

Summer Sisterhood Study- Eternally Desired- June 22, 2011
Our Heavenly Matchmaker

A. Chosen by God to be His own possession

1. The Jewish people- Deuteronomy 7: 6 *"For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. 7 "The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, 8 but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers,*
2. You and me- 1 Peter 2: 9 *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;*

B. Chosen by God in order to bless you- Ephesians 1:3-4 *3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Messiah, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Yeshua the Messiah to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will.*

C. The first step in the Jewish wedding is the Shiddukihin or arrangement-

1. Scriptural example: Abraham's chief servant finding Rebekah for Isaac- Genesis 24:1-4
2. The Father paid the bride price (*Mohar*) in Messiah's blood

Ephesians 5:25-27 & 32: 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Messiah also loved the congregation and gave Himself up for her; 26 that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that He might present to Himself the congregation in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless. 32 This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Messiah and the congregation.
3. The Covenant of Marriage, the *Ketubah* is established by the Groom

Luke 22:20 And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.

Colossians 2:10 and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority.

An Overview of the Ancient Jewish Wedding Customs

Compiled by Natalia Fomin

Ancient Jewish wedding customs offer striking similarities with the mystery of the Bride of Messiah and her Groom, Yeshua. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Messiah and the congregation (Ephesians 5:32).

I. The Arrangement (Shiddukhin)—was the first step in the ancient Jewish wedding, and this custom is kept in some circles until today. Similarly, God the Father chooses the Bride for the Groom and then pays the bride price (*mohar*). You are the Bride and the bride price is the blood of Yeshua: Ephesians 5:25; John 3:16; 1 Peter 1:18-19; 1 Corinthians 6:20.

II. The Betrothal (Eyrusin)—was the next step: This was the engagement. This step could last up to a year or more. Traditionally it was also called the period of sanctification or *Kiddushim* in Hebrew, which means to be set-apart. At this time the Groom signed the *Ketubah* or marriage contract. This contract served as a promise and assurance of the groom's love for his bride. During this betrothal period, the bride was being trained and prepared to take on the role of a wife. It also provided an opportunity for her purity to be tested.

In the anticipation of the upcoming wedding, would she be faithfully waiting for her groom to come back for her? Would she keep herself pure, continually trusting that her beloved would return for her, trusting that they would share their lives together in a home that he had been preparing for them? Or would she begin doubting his fidelity and love for her? The best gift that the bride could give to her beloved was a heart that was fully yielded to him. Likewise, there is nothing greater that we too can offer Yeshua than our undivided life wholly submitted to His Word.

The Betrothal ceremony was conducted under a *chuppah*, where both the groom and bride would partake of the blessings over the cup of wine and recite the betrothal blessing. In fact, the bond of betrothal was as binding as the marriage itself. This covenant could not be broken; to nullify it, they would need to get a divorce (*get*). Likewise, Yeshua had initiated the betrothal in the Upper Room when He raised the cup of the New Covenant and said, "*This is a cup of the New Covenant... I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes.*" The Scriptures which reflect this custom are: 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:26-27; Luke 22:20, John 15:13.

III. The Fetching of the Bride—was one of the most mysterious and unpredictable customs, but also a very exciting one. What was the groom doing during all this time, while the bride continued to anticipate his coming? The groom had many responsibilities; he was the provider for and the protector of his bride. He was busy preparing a suitable home for his beloved. Typically, the groom would build an addition onto his father's home, and had to wait for his father's final approval of the dwelling before he could go to fetch his bride. Following this tradition, Yeshua said this to His disciples,

"In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:2-3).

Furthermore, just as the groom did not know exactly when he would be back for his bride, the disciples, in their impatience to know all the details, and in their anticipation for the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom, pressed Yeshua on to give them the approximate time of His return, to which Yeshua answered,

“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone” (Matthew 24:36).

Therefore, because the groom’s time of coming was unpredictable, the bride was under constant pressure to always be ready, living in a state of expectancy. In the ancient Jewish wedding it was customary for the groom to fetch his bride at nighttime, with torches lighting the way, and with the sound of a sudden shout, proclaiming **“The Groom is coming!”** The parable of the Ten Virgins illustrates this tradition very well, clearly communicating both the sense of unexpectancy and the responsibility of the bride to make herself ready. In verses 10 and 13 of Matthew 25:1-13 the point hits home:

“..the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut” and here is the admonition for all of us, *“Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.”*

What then, will the fetching of the Bride of Messiah look like for us who believe? The fetching of the Bride is the Rapture of the congregation, of the Body of Messiah; that is, all who believed in Yeshua the Messiah, who entered into the Katubah with Him, and who had been purchased by His blood. The main Scripture for this mysterious event that is yet to occur is found in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17,

“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command [shout], with the voice of the arch-angel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Messiah will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up [fetched] together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.”

IV. The Wedding Ceremony and Marriage Feast (Nissuim) – was the consummation of the marriage. Only a few were invited to the wedding ceremony, whereas many more would be invited to the marriage feast. The day had come and the bride had made herself ready (Revelation 19:6-8).

The Father has issued the permission to get the Bride, and all has been prepared in Heaven for His beloved, His pure and spotless Bride. While the Groom has been preparing a place for His Bride, the Bride was preparing herself for that place. Ancient Jewish weddings could last as long as seven days, which signifies the fullness of joy. In God’s presence is fullness of joy; in His right hand are pleasures forever (Psalm 16:11).

After the marriage feast, and how blessed are those who will be invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9), the Bride will enter her eternal abode, the very dwelling place that had been prepared for her, and that she had prepared herself for. And though it took a long time to be completed, oh how this abode was worth waiting for! Here is our sneak preview into that special mansion... but wait... there is more than just mansions here. There is also a city that Yeshua is preparing for you and me:

“Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb. And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper (Revelation 21:9-11).

The best is yet to come, and even though we need to be patient in hope, it is worth the wait. I am so looking forward to that wedding ceremony which will usher us into the eternity of endless bliss. **Will you be there?**

Jewish Wedding Elements

Compiled by Natalia Fomin

Blessings of Betrothal - In *erusin* (betrothal) and *nissuim* (marriage) there is a blessing over wine, then one or more blessings – one in the case of *erusin*: the *bircat erusin*, or betrothal blessing. This text of this blessing is taken from the Talmud. The blessing is normally recited before the ceremony, but in some Sephardic communities, there is – or was – a custom to recite it afterwards. Originally the blessings were recited by the groom, and in some places this is still done; but it is more common for someone else to recite them, such as the Rabbi. After the standard blessing is made over wine, the couple drinks the wine. Then the betrothal blessing is recited (in Hebrew), as follows:

Praised be Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast sanctified us with His commandments and has commanded us regarding illicit relations and has prohibited us those who are merely betrothed but has permitted to us those lawfully married to us by chuppah and Kiddushin. Blessed are Thou, God, who has sanctified His people Israel through chuppah and Kiddushin.

Breaking of the glass - An old custom following the *nissuim* (marriage) is for someone - usually the groom - to break a vessel with his right foot. In some cases, the wine vessel was used, after the wine was poured out. Smashing the vessel was the general Jewish tradition in early first millenium, and back then its smashing was greeted by those present exclaiming that this is the sign. The exact origin of this custom is shrouded in **mystery**. Traditionally, this custom was also incorporated into the ceremony to remind everyone that even at the height of one's personal joy, we must, nevertheless, remember the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. The breaking of the glass symbolizes the breaking of our hearts in remembrance.

Chuppah – is a canopy under which a bride and groom stand during their wedding ceremony. It consists of a cloth or sheet, sometimes a *tallit*, stretched or supported over four poles, or sometimes manually held up by attendants to the ceremony. A chuppah symbolizes the home that the couple will build together. In a spiritual sense, the covering of the chuppah represents the presence of God over the covenant of marriage.

Ketubah - A *ketubah* is a special type of Jewish prenuptial agreement. It is considered an integral part of a traditional Jewish marriage, and outlines the rights and responsibilities of the groom, in relation to the bride. The rabbis in ancient times insisted on the marriage couple entering into the ketubah as a protection for the wife. Symbolically, this document is also reminiscent of the wedding between G-d and Israel where “Moses took the Book of the Covenant” and read it to the people after the Jews stood under the “*Chuppah*” at Mt. Sinai.

Seven Blessings - *Sheva Brachot* also known as *birkot nissuim*, “the wedding blessings” in Jewish religious law are blessings that are recited for a bride and her groom as part of *nissuim* (marriage). Though the *Sheva Brachot* are a stylistically harmonious whole, they are actually a mosaic of interwoven Biblical words, phrases and ideas. It is not certain who composed the benedictions; the text is recorded in the Talmud (Ketubot 7b-8a) but its origin is probably several centuries earlier.

Seven Circles - When they arrive at the *chuppah*, the bride and family circle the groom seven times. One of the many explanations for these seven circuits is that they represent a seven-fold bond which marriage will establish between the bride and groom and their families.

The number seven represents the completion of the seven day process in which earth was created. During these seven days, the earth revolved on its axis seven times. Since marriage reenacts the creative process, the *Kallah's* (Bride's) encirclement symbolizes the repetition of these seven earthly rotations. Also, on the day of his wedding, the groom is compared to a king. Just as the king is encircled by his legion, the groom is to be encircled by his bridal entourage. When the bride has finished encircling the groom, she stands at his right, as the Psalmist states, “*at the right hand does the queen stand*” (Psalm 45:9).