

Wedding feast: Jewish wedding feast
Feast of the Lord

Researched and written by Cynthia Bauer

Jewish Wedding Customs and the Bride of Christ the Messiah

Though I know Gods truth about his love for me, it is so glorious to see how beautifully it is portrayed in the Ancient Jewish Wedding Custom. God is into details!

There are many customs appointed by God as teaching tools, a sort of “hands on” learning to help us understand the rich spiritual truth of Gods covenant with His people and His love for them. The Jewish Wedding Ceremony is a detailed illustration of the Messiah's relationship to His bride. You also participate as a bride in this ceremony!

The Shiddukhin - Arrangements preliminary to Betrothal:

Shiddukhin refers to the first step in the marriage process - the arrangements preliminary to the legal betrothal. It was common in ancient Israel for the father of the groom to select a bride for his son.

Sound familiar?

God chose US for his Son. We are the chosen bride! Chosen by the Father just as shown in the traditional choosing of the bride!

“For he chose us in him before the creation of the world...” Eph. 1:4a

God invented marriage.

God chose the bride for the very first wedding.

The very first wedding took place between Adam (the groom) and Eve (the bride).

God, the Father of Adam, not only chose Adam's bride -- He created her!

*Kinda neat to see how the thread runs even deeper, for example, Christ is often called “the Last Adam”

Biblical Example of Shiddukhin is found in Genesis 24:1-4:

Abraham - makes arrangements for his son Isaac's wedding. While the father usually had the responsibility in Abraham's life it was not possible. It was acceptable for the father to delegate this responsibility by designating a representative - called a shadkhan - marriage

broker or matchmaker.

The next phase of this step was the - Ketubah:

Ketubah means - "written" The ketubah was and still is today the - "marriage contract." The ketubah includes the provisions and conditions of the proposed marriage:

The groom promises to support his wife to be. Sounds like Christ and His love for us!

The bride stipulates the contents of her dowry - financial status.

We see this described in - Gen. 24:52-53. Despite the fact that this was an "arraigned marriage" The consent of the bride is very much a part of the ketubah - (Gen. 24:5). We are never forced into a relationship with Christ!

We also have a legal contract - a ketubah - which is the New Covenant! In it the groom promises love and care for His bride - and to give Himself for her .

The Mohar - or Bridal Payment :

This is sometimes called - the Bride price. It is a gift paid by the groom to the bride's family - but ultimately belongs to the bride. It changed her status and set her free from her parent's household. We see this illustrated in two Biblical examples:

Isaac and Rebecca - Gen. 24:53

Jacob and his wives - Gen. 29:20,27

Christ paid the price for our freedom, His own life!! Freedom from the bondage of sin and death! 1Peter 1:18-19

The bride promises to pay her dowry - her financial status(all we have to offer) - that of her yielded life and to keep herself for Him ! "you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body." ~1 Cor. 6:20.

The Mikveh - or Ritual Immersion:

To prepare for betrothal it was common for the bride and groom to separately take a ritual immersion (bath) called mikveh. The ritual immersion - mikveh -was prior to actually entering into the formal betrothal period, and was symbolic of spiritual cleansing. Baptism and so much more!

Our grooms Mikveh is recorded in scripture! : "At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan." ~Mark 1:9

And the bride: "To make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other

blemish, but holy and blameless.” ~Eph 5:26-27 (Death burial resurrection)

The Eyrusin - or Betrothal:

The word eyrusin means - Betrothal. The period is also called - kiddushim - meaning "sanctification" or "set apart." This word really defines the purpose of the betrothal period - it is a time in which the couple are to set aside to prepare themselves to enter into the covenant of marriage. The Jewish understanding of betrothal has always been much stronger than our modern understanding of an engagement. The betrothal was so binding that the couple would need a religious divorce or (get) in order to annul the contract (Deut. 24:1-4). This option was only available to the husband, as the wife had no say in any divorce proceeding.

The Scripture points to the fact that we are betrothed to the Messiah - we are in that engagement period prior to the wedding. As in any betrothal - the promise is so sure of our wedding that it would take a religious (get) divorce to nullify the contract. This divorce (get) is only available to the husband.

This too is promised by God in Hosea 2:19-20 - He promises that He will betrothal His people to Himself - forever. Would God ever divorce His people - (Malachi 2:16) - certainly it is not in His character to divorce.

The lesson or implications are quite clear - we are secure in our Messiah's contract with us - we cannot break it - and He promises that He will not break it - (Jn. 10:28).

Aspects of the Betrothal:

After the couple had undergone - Mikveh (immersion) , each separately, they would appear together under the Huppah - or canopy - and in public they would express their intention of becoming betrothed or engaged. From ancient times - the wedding canopy has been a symbol of a new household being planned - (Ps. 19:5; Joel 2:16). While under the Huppah the couple participated in a ceremony in which some items of value were exchanged - such as rings, and a cup of wine was shared to seal the betrothal vows, a sealing of the covenant.

One of the last of Jesus's actions was to bless the cup of the New Covenant - the cup of the ketubah- that contract of marriage. Jesus shared a cup of wine with his chosen disciples, at the last supper! We also partake in this as a reminder of our covenant vows!

He also stated that He would not taste it again until a later time, when he would drink at the wedding feast, when he returns!

“For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”
Luke 22:18

After the ceremony - the couple was considered to have entered into the betrothal agreement. This period was to last for one year. During this time the couple was considered married and continued to live separately until the end of the betrothal. They did not begin to live together at this time. They hardly knew each other, therefore- before the marriage could be consummated - they spent an adequate period of time together during which they got to know each other and gradually fall in love with one another. We currently are not in our new home with Christ, until then we are to spend time with him, getting to know him, and falling in love with him! Are you spending time with your groom?

The Matan - or Bridal Gift:

Following this betrothal ceremony the groom would return to his home to fulfill his obligations during the betrothal. But just prior to leaving he would give his wife to be a Matan - or bridal gift, a pledge of his love for her. Its purpose was to be a reminder to his bride during their days of separation of his love for her, that he was thinking of her - and that he would return to receive her as his wife. THIS IS THE HOLY SPIRIT!!!!
In (Eph. 1:13-14) Paul tells us that our Matan (pledge or gift) is the Holy Spirit. A promise of love and that He will return for us.

The Couple's Responsibilities During the Betrothal:

As the huppah symbolized a new household, the groom's responsibility was to focus on preparing a new dwelling place for his bride. The place to which the bride was to be taken must be better than the place she had lived before.

In Biblical times this was most often done not by building a new home - but by simply adding additional rooms to the existing home of the father!

Beloved, are you seeing it?! Hear it, precious and sweet bride of Christ: “In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” ~John 14:2-3

Do you see how this is all coming together?...How you... beloved Bride of Christ, enter into

this Marriage with our Lord? AMEN!

It was not the groom's duty to determine when the place he was preparing for the bride was ready - his father would make that determination and give the go ahead to receive his bride.

"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." Mark 13:32

Jesus – told His disciples – that He did not know the day or hour of His return (Matthew 24:32-36) This is not so much to say He does not have all knowledge of all things. However, as with any Jewish bridegroom, He MUST WAIT for His Father to give the word that the set time has come. The pinnacle of the Jewish wedding was the joyful celebration of the marriage supper. This too is a facet of our Lord's soon coming wedding (Rev 19:7-9)

During this one year period - the bride would consecrate herself - and prepare holy garments for the upcoming marriage. Paul puts this preparation in very clear terms - (Eph 5:25-27). The bridegroom is making preparations to return for His bride - we need to ask ourselves are we as His betrothed keeping our garments clean? Are we arrayed in our bridal attire, and keeping our ketubah - covenant promises and vows? Are you yielding your life? "For you were bought at a price. So use your bodies to glorify God." ~ 1 Cor 6:20

** Are you preparing yourself for your groom and his return? He is making preparations for us! Be faithful to HIM!

The Nissuin - Marriage Itself:

The culminating step in the Process of the Jewish Wedding!

The final step in the wedding process is called - Nissuin - the word comes from the Hebrew verb - hsn (nasa) - which means , "to carry." This is a graphic description - as the bride would be waiting for her groom to come - to carry her off to her new home. The period of the betrothal - was a time of great anticipation - as the bride waited for the arrival of her betrothed. We also anxiously await the return of Christ!

One of the unique features of the Biblical Jewish wedding was the time of the groom's arrival - it was to be a surprise:

The bride took the betrothal seriously - expecting the at the end of the year long period of

the betrothal.

She knew the approximate timing - but the exact hour or day was uncertain.

It was the father of the groom who would give the final approval for the marriage to begin.

"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." Mark 13:32

The coming of the Bridegroom and the Wedding Begins

The time of the grooms arrival was to be a surprise. The bride would therefore be anxiously watching and waiting for the exact moment of his return. Even in the late evening, the bridal party was to keep their oil lamps burning just in case the wedding was to begin. Since the time of his arrival was a surprise - the bride and her bridal party were always to be ready - this is the background of Jesus's parable of the Ten Virgins.

(The Parable of the Ten Virgins: 1 "At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2 Five of them were foolish and five were wise. 3 The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. 4 The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. 5 The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. 6 "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' 7 "Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. 8 The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.' 9 " 'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.' 10 "But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. 11 "Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. 'Open the door for us!' 12 "But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.' 13 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour. Mat. 25:1-13).

** They were not prepared, they all became drowsy and fell asleep, but some were not prepared for the return by not having enough oil in their lamps.

It was customary for one of the grooms party to go ahead of the bridegroom, leading the way to the bride's house - and shout - "Behold, the bridegroom comes!" This would be followed by the sounding of the shofar or that is the Ram's Horn. At the sounding of the shofar the entire wedding processional would go through the streets of the city to the bride's house.

The groomsmen would again set up the huppah. Again the couple would say a blessing over the cup of wine. When Christ returns, he will again, drink this cup with us!

The ceremony finalized the promises and vows.

The pinnacle of this joyful celebration was the marriage supper:

It was much more than just a sit down dinner for all the guests.

It included seven full days of food, music, dance and celebration - (Jn. 14:10-12).

After the festivities the husband was free to bring his bride to their new home to live together as husband and wife in the full covenant of marriage!

Another cool parallel is that the Groom stands to the right during the ceremony. Christ is also at the "right" hand of the father!

Messiah's Wedding - Still to Come:

Jesus - told His disciples - that He did not know the day or hour of His return (Mat. 24:32-36) - this is not so much to say He does not have all knowledge - but as with any Jewish bridegroom - He must wait for His Father to give the word that the set time has come.

As we noted before - in a traditional Jewish wedding - one of the groom's men would go before the arrival of the groom and shout - Behold the groom comes - should we expect anything less with the coming of our heavenly bridegroom? But where do we see such an event? - if we look to (I Thess 4:16-18) we see that just prior to our Lord's return - there will indeed be a shout - could it be - "Behold the groom comes?"

We also saw that after this joyful proclamation of the groom's men there was in a traditional Jewish wedding the joyful sounding of the shofar. Will this happen when our Lord returns to receive His bride? If we continue reading the description of our Lord's future wedding in (I Thess 4:16-18) we see there also - the sounding of the shofar in annunciation of His return.

At the sounding of the shofar the entire wedding processional would go through the streets of the city to the bride's house - but where is this wedding processional at Jesus 's coming

wedding - again it is clearly pictured for us in (I Thess 4:16-18) - where all of Jesus's wedding party is gathered together for the great wedding feast.

The pinnacle of the Jewish wedding was the joyful celebration of the marriage supper - this too is a facet of our Lord's soon coming wedding (Rev 19:7-9).

Revelation 19:7-9

Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory!

For the wedding of the Lamb has come,

and his bride has made herself ready.

Fine linen, bright and clean,

was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!' " And he added, "These are the true words of God."

The bride longs for the Bridegroom to return for her...

By night on my bed I sought the one I love;

I sought him, but I did not find him.

(Song 3.1)

At last, the Bridegroom returns for His bride...

And at midnight there was a cry made,

"Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him!"

(Mt 25.6, KJV)

The Bridegroom speaks to His bride...

O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the cliff,

let me see your countenance,

let me hear your voice;

for your voice is sweet, and your countenance is lovely.

Behold, you are fair, my love! Behold, you are fair!

...You are all fair, my love, and there is no spot in you.

(Song 2.14, 4.1a, 4.7)

The bride speaks to the Bridegroom...

The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.

His left hand is under my head,

and His right hand embraces me.

(Song 2.6, 2.8)

The Bridegroom speaks to the bride...

Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.
For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone.
The flowers appear on the earth;
the time of singing has come,
and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.
The fig tree puts forth her green figs,
and the vines with the tender grapes give a good smell.
Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away!

(Song 2.10-13)

The bride rejoices as she is carried to heaven...

I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine... He has brought me to the banqueting house,
and His banner over me is love!

(Song 2.4, 6.3a)