

TRUE NATION NEWSLETTER



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**YOU
REAP
WHAT
YOU
SOW**



Joshua 1:7-8 "Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. (8) This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."

Joshua 1:7-8 emphasizes the need for strength and courage in following the law, a principle applicable to our daily lives. Our actions and decisions yield rewards, which can range from commendable to dishonorable depending on how wise or foolish the decision made. One concept that everyone should learn from scriptures is that you reap what you sow.

Stress, anxiety, and depression have become prevalent issues within our community, often pushing us to seek an escape from reality to regain clarity. The demands of modern life require us to constantly hustle and move, intensifying our craving for relaxation. While rest is crucial for maintaining functionality, it can also impose limitations on our potential.

As children of YHWH, we should aspire to be our best selves and serve our Power, valuing the gifts and talents bestowed upon us. Don't let your job drain your energy to the point of seeking only relaxation. Strengthen your discipline. The beauty of discipline is being pleased with productivity, which provides satisfaction akin to resting. Being productive can also increase the quality of rest you get.

Scriptures repeatedly emphasize the importance of staying active. Sirach even tells us that idleness teaches much evil. If you can find time to relax, then you can find time to be productive.

If you are tired yet still find the strength to go to work, then you can find the strength to take advantage of

every opportunity of leisure. Your works for YHWH are also your fruits that you offer and your success will be reflected upon the amount of labor you do.

Turn productivity into a source of dopamine, deriving satisfaction from it. Eliminate distracting devices from your life and refrain from carrying work-related stress back home. Your skills, knowledge, and strength stem from the effort invested in building your foundation. Rather than seeking mindless relaxation through social media or television, cultivate a habit that aligns with your passions.

Identify the activities that immerse you in your zone, and lose yourself in your work. A scattered mind only begets stress. Channel your passions towards YHWH, and you'll perpetually harness energy. Leisure offers an opportunity to clear your mind and draw closer to YHWH, allowing you to study your passion. Squandering your downtime is detrimental. Construct your motivation, set goals, achieve them, stay focused, and find contentment in your growth.

An additional crucial point to keep in mind is the mindset required to pursue your passion. Master the ability to summon and enhance that attitude on demand for genuine productivity. Like our father Yasharahla, we must contend for our blessings. Failing to invest time and effort will lead to lackluster results in our endeavors. True greatness remains elusive with a lack of commitment. **TN**



MODESTY:

INSIDE AND OUT

INTRODUCTION

Modesty is a profound outward reflection of an inner commitment to the Lord, Christ, your husband if married, and an embodiment of you through your children. 1 Corinthians 11:3 illustrates the importance of an orderly and decent Israelite household, emphasizing the significance of spiritual and physical coverings.

This understanding hinges on the roles played by the Lord as the creator, Christ as the sacrifice for the nation of Israel, a husband as the leader, protector, and provider for his household, and a wife as the reflection and role model for her children. These roles serve as symbols of guardianship over the salvation of your entire household, in accordance with their righteous

SIRACH 19:29-30

“A MAN MAY BE KNOWN BY HIS LOOK, AND ONE THAT HATH UNDERSTANDING, BY HIS COUNTENANCE, WHEN THOU MEETEST HIM...”



deeds. Without such guardianship, chaos may prevail, underscoring the Lord's requirement for both inner and outer modesty.

Preservation is vital, as it ensures that you, as a sister, are prepared for future roles such as wifehood and motherhood. Pre-exposure to ungodliness without proper coverings should be avoided, as it can make you vulnerable to both invited and uninvited wickedness. The absence of a covering leaves you unprotected, making spiritual and physical modesty essential for safeguarding oneself.

MODESTY

Modesty is a manifestation of your beliefs, knowledge, and convictions. Ecclesiasticus 19:29-30 underlines that a person's appearance, understanding, attire, and demeanor all reveal their character. The Lord emphasizes the inseparable connection between your spirit and your attire. It's better to choose a good name and reputation over attracting inappropriate attention due to immodesty, even though you're not responsible for the actions of others. While you're not to blame for their behavior, you can help prevent it.

The glory lies in a man dealing uprightly with you, much like our forefather Tobias did with his wife Sarah in Tobit 8:7. Ecclesiasticus 25:21 warns against lusting after a woman for pleasure, highlighting that the Lord does not condone sinful behavior. There is an expectation to stay married, and your actions in the beginning set the tone for the future. Proverbs 31:10 describes a virtuous woman who fears the Lord and understands that beauty is fleeting, while Ecclesiasticus 26:9 contrasts a virtuous woman with a harlot based on their demeanor.

The impression you create matters. How you represent your Lord and the compliance with His laws are of utmost importance. This includes wearing a head covering when prophesying and praying (1

1 CORINTHIANS 11:5

**“BUT EVERY WOMAN THAT PRAYETH
OR PROPHESETH WITH HER HEAD
UNCOVERED, DISHONORETH HER HEAD...”**

Corinthians 11:5), avoiding attire that pertains to men (Deuteronomy 22:5), wearing fringes with a border of blue ribbon (Numbers 15:38-40), and adhering to modesty (1 Timothy 2:9-10).

As a daughter of the Lord, your duty is to prevent vanity and pride from consuming you. High heels or glamorous outfits alone won't make you virtuous. Instead, it's the Lord's Word and righteousness that truly matter. While there's nothing wrong with dressing elegantly, ensure that your attire reflects righteousness.

MINDSET

You might be wondering how and why all of this relates to your attire and behavior. The Lord has high expectations for you because He loves you and desires to protect you. Psalms 50:2 tells us that “Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.” It's crucial to maintain the right frame of mind when following the Lord's

laws, as failure to do so can lead to judgment, as seen in Isaiah 3:16-24, where beauty turned into burning due to disobedience.

Modesty holds immeasurable value. It serves to keep you on the right path and show that you are of the faith. Modesty primarily involves being selfless and considering how you can meet the needs of your neighbor. It is a matter of character, and one way for a woman to demonstrate this is through a humble and sober mind. This isn't limited to your consumption but extends to your understanding and dedication to life and the law. Romans 11:22 reminds us of God's goodness and severity, emphasizing the importance of staying on the right path.

The Lord expects His daughters to represent Him with good conduct in various settings, including the church, public spaces, at home, among believers and unbelievers. Women play a vital role as the



mothers of the nation of Israel. People look to you with high hopes that you embody silence, love, and grace. Titus 2:3-5 outlines the behavior expected of women, emphasizing holiness, not making false accusations, avoiding excessive drinking, and being teachers of good things. The aim is to teach young women to be sober, love their husbands and children, be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, and obedient to their own husbands, to prevent the Word of God from being blasphemed.

Balance is key, and the blueprint for righteousness can be found in Proverbs 31. Being teachable is essential. It's better to offer support and stay in protected spaces rather than risk losing your virtue in the world. Wickedness can emanate from women towards men, as seen in the story of Adam and Eve. It's time to reverse that trend.

Modesty also extends to language – knowing when to speak, when not to, and when to avoid certain company. A modest woman isn't overly friendly to the extent that lines blur. She is discrete and honors private settings in public spaces. For married women, it's wise to avoid close association with men, especially if they have questionable intentions. Instead, spend time with your sisters or tend to the children. The Lord desires you to be chaste, meek, and quiet, as a means of protection, wisdom, order, and decency.

Modesty is not merely about your outward appearance but also reflects your inner character. It is a test of your faith and commitment to the Lord you serve. 1 Peter 3:3-6 Pray, study, and fast that you keep his law heartily and profess holiness. Will you comply?

TN

“MODESTY IS NOT MERELY ABOUT YOUR OUTWARD APPEARANCE, BUT ALSO REFLECTS YOUR INNER CHARACTER.”



WOMEN OF SUBSTANCE



In a world that constantly evolves, some traditions stand the test of time, captivating us with their wisdom and timeless relevance. Our people exist comfortably with the ghost of our traditions, ignorantly saying “We’ve evolved.” This way of thinking is prominent amongst Israelite women today, as many actively reject the traditions of our foremothers in an attempt to “reclaim the power of the woman.” Unbeknownst to them, their faith in what they believe a woman’s power is, is considerably misplaced. Our power is not in our outward appearance: who can dance or sing the best, who attracts the most men, or has the most money. Our power IS our virtue. The virtuous woman’s value resonates through generations,

serving as an eternal testament to the immeasurable worth of women within society.

VIRTUOUS WOMAN

The virtuous woman holds a timeless and remarkable value that’s worth celebrating. In simple terms, being virtuous means living by strong moral and ethical principles, being upright in our actions, and following the laws and commandments of the Most High. This virtuous strength, described as “hayil” in Strong’s H2428, is like a source of inner might, efficiency, wisdom, and kindness. Proverbs 31:10-31 tells us that a virtuous woman’s “price is far above rubies,” in her household as well as her community. She is an

PROVERBS 31:10

“WHO CAN FIND A VIRTUOUS WOMAN? FOR HER PRICE IS FAR ABOVE RUBIES.”



asset, a pillar, and a light. Take, for instance, Ruth, a Moabite woman who displayed immense loyalty and devotion to her mother-in-law, Naomi, after the death of her husband. Her commitment to Naomi and her unwavering work ethic in the fields of Boaz showcased her strength and integrity. Ruth's virtuous character shines through her actions and choices, reminding us that virtue isn't limited by our circumstances or background but is defined by our choices to do what is right and honorable. Her story encourages all women to cultivate similar virtues of loyalty, dedication, and kindness in their own lives.

MOTHER

From the tender moments of infancy to the challenges of adolescence and beyond, the role of a mother is perhaps the most important position we are blessed with as women. We hear this all the time, don't we? Our role as mothers is important. How we raise our children is important. But do we truly understand a mother's value and her love?

When we hear Proverbs 31, an overwhelming majority of people automatically think about it being the guideline to being a virtuous woman. While Proverbs 31 is definitely a useful passage for a woman's growth, not many pay attention to how it is also a testament to the profound influence a mother can have on her child, particularly her son, in shaping his character and understanding of leadership. In Proverbs 31: This chapter imparts invaluable life advice to a young King Lemuel from his mother, illustrating the pivotal role she played in his upbringing. His mother's wisdom, found in the detailed description of the virtuous woman, serves not only as guidance for Lemuel's choice of a wife but also as a reminder that qualities like diligence, wisdom, and compassion are universal principles of righteousness. The mother's role as a teacher and guide in this narrative highlights the crucial role

mothers play in nurturing the values and character of future leaders, reminding us that the wisdom and guidance they provide are instrumental in shaping a righteous societal infrastructure, both in men and women. Proverbs 31 thus highlights the importance of maternal influence in fostering leaders who possess not just power but also integrity and empathy, attributes that are vital for the prosperity and well-being of the Israelite community and for the kingdom.

In Ezekiel 19:2, it says “What is thy mother? A lioness: she lay down among lions, she nourished her whelps among young lions...” As you continue to read, it talks about how women raise their sons to be valiant men of Israel, standing strong amongst nations that do everything in their power to eradicate them. Conceivably the best example of this is outlined by the Maccabean mother and her seven sons, all slain for refusing to transgress the Most High’s laws by eating the king’s pork. “But the mother was marvelous above all, and worthy of honorable memory: for when she saw her seven sons slain within the space of one day, she bare it with a good courage, because of the hope that she had in the Lord. Yea, she exhorted every one of them in her own language filled with courageous spirits, and stirring up her womanish thoughts with a manly stomach...” 2 Maccabees 7:20-21. Despite being pushed extremely beyond every limit mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually, the Maccabean woman was humble and served the Most High. When their faith was tested, her sons were able to remain faithful and not fearful because she taught them to do so. She exhorted them, encouraging them to continue to be kingdom minded in the midst of their persecution.

WIFE

“Whoso findeth a wife, findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favor of the Lord” Proverbs 18:22. Many women in the world view being an Israelite wife, a





wife according to the scriptures, the way the Most High would have us to be, as something to stray away from. An overwhelming majority of modern women don't recognize that having a feminist, combative, and defensive spirit, detracts from your power as a woman and actually creates more problems than solves them. Proverbs 31 reminds us that the role of a wife matters, and we need to know the power and influence we have to help your husband and your house be great. Verse 11 says that "the heart of her husband doth safely trust her..." and illustrates how trust, built upon the pillars of love, respect, and support, creates a safe haven within the home. Did you know that the more that you pour into your husband and your house, the better YOUR life will be? If you think about it, investing time into making sure your husband is taken care of, respected, supported, is actually an investment in your happiness, prosperity and quality of life. Doing your duty as a wife according to the Most High can only be beneficial for you: mentally, physically, emotionally, and most

importantly, spiritually. In embracing the wisdom of Proverbs 31, women can discover the path to fulfillment and blessings in their roles as wives, fostering not only harmony within their homes but also cultivating their own well-being in the eyes of the Most High.

One of the beauties of the bible is that the Most High gave us all the examples we need in order to learn how to become a virtuous wife. We look at Abigail's unwavering loyalty and resilience in the face of her husband Nabal's wickedness, and it is truly admirable. Nabal's very name meant "fool," and he was often referred to as a son of Belial, symbolizing his wicked nature. Despite this, Abigail, as a devoted wife, was willing to "bite the bullet" for the sake of her marriage vows. Her courage and wisdom is evident, as she not only took it upon herself to prevent a potentially disastrous conflict with David but also risked her life by delivering gifts to him in advance. Abigail's actions exemplify the importance of commitment and dedication within a marriage, serving as a timeless reminder of

PROVERBS 31:10

**“WHO CAN FIND A VIRTUOUS
WOMAN? FOR HER PRICE IS
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the strength and character that women today, as wives, can exhibit to enrich their relationships and overcome challenging circumstances.

So, what happens on the opposite side of the spectrum: when you make the choice to be a wicked wife, rather than a virtuous one? A wicked wife can indeed cast a long shadow of suffering over a man's life, potentially driving him deeper into wickedness or even leading to his ruin. Take, for instance, Adam and Eve. Eve's disobedience in offering the forbidden fruit to Adam brought not only physical death but also spiritual separation from the Most High. Similarly, Samson, a man of great strength, was ultimately brought to his knees by Delilah's deceit and betrayal, leading to his downfall. King Ahab, while already inclined toward wickedness, was pushed further down that dark path by his wife Jezebel, who actively promoted idolatry and cruelty. What sets Jezebel apart is her unyielding determination in her wickedness, unlike Ahab, who had moments of repentance. These accounts outline how imperative it is for women to be virtuous and supportive partners, as their influence can either uplift and strengthen their husbands or contribute to their physical and spiritual downfall. Virtuous women can serve as pillars of support and inspiration, helping their husbands navigate life's challenges with grace and integrity.

In a world ever-changing, where traditions often fade into obscurity, the enduring wisdom of our foremothers, the “Women of Substance,” remains an eternal beacon of guidance. In today's quest to redefine the power of women, it is essential to acknowledge that true power resides not in external attributes or superficial accomplishments, but in virtue. The virtuous woman, as exemplified through the scriptures, embodies qualities of grace, strength, and unwavering dedication within the household and the community. As we reflect on the roles of the mother, the wife, and the woman, we recognize the profound influence these women have in shaping not only their families but also future leaders and Israelite society at large. Their wisdom, guidance, and unwavering commitment are the building blocks of a righteous and prosperous community. As we look to these examples, we are reminded that embracing virtue and fulfilling our roles as women according to the Most High's will can lead us to a life filled with blessings, fulfillment, and true power. The legacy of virtuous women is a testament to the immeasurable worth of the Israelite woman, and serves as a timeless reminder of the path to true empowerment. **TN**

BY AHMAN AHLA

TESTIMONY



My name is Ahman Ahla, but it hasn't always been so. I was born and raised in the South-East sector of Los Angeles, bearing the name Edward Jordan, given to me by my parents. In the mid-80s and early 90s, the demographics of our neighborhood shifted. White residents left and Israelites, predominantly of Mexican and Chicano descent, moved in, with the exception of my non-Spanish speaking, Earth, Wind and Fire loving, LA Laker watching African American parents. Culturally this Identity became harder to walk in as life experiences stacked up from memories as early as 7, and the photographs meditated upon as I came of age. They began to challenge my cultural identity, with one pivotal event being the homosexual abuse I endured from a cousin between the ages of 7 to 13.

My problem was, I enjoyed it. By the time this abuse ended, it had already influenced my sexual preferences and emotional well-being. Porn became a problem. Sunday church became a problem. Video technology became a problem, and with hindsight, some of my friendships were problematic. The resulting struggle led me down a path of addiction, impacting my spirituality, relationships, and mental health.

At 17, I obtained a Bass Guitar and had been engaged in a college prep program since middle school, which nurtured my intelligence and intuition. Throughout my twenties, I juggled academic endeavors, social activities, and employment, accumulating substantial pressure. This led to a period of depression and confusion that eventually prompted me to drop out of college as I sought a deeper sense of purpose in life.

My sense of loneliness persisted within a crowd, driving me to seek masculinity in all the wrong places. Despite my missteps, I held onto my faith, blending Christian and New Age spirituality. I remained reclusive and deep in contemplation.

At 26, I found myself edging towards poverty, working in a warehouse under a temp agency, and

identifying as a Communist to give purpose to my life. A fellow worker introduced me to the concept of the 12 Tribes of Israel, piquing my interest due to my history with Mexican culture and my belief that my family was Black. This eventually led me to explore my true identity as an Israelite.

Several months after the seed of the 12 Tribes of Israel concept was planted, around the end of 2016, I faced a series of setbacks. I lost my job at the warehouse, was separated from the friends I had met and lived with at work, and was even evicted from the apartment of longtime friends since elementary school.

My disillusionment with the ultimate goal of the Communist revolution, which aimed to abolish all faith and belief in God, left me in a state of confusion. It was during this time that I reflected on the same God who had, at the very least, answered my prayers to maintain my sanity and continue my search for the meaning of life and destiny.

Letting go of the Communist ideology, I returned to my parents' home, emotionally scarred after two years of searching for answers. This period left me in a humble state, leading me to prayer. It was then that I recalled the concept of the 12 Tribes of Israel and began my research. Finally, I encountered real people on social media who resembled me and my friends, claiming to be Israelites.

These individuals spoke of breaking God's laws and enduring poverty, which prompted me to scrutinize my own lifestyle. This introspection gave rise to fear. However, it was through this fear that I began to perceive how Yahawah was guiding me in His hands.

I understood that many of my desires went unanswered because they conflicted with God's laws. Driven by fear and faith, I underwent a transformation, becoming impulsive and gave into the thought that I needed to go to New York to further my walk in this Truth, but my car broke down, redirecting me to where

I was meant to be.

Just a few hours before the congregation's doors opened to the public, I crossed paths with someone who would later become a former Elder. Some might call it chance, but I believe it was fate. With a message imprinted by the Holy Spirit in my mind, I told him, "I've come to seek

repentance from my sins." He instructed me to return at 4:30pm. I anxiously waited at the bus stop, determined to stay until the appointed time, until I finally witnessed people dressed in red approaching and entering the building. Summoning courage and overcoming my doubts, I walked over to that door and have been attending every Saturday for the past seven years. I am 33 now.

In this church, I've formed deep connections with people, I've learned to love to the point of anger, disappointment, and even fear. Throughout my journey of rehabilitation, I've made significant mistakes.

My experiences within the congregation have been diverse—I've felt both ostracized and nurtured, played and admired, embarrassed and honored. These emotions have shaped my path. I've been entrusted with a leadership role, fulfilling a cherished childhood dream of being a hero.

Now, I'm fighting with unwavering determination to uphold what is right, all the while sensing the pull of destiny under the guidance of the Most High, Yahawah.

My name is Ahman Ahla, and I am a teacher under the True Nation Israelite Congregation. **TN**

A man with dreadlocks and a beard, wearing a dark blue patterned vest over a dark blue shirt, stands next to a woman wearing a bright orange, ruffled wedding dress and a matching headscarf. They are both looking upwards against a clear blue sky with light clouds. The woman is smiling.

CELEBRATING LOVE ACROSS BORDERS:

DISCOVERING ISRAELITE DESTINATION WEDDINGS WITH THE HOUSE OF SHAHAD

Shahad Ahmath and Ratazah Ahyash met at Passover, at True Nation Israelite Congregation in March 2022. Shahad was tasked with updating the True Nation website, and had been told to reach out to Ratazah for help. Working remotely, with Ratazah living in Vermont, and Shahad in California, they developed the website and became fast friends, starting their courtship in May 2022. Not long after, in July 2022 they announced that they were betrothed. Wanting to wait until the wedding, Shahad and Ratazah refrained from the act of marriage. Ratazah moved back to California in March 2023, and they lived together until their marriage on September 5, 2023.

Shalom and grace sis!

Shalawam sis!

I feel really happy to be in this space with you. Just chatting with you about your destination wedding!

Okay, so my first question to you is, was there a wedding planner?

There was. Well, kind of. Shahad's sister is actually a wedding planner. And so I got a lot of advice from her. But when we booked with the resort, the resort gave us a wedding planner with our package. We didn't really do too much until the end of the process. But, yes, we did have a wedding planner.

It's nice when it's always in the family. So how far in advance did you plan your wedding?

It was about a year. A year or so. We started out with a beautiful resort. It had all the amenities, all inclusive, and it was great. And I reached out to the resort and asked them to give me back prices, because the biggest thing for us is we wanted to make sure it wasn't too expensive so we could have the most amount of people, right? And so they came back with these extreme prices and I was like, okay, it kind of makes sense because the resort was just beautiful.

And so that kind of fell through. And then for a little bit, you know, I was kind of scrambling and then I came across a destination wedding website. From there they pretty much took care of everything for me, gave me all these resort options and umm, what was the question again? *laughs*

***laughs* I asked you how far in advance did you book , which led you in to talking about the all inclusive, and the—**

Ohhh I'm oversharing. That's what it is *laughs*

No, actually, that was the follow up question so it's really in the spirit. All praises! So speaking of costs, right. How much was the trip for guests?

Let's see. It was an all inclusive resort so food, drinks, all of that was included.

Your flight was booked separately, but through our travel agent. I believe the lowest you could get for room and board depending on what room tier you chose, was about \$1100 for a 3-4 day trip. And even cheaper at around \$8-900 if you added people to your reservation.

Okay. And if a guest wanted to pay in small payment increments? How much did that cost? And what did that consist of?

So they did have the option to either pay payments to the travel agency through their portal up until the due date; or they had the option to do affirm. Affirm would pay the full amount and you would be making payments to Affirm for however long a period of time. So it's kind of like Afterpay on Amazon: You say, "I want to pay for this now, but I don't have the money right upfront." You can make payments over however long you want. So that was nice.

Absolutely! That's really convenient for brothers and sisters. Because the first thing that comes



into Israel's mind is that it's expensive. But I'm glad you were able to have the amount of people who came to support you. So what customs did you follow at your ceremony that may be different from weddings outside of Israelite culture?

So, we obviously didn't have traditional attire. I wore orange. He wore navy blue. We had fringes. My head was covered.

We didn't do vows. You know vows are very important, especially when you make one before the Most High. So we pretty much talked about what we meant to each other, what we wanted for our marriage and how we were dedicated to each other.

But those I think for the most part, it was pretty quote unquote, traditional. Except for our attire and the fact that we didn't do vows. Oh! and rings, we did not do rings. We believe that is a pagan custom. So we decided to not do rings.

Understandable. Now, how was the process of rejections from family and friends that couldn't afford it? How did you handle that?

At first I was upset. I was like, I understand because of the money, I think I was a little selective about who I was upset about. I was like "If anyone should be there it should be you and you're not here," you

know? But I had a conversation with my husband and, it was like people are not obligated to come for one and two, I needed to be more empathetic. It's not like they don't want to go. Basically I shouldn't take it personally.

So it was like that maybe like the first couple of rejections. And then after that, I was like, you know what? Like, I understand. They're coming from a place where they might not be able to afford it. It may not be the right time. Maybe they aren't able to travel right now. So there's a lot of different factors. And I just kind of took that in and applied it to every situation. And what I realized is that with the people that came it was an amazing time. Would I have liked everybody there? Yeah, but there was so much love there anyway, so I really was just trippin' for no reason.

And you also had it set up where we can actually watch from home.

Yes. Yes. I believe Qawalyah and Kani... it was a few people. I was over here too busy hyperventilating down the aisle to notice who but it was a few people that recorded it.

All cameras on me!

Right! There were a lot of people who really came through, really did a lot for our wedding, even though it was a destination wedding. It helps



to be able to show what was going on and they were happy to be a part of it even though they weren't able to attend.

Absolutely! Was the destination wedding worth it opposed to traditional or local weddings?

I'm a sucker for all inclusive resorts and international trips. The other thing is when you do a destination wedding, the destination is your decoration. The destination is your experience. You know, what you do with your family and friends while you're out there that creates the experience for them.

When you do it locally, you need tablecloths. You need to buy all of these different trinkets that go on the table, the centerpieces, silverware, you need flowers here, there, everywhere! You know, it's a lot more expensive, especially in California. Originally we were like, we want to do it here so everybody can come. And right off the bat, it was like 20K. If we went any further than that, if we added any more decorations to that, it's just going to go up in price.

And so, you know, one of the brothers suggested we do a destination wedding in Mexico. And Shahad was like, why not? And as soon as we found a resort that we liked, that everybody could afford, it was like we really aren't paying nearly as much as we would if we'd stayed here.

So it was cost effective?

Yeah. For sure

So did you ever consider the church setting as an option, here at True Nation headquarters?

laughs I didn't. I'm not even going to lie to you. The church is lovely—

New building!

All praises! We always said we wanted to do a small

reception or something afterwards so we could have all of our family from True Nation and from California come together. But, I think we both wanted something grander, you know, a venue that would be able to support the amount of people that we invited. Because originally our guest list was like a hundred plus, and there's no way a hundred plus could fit in there. So we were like, you know, let's do it somewhere else where we have a little bit more control over the area.

So please explain to the readers where your destination wedding was located.

So we were at the Playacar Palace in Playa del Carmen. There are a lot of sub-city names. So I think





it's Playa del Carmen/Cancun/Quintana Roo. There are a lot of different... I think they're sub-cities but we basically were in Cancun at the Playacar Palace.

So Ratazah what does Mexico mean to you and your husband Shahad?

I think because we did get married there, you know, it's always going to be special to us. My top favorite food is Mexican food. We both have never been to Mexico. He had never been anywhere internationally. And so it was a lot of firsts for us, which is something that we were really looking forward to, just having firsts, you know? So our first international trip, his first international trip, *laughs* you know, a lot of firsts.

Mexico is amazing. It would have been amazing if we went anywhere like the Dominican, Jamaica, Mexico, etc. Places like that, rich in culture, was something that we wanted to experience.

Absolutely. And where are you and your husband originally from?

I'm from California, and my husband is from the Michigan/Indiana area.

And you didn't want to have it in California or Michigan/Indiana?

I don't think my husband has any intentions on going

back to where he grew up unless it's to visit his mother *laughs*. California. It's just too expensive. You know, It's just expensive all around. Love it for sure. I honestly, left California and I was like I'm not coming back. And then here I am. Whole husband. He was like "Nahh we here" so California it is. But I definitely did look here first.

So how was the weather in Mexico and what did you suggest to the sisters that were coming out there to support you on your wedding day? As far as their outfits are concerned?

So Mexico is pretty hot. It is pretty humid. And I think it's pretty much like most places outside of the U.S.

We had a wedding website where I pretty much put everything pertaining to the wedding: where it's at, what we're doing, how we met, etc.

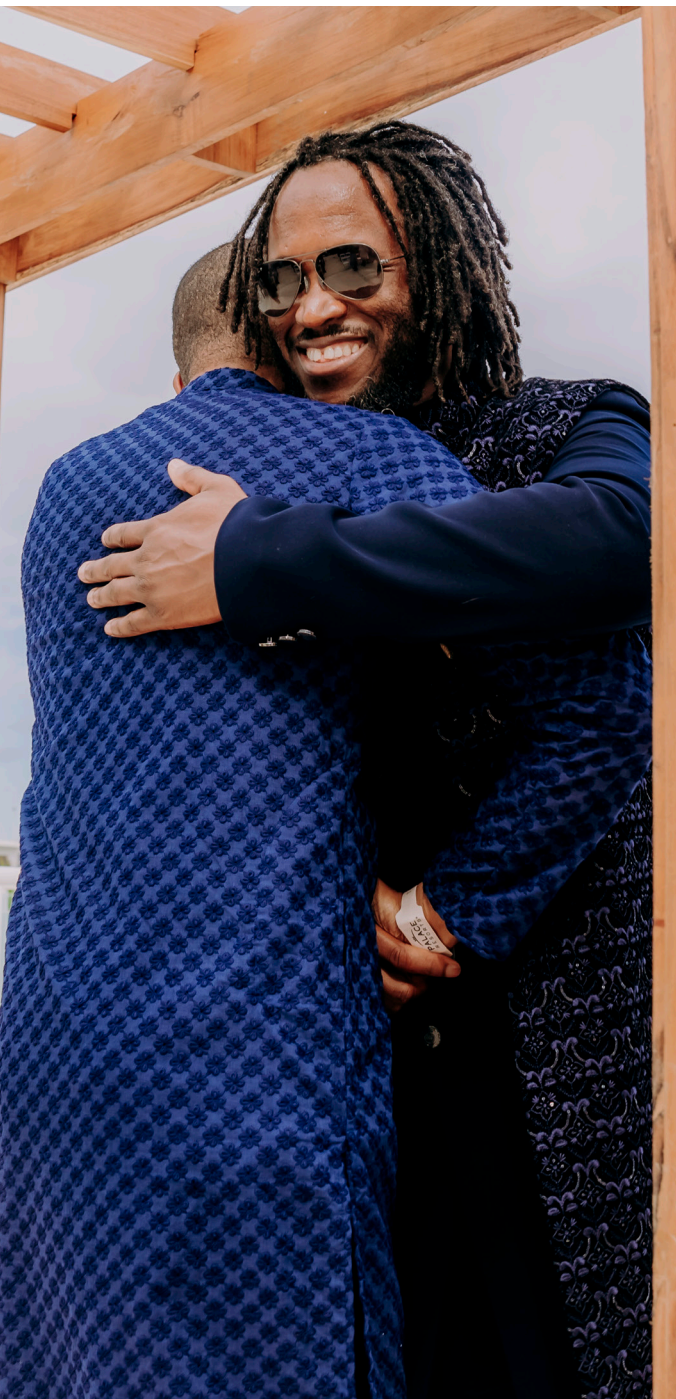
Okay organization!

All praises! As far as attire I pretty much wrote, "This is how we live our lives. And as the people are getting married, you know, you're kind of honoring us. We would love it if you would adhere to the way that we live our lives, which is what you should be doing anyway. I put modest apparel for the women. And I had created a Pinterest board and put a link to the Pinterest board so people could get an idea of what Modest Apparel is.

It's not sheets and blankets.

We put kosher guidelines, with a link to the video that Shamar did about the dietary law so people understood how we eat. We wanted people to adhere to what should be their culture as much as possible. And so we put that on our website.

All praises! A little education, bringing them into the truth at the same time. So because you express your sentiment with Mexico, would you go back to Mexico as a normal vacation or for your anniversary?



Definitely for both. There's a few places we want to go first, but I would definitely go back for an anniversary. I would love to go back to that resort especially, it was an amazing resort. But I also would like to see other resorts in Mexico.

So what would you say was the value of having it out so far from home?

We don't know Mexico, so we haven't necessarily experienced what captivity in Mexico feels like. But we do know that our people are in captivity everywhere. Having it so far away it's allowed us to kind of escape a little bit. We were with our family and friends on vacation. We were able to put ourselves in a vacation mindset, whereas if we'd had it here, you know, it could have been more stressful. It could have been, you know, just a lot more factors in play. We were able to disconnect.

Perfect. We know that it's necessary for Israel to see and be in tune with different environments that are out there. So I'm actually glad that you put a lot of your brothers and sisters in that place to go see something new. How affordable was it for you and your husband? Where would you say you need to be financially to be able to afford a destination wedding?

So if you're attending a destination wedding, you want to have at least 3K. You're going to spend about 1100 or so on your stay, depending on where you go. You're going to spend about 600 for your plane ticket. And then you'll want to do things while you're out there. They range about 100 or so dollars for every different excursion or experience. Give yourself a little room for experience and souvenirs and then anything you want to do outside of the resort.

For people actually having the wedding, I highly encourage you: you do not need decoration. The only



thing you need is what you're wearing and whoever is officiating. The resort that you choose should have a package that includes the basics. Stick to the basics. What we paid extra for was a DJ, though some resorts include a DJ, and photography and videography.

The extra charge for stuff like that is not the same across all resorts. Some of them have those amenities included. Some of them, if you bring your own vendors, they charge you for it. So roughly, I want to say if you decide to bring your own vendors, anticipate paying about a thousand per vendor on top of what you're paying the vendor.

You want to look for resorts that offer you a free package. It honestly just depends on what you want to pay for it. You can get it by with a 5K wedding. And that's with paying for extra stuff. If you don't want anything extra, you're not paying anything extra.

So were you wearing your dream wedding dress? And was your wedding dress expensive?

Yes! My wedding dress was my dream wedding dress, all praises! Hit my inbox! *laughs*

You looked absolutely beautiful. Completely radiant going down the runway, absolutely stunning. You

looked very confident and happy, shouting out the House of Shahad extremely proud of you.

All praises! The dress was the thing that was most important to me. And it was everything that I asked for. It was everything that I wanted. I had an experience with a designer before the designer that did my actual dress, and uhhh I didn't have too much faith *laughs* But it turned out the way that the Most High wanted it to turn out. And it was beautiful. You know, so many people gave me so many compliments on that dress.

And for me and Shahad if we can do it, we like to do it big. We gon' show out if we can, you know. So I wanted something that didn't look like everybody else's dress. I wanted something that was giving. It was giving high fashion, but it was also giving Israelite, you know, so like, it was like a blend of all the different things that I wanted to incorporate. So it was, yes, it was my dream.

Was it expensive?

Umm I don't know how much wedding dresses are honestly *laughs*

Well you know these other weddings, people prioritize their wedding dress and that can go like thousands...

Well one, yes it is a wedding dress. And you are paying someone for a service, whether you're getting a custom made or you're not getting it custom made. The fact that it is for one of, if not THE biggest events in your life, you're going to be spending money. Custom made, it just depends on what you want. So for me, it's not about how expensive the dress is, it's about the quality of the work, the personality, and the relationship I have with the designer.

Creatives have a really hard time with people because people want cheap things. They want the cheapest option, you know, the thing that costs the least amount of money, but looks like a million dollars. Like you want to look like the Met gala, but you want to pay Shein. You can't do that! Make it make sense!

And I'm like, especially if your designer is Israel, you should want to pay them their worth. So I'll say no it's not expensive. I think it was the price that it was worth for the designer that I had.

Well worth it! And to look that beautiful. The answer is yes. Would you say that the orange color was from you or from Shahad?

We went over color palettes for a cool little minute and Shahad loves orange. He loves orange. He doesn't like green. We didn't want to do red. We weren't too fond of purples or blues. We went through all the different colors in our palette. And I was like, I don't want to wear Cream. I don't want to wear, you know, this style or whatever. And orange was it.

It's funny, when we went fabric shopping, it was hard to find orange and that was kind of a sign to be like, "This is unique, orange is the color," you know? So I chose orange because it's one of his favorite colors. And I really like the Navy Blue, so it all came together really well.

You made it your own! It also matched the scenery in Mexico, it was a perfect fit. Did you run into any hiccups during the planning process? On the week of your wedding or at any given time?

So destination weddings are a little difficult. They are great in that it can be a very hands off process, but it's also like, and I don't know if this is across the board,





people are not as invested in your wedding until it is time for your wedding.

I'm a planner and I like to have everything done in advance. I'm not really like a last minute kind of person so waiting until the end was a little nerve-racking. Although having it planned in advance was not the opportunity that was presented to me, it was fine because it turned out beautiful.

There were a lot of things that we wanted to do that we could not pay for and so when we got there, we had kind of settled on the activities we had planned. But the Most High worked on our behalf because when we got there, all the things we wanted to do, we were able to do either for free or for a really, really low price. I don't feel like we had many hiccups. We were scrambling because we did the bridesmaids and the groomsmen pretty last minute. But, you know, other than that, it was a pretty smooth process.

People kept asking me, Are you okay? Are you okay? I know you're planning this huge wedding and I'm like I'm chillin,' I'm fine!

You held it together pretty well. And everyone at your wedding looked amazing as well.

They did, they came out. They were like, what are your colors?! What are your colors?! And I'm like, oh I've been to a few weddings and I didn't know we were

supposed to match. So, you know, they came out and showed up for real. All praises!

So how much would you say the cost was for the entire wedding?

So I don't know if it's the agency that we went through or if this is typical amongst destination weddings, but we paid deposits and we paid for services. I think we spent around 3 or 4K for visuals, maybe 2K for the DJ and then we stayed for like two weeks in our room. So it was about 6K for that.

And then we bought a lot. We bought tequila. We bought souvenirs. We went to see pyramids. We rode little scooters *laughs*

It's you smiling for me. *laughs*

So the wedding itself, just the wedding I would say maybe about 7K. Everything else includes our stay and the extra stuff.

The cool thing about the agency we went through is when you book a certain number of rooms or a certain number of people or a certain number of nights, you get discounts. So our room was 6K. Paid the 6K. But because we had a certain number of people. We got \$3K back.

So our \$6,000 stay was only \$3,000. On top of that, we got discounts on photography, videography, and

amenities, because of the amount of nights that we booked. So I think that's also something people need to keep in mind as well. When you book, the resort is going to ask you how many guests you think are going to come. The amount of guests that you think are going to come DO NOT give them that number.

The number of guests that you want to come, do not give them that number. Give them a realistic number. Take into account people's financial situations, Take into account, you know, kids and family matters, all of that and give them the lowest number possible. They're going to tell you, "Well, if you only do this amount of people, then it's going to be on a first come first serve basis for anyone else who wants to come." Totally fine. Do that because they're going to have room. Just take into account the amount of people that you for sure think are going to go, and give them that. Because odds are, chances are they're going to have room for anybody else who wants to come.

Absolutely! Thank you for sharing that. What would you say is the expectation after the wedding ceremony, and what was reality like once you came back to your home?

Being out of the country is like a dream, you know? It is a vacation. It's an experience. You're in a totally different headspace. For me and Shahad it was like we were all about each other out there. You know, there were no distractions, we didn't have any work to do. Our main focus was spending time together, getting to know each other, I mean more than we already did and really just enjoying Mexico. We knew that when we got back, everything was going to come back into the fold: work, work at the school, the work that we do for The Most High. Not that they stopped while we were out there, but we weren't physically doing what we normally do. You know, cooking *laughs* all of that. So it was just coming back to the mindset of, okay, we



have work to do. We are renewed, we're ready, we're relaxed, let's put this work in.

And you're married! You both were out there for a Sabbath as well right?

Yes, the sabbath on vacation. We basically ordered a few things from room service before the sun went down. The hot stuff we kept in the room at room temperature. And we pretty much just spent the day in the room, did some work for the school, and we ate. And then if we wanted to leave, we might have gone outside, looked at the beach. But yeah, we kept the sabbath. There's no excuse not to keep the sabbath. No matter where we are we gon' keep the laws.

Period! How would you recover financially after such a significant investment?

We used a credit card, all praises! I would suggest opening a joint card, if not a joint card, a credit card that has 0% APR for at least over 12 months so that you won't have any interest, and you can pay that card off in your own time. That is how I would do it all the way. Get a card that has points.

As you make purchases, you get points. And you also can pay it off in your own time without interest for a certain amount of time. Do it that way.



Nice so would you say it was worth the money.

Yeah, it's worth it. It was my dream wedding for sure.

So what would you say was the most memorable part of your destination wedding?

Getting married! *laughs* Umm I would say just being able to like when we finally walked down the aisle, we went to the reception and we had the reception just dancing and celebrating with our family and friends. Like that was, I think, the most memorable part. And also going on excursions with the people from our congregation. We went to see the pyramids and just having that cultural experience with them.

Would you give any specific advice for sisters that desire a wedding ceremony?

I would say do not be discouraged. Save. Talk to your soon-to-be husband or husband about it. It is attainable, and you need to put yourself in that mindset if that's what you really want. A destination wedding is going to give you an experience that a local wedding will not and it'll probably be a lot more joyful and memorable.

And lastly, if you had to encourage the next Israelite couple to have a destination wedding, what would you say?

I feel like the reason people don't consider it, is because they psych themselves out about their finances and just the details of it. Trust the Most High. If that is what you want and you are doing what is right in the eyes of the Most High and you put your mind to it, you put the work in, He's going to make it a process that is smooth. You know, sometimes there are hiccups, sometimes there are things that happen, but it's not going to break you. In most cases it's not going to keep the event from being a reality. So have faith in the Most High, it really just comes down to faith.

All praises! Well, Ratazah I just want to say that we love you so much and we appreciate you being such a light and an inspiration. And I'm really proud of you. And shout out to the House of Shahad.

Woot woot! House of Shahad! **TN**