

THE JEWISH WEDDING

By Richard Samuel

God's Word reveals all that we need to know. This is His desire for every Believer. Thus when studying the Bible, it becomes evident that intimacy between Jesus (Yeshua) and His Church is well illustrated in the ancient Jewish wedding customs. Jesus made several references to the Church being like a Bride waiting for Him, her eternal Bridegroom.

The Jewish marriage consists of two parts. First, the betrothal - Erusin or Kidushin, then about one or two years later, the second part took place. This is the wedding ceremony called, Nisuin or Huppah.

The betrothal is a parallel to the engagement in most ways except that in the ancient Jewish custom, it was binding. It was so binding that it could not be broken without a divorce. You were considered bound together from the period you entered the betrothal contract until the wedding day. When Joseph discovered that his betrothed wife Mary was with child, he had real grounds to obtain a divorce and would have if the angel had not appeared to him and explained the spiritual significance of what actually took place. From that point forward Joseph knew it was the hand of God that was upon her. He no longer had reason to put her away.

The Bridegroom's Father chooses the Bride; the Groom in most cases does not. He sends a friend or a trusted servant to come to terms with the parents of the prospective Bride, and makes all the arrangements. The Bride may not have any idea of what this person looks like, or even know his age. All she knows is she will spend her whole life with him if she says yes to this marriage.

This custom can be seen as a portrait of the Father's Holy Spirit in the Scriptures. It is He who calls us to enter into union with our Bridegroom, Jesus the Messiah.

"Stop grumbling among yourselves," Jesus answered. "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. John 6:43-44

"Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you Believe in Him and are filled with marvelous and festive joy," I Peter 1:8

The price was secured for the Bride, and was usually something of great value; lands, livestock, silver or gold. In the Believers instance the supreme price was paid, with the precious Blood of Jesus our Redeemer. Jesus left His Home and the Glory of Heaven to come to earth to pay the ultimate price for a Bride. This was so He might return once again to prepare for us a place, a Home with Him in the Glory of Heaven.

"For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the superficial way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious Blood of Christ, the Lamb without blemish or defect." Peter 1:18-19

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, did not affect to appear in divine majesty; but divested Himself, taking upon Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:" Philippians 2:5-7

The Betrothal ritual is like an engagement party. The promise was made and it was binding. The man and wife do not live together or have intimate physical relations at this time. But a cup of wine is served as a symbol of the marriage covenant thought which the Jewish Groom obtained his bride, so the cup of communion also serves as the symbol of the covenant through which Jesus has obtained His Bride, the Church.

"And Jesus took the cup in His right hand, lifted it, blessed it, and gave it to His followers, saying, 'Drink ye all of it; For this is My Blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that Day when I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom.'" Matthew 26:27-29

Jesus, when lifting the cup at the Passover understood that in just a short time from that moment, He would also be lifted up on a cross. It would be for His Bride that He would suffer and do this. Over and over again we will see that He *"alone establishes this Covenant,"* we have no part, other than to accept what He has done for us.

The written marriage contract is drawn up and in it the Bride is promised that she will be provided and cared for in every way. It states that all of her needs will be fulfilled by the Bridegroom. The Hebrew term for Bridegroom is "Hatan" meaning: *"One who enters Covenant."* This contract is always signed before two witnesses, then given to the Bride and her Father. The Bible Scriptures are our Wedding document. It tells us all that the Bridegroom has done for his bride, and will do for his bride.

Over and over Jesus declares His love for us. He promised to provide for all our needs. It is Jesus who will make our way straight. It is Jesus who will accomplish His Word in our lives. He is the Door, our Pathway by which we can enter into the Father's House. His cover dresses us, just as He said in Matthew's Gospel.

"So why do you worry about your garments? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the furnace, shall He not much more cover you, O you of little faith?" Matthew 6:28-30

"And my God will provide, fulfill and meet all your needs according to His excellent riches in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:19

As I mentioned before, the Bride had to be in agreement with this marriage, and so it is with all of us. By our free will we choose to enter into this contract. Even those who have gone before us were looking ahead to this place and event.

The book of Hebrews tells us:

"By conviction Abraham, when he was called to go out into a location which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed God; and he went out, not aware where he went. By conviction Abraham abided in the land of promise - as in a foreign country, dwelling in tabernacles with his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For Abraham looked for a City which has foundations, whose designer and creator is God." Hebrews 11:8-10

Today to enter into this Covenant you must accept Christ Jesus, and confess Him with your mouth to be Lord of your life. Jesus is revealed to us by the Servant, the Holy Spirit. We must say "**I do.**" In Hebrew it is the word '*daat.*'"

Making this decision (**I do**) is really the first act of intimacy. God has given to us free will to choose our Bridegroom. However, He knew from the beginning what our answer would be.

"Observe, I will bring them health and preserve them. I will cure them and I will reveal unto them the fullness of My Peace and My Truth." Jeremiah 33:6

This act of choosing our Bridegroom reveals to the Lord how intimate we want Him to be with us, and this revealing works both ways. It is a form of worship, "*yada*" in Hebrew, and this same word is used for an intimate encounter in the Word of God.

In the Jewish Betrothal ceremony, the bride drinks from her cup of wine. This cup is also called the shared cup of the Brit, (Covenant). The betrothed couple are now considered married. The betrothal is now secured (sealed). Gifts are given to the Bride and her family from the Bridegroom or His Servant, as in the case of Abraham sending his servant Eliezer.

Eliezer came with 10 camels filled with gifts to secure a Bride for Isaac. Eliezer means: comforter, helper, and is a picture of the Holy Spirit of God.

And their seed shall be known among the gentiles, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed whom YHVH hath blessed. I will greatly rejoice in YHVH, my soul shall be joyful in Elohiym; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels. For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so YHVH Elohiym will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations." Isaiah 61:9-11

Every time we share the cup of wine; the **cup of Communion**, we are re-affirming *our* marriage Covenant with our Bridegroom Jesus. We should always remember what it was that Jesus our Bridegroom achieved for us personally, with the Covenant of "*Communion in His Blood.*" Wine is a symbol of joy to the Hebrew mind, and it should be to His Church as well.

"The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will cut a New Covenant (Brit) with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the Covenant I made with their forefathers (those who died in Mt. Sinai) when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke My Covenant, though I was a Husband to them, declares the LORD. This is the Covenant I will cut with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put My (Law) Torah in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be My people. (This is the Promise from Deuteronomy 30:6)

No longer will a man instruct his neighbor, or a man his brother or sister, saying, 'Know the LORD,' they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity and will recall their sins no more." Jeremiah 31:31-34

Jesus also gave us many gifts. The Holy Spirit with all of His gifts: Prophecy, His Peace, His Joy, His Knowledge, Eternal Life, His Righteousness which is our Cover, and best of all His Love Everlasting.

The shared cup of Communion secured by the nails (vav) of the Covenant of the Cross makes us partakers with Him in everything, and it's all His doing.

In Hebrew the word for the Jewish Bride is the word "Kallah," meaning: "complete," and some teach that it means: "*enclosed one*."

"A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring of living water shut up, a fountain sealed."
Song of Solomon 4:12

The Bride went through a ritual immersion - washing, to symbolize her turning aside from all the former things and starting a new life with her Beloved. We are given water baptism for the purification of our old ways and to make us ready for our Heavenly home.

When the Hebrews came out from Egypt and prepared to enter into the Covenant with God (Elohim), the whole Congregation had to be cleansed with water. They were to be set apart, enclosed before they could come close to the LORD God.

They had to do it before meeting God; we now do it after we receive His Son. This washing was so that we could identify with His Son in all things.

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were immersed into Jesus (Yeshua) were immersed into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like Messiah was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been seeded together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection:

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Romans 6:3-6

Mikvah: ritual immersion - baptism is an act of separation.

When we obey the Lord and follow His example of immersion, we are embarking on our new life by departing from our old ways. This is a cutting off, or a putting off of the old ways, and this pleases both the Father, and the Bridegroom. It is a signpost for ourselves to remind us we are dead to trespasses, and alive unto God.

"He said unto them, Have you received the Holy Spirit since you Believed? And they answered him, We have not even heard whether there be any Holy Spirit. And he said unto them, Then what were you immersed into? And they said, Into John's ritual immersion. Then said Paul, John verily immersed with the immersion of repentance, saying unto all the people, that they should Believe on Him which should come after him, that is, on Jesus the Messiah. When they heard this, they were immersed in the Name of the Lord Jesus". Acts 19:2-5

After the betrothal ceremony, the Bridegroom would depart and go back to his Father's house to prepare a place for the wedding and his new Bride. My understanding is that a pledge is made by the Bridegroom affirming to his Bride that he will indeed return for her. Jesus did the same. He left earth, the home of his Bride, and returned to His Father's house in heaven. We read Jesus pledge in John's Gospel:

"Do not let your hearts be distressed. Trust in God; trust also in Me. In My Father's house are many chambers; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to make ready a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and catch you up to be with Me that you also may be where I am." John 14:1-3

These words above are the same words spoken in the ancient Jewish Wedding rite. Jesus speaks to His followers as a Bridegroom, affirming to them that He would come to take them to Himself.

Now the time of waiting comes. The Bride would prepare herself making all the preparations to be the best Bride she could be. She waits for the Bridegroom to come. Her Beloved will come for her; the exact time is "only" known by the Bridegroom's Father.

When the Father sees that all of His Son's preparations for the wedding chambers (chadar) are ready, then He will allow His Son to transport His Bride to His home.

"At that time the kingdom of Heaven will be like ten undefiled maidens who took their lamps and went out to meet the Bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were insightful. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The Bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became sleepy and fell asleep." Matthew 25:1-5

At this point in the Bride's life she is surrounded by her family and friends who she will be leaving very soon. She is filled with emotions. She may be going on a long journey to the land of her Husband's home far from her family's home.

Rebecca was a zealous Bride, enthusiastic to go meet her Beloved Isaac. She did not vacillate at all; she is the perfect picture of Messiah's Bride. Jesus is coming for a Bride who is seen through His eyes as without spot and undefiled.

"Nevertheless we, according to His Promise, look for New Heavens and a New Earth, wherein dwelled righteousness. For what reason, beloved, seeing that you're looking for such things, be diligent that you may be found of Him in Peace, without spot, and undefiled." 2 Peter 3:13-14

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Messiah also loved the Congregation, and gave himself for it; that He might hollow and absolve it with the washing of water by the Word. That He might present it to Himself a glorious Temple, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be sanctified and without blemish." Ephesians 5:25-27

It was said by the Jewish Sages, and even today's Rabbis teach this truth: That on the day of your wedding the Bride and Bridegroom stands before God without spot, and without blemish.

"I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall delight in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of Salvation (Jesus). He has covered me with the Robe of Righteousness, as a Bridegroom decked himself with ornaments, and as a Bride adorned herself with her jewels." Isaiah 61:10

It is Jesus who makes his Bride that pure, not the Bride herself. He clothes the Bride in his robe of righteous, and places his crown on her head. He left His throne in heaven to take the sinners crown, and place His Kingdom crown on those who believe in Him.

When the Jewish Bridegroom comes to get His Bride it is more of a willing kidnapping. It could be called a snatching in the middle of the night. The Bridegroom and His friends would sneak up on the Bride suddenly. However, not without a shout first! Then there was a blast of the shofar sounding out, she must be ready to run to her Beloved, to flee with him with no hesitation or procrastination.

"At midnight the shout went out: 'Here's the Bridegroom! Come out to encounter him!'" Matthew 25:6

It is worth remembering that one of the names for the Feast of Trumpets according to Jewish literature is *"The wedding day of Messiah."* This whole marriage feast is a picture of the LORD coming for His Bride before Yom Kippur, the Day of Judgment.

Jesus the Messiah has a "deed" for us; it's the Ketubah - the Betrothal Covenant. He is now our Master and our Husband. He has the rights to come to take us to His home because He paid the "Mohar" - the Bridal Price. When He comes He will come from the place of Power, the **Father's right hand**.

The Bridegroom with His strong open hand takes His Bride away to the place that he has prepared, and the marriage is now consummated. The Tallit (the Jewish prayer Shawl) is used today as the Huppah. Made of silk or fine wool it is raised over the couple. It can also be held up

by poles or trees that may have been planted at the birth of the Bride or Bridegroom. If he's a rich Bridegroom he may give her all of her wedding garments before hand, which she gladly receives as part of his price. Messiah has given use all of our garments as well.

Blessings are said over the couple, this is called the Birkot Nisuin, the 7 blessings. The second cup of wine is now drunk, and this sets the second seal to the marriage Covenant. We will drink this cup with our Bridegroom Jesus.

Now the new couple will spend 7 days together in the wedding room, the "Huppah." This starts the honeymoon cycle, this is where the Bridegroom will cover her with Himself.

This part takes place in the Huppah. This is also called the "Nisuin" or the "hometaking." Jewish Bridegrooms do this part today at the wedding by placing their Tallit over their Brides so all can witness it.

The new couple will now become **one flesh** - Echad. This is also called "Kidushin" meaning: sanctification or ratification. They will get to know each other like never before, this more than a face to face encounter. This also has an ancient name, "Yihud" or the "*Knowing*." The act of sexual intimacy takes place between the Bride and the Bridegroom. The bed sheets with her blood on it were given to the Brides family. This was so they could never say she was not pure before the wedding day. It was in a sense, her insurance policy. It will be Messiah's bloody garments that will be our insurance policy. It is His covering that dresses us, not our own.

"Now we see but it is a poor reflection as in a brass mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known." I Cor. 13:12

And now it is time for the wedding feast to begin. Our Wedding Feast will be in the place that Jesus has prepared.

Right after the 7 days of the Huppah, the couple come out of the room and joins their guests. These guests have a special name; they are called the B'nai Huppah, "*children of the Bridal Chamber*." They will join the Bride and Bridegroom to a very festive marriage feast. This is the meal that the couple share with their guest after the 7 days of being alone is over. This meal is called Seudat Mitzyah, a festive meal. Jesus will be King, and we shall be His Queen. We will rule and reign with Him forever. This is for Israel and for all (gentiles) who are grafted into her.

Jesus the Messiah has now been given a Staff, "*The Rod of God*" to rule with, just like all the past kings of Israel. The one thousand year begins; this is the millennial reign of Messiah on earth. This is the time of peace we read about in the book Isaiah. This is when the Bridegroom will rejoice over His Bride.

"For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall thy sons marry you: and as the Bridegroom rejoices over the Bride, so shall your God rejoice over you." Isaiah 62:5

"Let us rejoice and be delighted and give Him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His Bride has fashioned herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (For

the fine linen stands for the legal rights 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" Revelation 19:7-9

My lamp is illuminated, and He has pressed out fresh oil for my lamp! So I can now say, I'm waiting for my Beloved to come and whisper to me, "Come away my beloved, come up, for I have made a place for you. Come enter the chamber and shut the door that we made be known of each other, my Bride, my Love." I will answer my Beloved Bridegroom with "His Word." Song of Solomon 1:2-4