

Messiah and the Jewish Wedding, Part 1

Preparing for the Wedding Day

This past year we have been looking at the second coming of Yeshua and how it relates to the Fall Feasts. Today, we want to look at the ancient Jewish marriage customs to understand what we, the Bride, need to do to prepare for our Bridegroom Yeshua's coming. In this newsletter we will look at the betrothal. The betrothal is represented by the Spring Feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Pentecost. In the next newsletter we will look at the wedding.

We Must Have a Bride

In every marriage, we have to first have a bride. Let's look at Scripture to see how a bride was chosen. It was the father who chose the bride for his son. We know that God chose Eve as a bride for Adam at creation (**Genesis 2:20-25**). We see that after Adam names all of the animals, that there was not a suitable companion for him. So God put him in a deep sleep and took one of Adam's ribs and fashioned a woman and when Adam awoke from his sleep he said, "This is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." Scripture tells us that the man is to cleave to his wife and the two become one flesh.

Next we see Abraham choosing a wife for his son Isaac (**Genesis 24**). Abraham, too old to travel now, tells his eldest and I'm sure his most beloved servant to go and get a wife for Isaac. But first he has him swear that he would not take a wife for his son Isaac from among the Canaanites, but only among his kindred. The servant vows to Abraham and sets out to find Isaac a wife; but we see here that Abraham had passed on his beliefs even to his servants. For before arriving to Abraham's hometown, the servant prays for God to intervene and, in actuality, choose that wife for him.

In **Exodus 19**, we see that God the Father chose a wife: the people of Israel. In **verse 3** it begins, "And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel: 'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and

a holy nation." At Mt. Sinai, God chose His Bride. God the Father does not have one bride and Yeshua has another, but we see in **1 Peter 2:9** that He tells the believers, who also were Jewish, "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." We see here that God has one bride and that bride is special to Him because it is God who has chosen us, not us who have chosen Him (**John 15:16**). We must remember that we have been grafted into Israel, not the other way around (**Romans 11:17**). We see here that the Father, too, has chosen the bride for His Son.

So now we have the bride; what's the price?

Pay the Price

With every bride comes a price. She must be bought from the father of the bride. Women were sold and then became the property of their husbands. We see that Abraham went to Egypt and he told the king that Sarah was his sister and the king sent gifts to Abraham: sheep, camels, oxen, donkeys, and servants for the purchase of Sarah so he may marry her (**Genesis 12:16**). The servant of Abraham gave gifts to Bethuel of silver and gold and garments to Rebekah, and he gave gifts to her brother and mother. Jacob worked fourteen years for Leah and Rachel and we see others like Othniel who paid for Caleb's daughter (**Joshua 15:16-17**); we see Boaz the kinsman redeemer who paid for Ruth, God who redeemed Israel from the hand of the Egyptians, and on and on in the Bible we see the price paid for a bride, till we see Yeshua who redeemed His Bride by purchasing her with His own blood.

First I Must Say I Do

The woman was not totally without a say. We see in **Genesis 24:8** that Abraham's servant asked him, "What if she will not come with me?" And Abraham replied, "If the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be clear from this oath; only do not take my son back there." Yeshua tells His disciples the same in **Matthew 10:14**: "Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet." So too, they asked Rebekah: "And they called Rebekah, and said to her, 'Will you go with this man?' And she said, 'I will go.'" The people of Israel said "Yes" to God. **Exodus 24:3** says, "Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, 'All the words which the Lord has said we will do.'" And like Rebekah, who did not see Isaac before she gave her consent, we too say "Yes" to Yeshua before we have seen Him or knew Him. **1 Peter 1:8** says, "And though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory."

Have you said, "I do"?

The Ketubah

The Ketubah was a document used for the purpose of assuring that a bride would be provided for. It stated the groom's promises and the rights of the bride. Today we would call it a prenuptial agreement. It was signed and witnessed by two people and it was a binding contract. The Torah states that every matter needs to be established by two or more witnesses. We see this in **Hebrews 6:13** when Paul speaks of God witnessing the covenant with Abraham. "For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself."

Once the Ketubah was signed, the couple were legally married, or betrothed, though they each remained living with their parents till the wedding ceremony. We see this with Mary and Joseph. We do not see this contract written up during the arrangement of Isaac and Rebekah, even though we see that gifts were given. It may have been omitted from the story, but this was an ancient Middle Eastern practice. The Torah is such a contract. We see in **Deuteronomy 5:2**, "The Lord our God made a covenant with us at Horeb." In **Exodus 19:5-7**, God calls His people His Segulah, His special treasure, His own possession, very endearing; He is calling His Bride.

In **verse 8**, the people agree and accept His offer of betrothal. Starting in **Exodus 20** through **chapter 23**, we see the stipulations. In **chapter 24** God and Moses ratify the contract and burnt offerings are offered and the contract was read and both parties agreed; and Moses, the one officiating the ceremony, sprinkles the agreement with blood. The Bible tells us in **Hebrews 9:18**, "Therefore even the first covenant was not inaugurated without blood."

We see extensively the framework of the Ketubah covenant in Deuteronomy. **Chapter 1:1-5** is the preamble, the prologue in 1:6-4:49, the stipulations in 5:1-26:19, the blessings and the curses if the covenant is either kept or broken in **chapters 27-30**, and the witnessing in 30:19. Moses names His successor in the covenant agreement (**Joshua 31:1-8**) and the deposit and reading of the agreement (31:9-13). This gives us great insight not only regarding the covenant between God and His people, but also how the ancient world made agreements between nations and people by this framework. These covenants were legally binding so no one could change them except those specified to do so. Moses was the mediator in the first agreement, Yeshua was the mediator in the second.

Now the second did not nullify the first, it only made changes to it. Jeremiah writes in **chapter 31:31-34**, "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the Lord. "But this is the covenant

which I make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord. 'I will put My law within them, and on their hearts I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,' declares the Lord, 'for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sins I will remember no more.'" This new covenant was ratified by Yeshua Himself with the shedding of His own blood. We see that the change made to the new covenant (the law) was that it would be written on the hearts of the people, not on tablets of stone and that it had better promises and Yeshua was now the new Mediator of this new contract with God's people (**Hebrews 8:6**). We see Paul use the same analogy of this new covenant in **2 Corinthians 3:1-3** when he tells the people that they are Paul's letters of commendation written on the hearts, read by all men, written not by ink but with the Spirit of God, not on tablets of stone but on the tablets of human hearts.

So we see that God made His agreement with His Bride, but we have a lot to do yet before the wedding.

But First a Toast and a Meal

It was the custom to have a glass of wine and for the future groom to commune (fellowship, eat a meal) with the family and friends of whom he was marrying into. The Hebrew word for communion is *dabar* and it means to speak, promise, pronounce. In **Exodus 25:22** God tells Moses that He will commune with him from above the mercy seat, and that he was to tell all that He says to the children of Israel. Back then, God would commune at the mercy seat in the temple. Today we are the temple, and God communes with each of us personally. We see David communing with Abigail (**1 Samuel 25:39**) and Michal (1 Samuel 18:22) before he married them, and Hamor communing with Jacob in **Genesis 34**. But most of all, we see Yeshua lifting the cup of wine and telling His disciples that the cup represented His blood which was shed for us and that it was the blood to ratify the New Covenant for the remission of sins. Yeshua points to the future, the wedding, when He says in **Matthew 26:29**, "But I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in the Father's Kingdom." He speaks His communal promise to His Bride that He will wait for the day of their marriage to enjoy once again the fruit of the vine. The Seder Meal at Passover was the communion meal and Yeshua tells His Bride to remember Him every time the Seder is done in remembrance of Him. Paul asks us in **1 Corinthians 10:16** of the cup of blessing which we bless (the cup of redemption), is it not the communion of the blood of Messiah? This matzah that we break (the afikomen), is it not the communion of the body of Messiah?

I Will Provide for You

So now that we have a bride and she has said, "Yes," to her future husband, and all

have agreed to the bridal price, and the gifts have been received, then the two legally become betrothed. You can say without a doubt the two are married. Though it would take a certificate of divorce to separate the two, that is exactly what these two people will be until the formal wedding. He will go to his father's house and she will remain in her father's house. The wedding could be a year or two later depending upon how long it took the father of the groom to make all the preparations for the wedding and, of course, the couple must have a dwelling place. And if this agreement occurred when they were just children, then they would wait till the man could support his wife.

This is where we are at in time. Our Groom has gone back to live with His Father. The Father is preparing for the wedding. Every detail must be taken care of for the great marriage supper. A suitable dwelling must be prepared for the Bride and the Groom. Yeshua alludes to these in many of the Scriptures. "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you. And 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**). "But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone" (**Mark 13:32**). Yeshua told many parables about that day: **Matthew 22:1-14**, **Luke 12:35-40**, and **Matthew 25:1-13** to mention a few. Between the Spring Feasts and the Fall Feasts (the time that we are in now), we are to be preparing for our wedding day. We are to be anxiously waiting for our one true love, our husband's return, waiting for that day that He will come and snatch us away so that we can be together forever. We, too, have work to do while He is preparing for us we need to be preparing for Him.

We will be taking a closer look at this in our next newsletter. As for now, our Husband tells us that He knows our needs and He will provide for everything both now and when He comes again. He is our lawfully wedded Husband who takes good care of His Bride. **Matthew 6:25-34** says, "For this reason (you can only serve one husband), I say to you, 'Do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing?'"

Happy Passover and Resurrection of our Groom Yeshua, who has bought us with His shed blood and who is coming again to receive us unto Himself but for now has given us the Holy Spirit as His pledge!