Yoneq said that when Phineas arrived in the Little Flock, fresh from Tushiyah and Shalem's wedding, all he could talk about was breathless descriptions of the music and majesty of the wedding. He talked much more about Nun than he did Tushiyah or Shalem. This isn't to detract from Nun or his hard work in contributing to these weddings, but the way it stands now, it is impossible to go beyond or feel content with anything less than the glorious standard of the last few weddings. How can anything ever exceed or speak beyond the song that was presented at Tushiyah's wedding?

I know that we have a principle of saying, "We don't want to try to top the previous weddings," but in true practice people also say, "Oh, each wedding is better than the previous one. Our Father is making them better and better." Well, what values are people basing their thoughts on when they say this? What is *better* as concerns a wedding? Do we mean that the typology and symbolism of Messiah and His Bride is more clearly presented at this wedding than at the previous one? Does it mean that the guests were more impressed than at other ones? Were the dances more skillfully choreographed and executed than every before? There is a real danger of the flesh overshadowing these holy times if we don't see this trend.

Tamidah, who has a wonderful heart, really illustrated something about this to us. One night ha-emeq lightly mentioned to Tamidah that we might just keep her here until four days before the wedding. Ha-emeq meant nothing by it, but Tamidah's peace and countenance drained away to the extent that she couldn't even come to the table. When she finally came to the table, it became clear that she was overcome by acute anxiety and fear about not getting back to Island Pond in time for the dance preparations. She, above all, knows how much drilling and practicing we go through to stage wedding dances. There is so much to coordinate and plan that it requires committees to sit down and figure out all the logistics weeks in advance.

Yoneq isn't against wonderful weddings, but he even wondered if it might be hard to be spontaneous and celebrate and worship the way that we should. Perhaps there doesn't always have to be all new or *original* dances. Perhaps we might even have dances that the whole church is well acquainted with, so that people could enter in and dance with all their strength (and even make mistakes). This isn't to take away all the creativity that might go towards our weddings from the gifts in the Body. (Not to cause an overreaction or *pendulum swing*.) Israel of old probably didn't disdain using the same dances over and over as people were married, but also there is a time to be creative too. Suppose that six couples were close to the time of their marriage (thinking ahead to 40 households in Island Pond) but the way it is now, they would have to be put on a waiting list because six consecutive weddings of the type we have now would tax the Body too much, financially, and physically.

The weddings shouldn't be such an all-consuming thing. It is even conceivable that we all might come to worship one Lord's Day and participate in a wedding as a part of the day. It was pointed out that Yochanan Abraham and Mithkah had only two days between the time of their *amen* and the wedding. But it was wonderful due to what was in the heart of the bride and groom for one another. They are just as much married as Korem and Ruth Aminah, Phineas and Simchah, or anyone else. Simplicity and spontaneity aren't necessarily bad. This isn't to advocate that all weddings would be like Yochanan Abraham and Mithkah's, but mostly I said that to show that what is wonderful about a wedding is

what's in the heart of those being married.

It just shouldn't be that a wedding has so much grandeur attached to it that it becomes an idol to the bride, or anyone else. I heard someone say (ha-emeq) that what they would cherish the most about their wedding would be that God spoke that day — that a prophet of God spoke, that this would be a much more precious thing than the memory of any song, dance, or presentation. I'm trying to convey a proper spirit here, not cause all zeal for the weddings to cease. I'm sure Yoneq will be communicating more about it in the future.