

Introduction:

1. Only when you understand the wedding customs of the Bible can you begin to appreciate the rich imagery of our salvation in Christ and our marriage to Christ *as his virgin bride*.
2. The three "C" of bible weddings: Contract, Consummation, Celebration
 - a. These same things exist today in modern marriages, the order and timing of each stage is different.
3. Ancient Jewish weddings never involved a wedding ceremony like we see today with the bride walking down the aisle to be married in the synagogue.
 - a. The "wedding ceremony" is something that did not develop for hundreds of years after Jesus rose from the dead.
 - b. Modern Jewish weddings are as removed and different from the ancient Jewish marriage culture of the first century as Christian weddings are.
 - c. If you want to understand the many metaphors, illustrations and figures of speech used by Jesus about "the wedding feast" and the church as the "bride of Christ", you must learn the ancient culture and forget everything you know about modern marriage ceremonies.
4. There were three states of a marriage in the Bible:
 - a. Stage 1: signing the "ketubbah" contract (Creating the marriage bond)
 - i. The bride would chose her husband and her father would sign a legal contract with him called a "ketubbah".
 - ii. Once this is signed the couple is 100% married but do not have sex yet.
 - iii. Young children were often married, (arraigned marriage) but did not consummate until of age.
 - b. Stage 2: The "chuppah": sexual consummation.
 - i. Up to 7 years later, the groom is able to raise the money as set out in the ketubbah contract and notifies the father of the bride, who then sets a date to consummate the marriage at the bride's home.
 - ii. The bride waits with her maidens, for the arrival of the groom and his companions.
 - iii. The couple enters the chuppah room and consummates the marriage while the companions of the bride and groom wait and celebrate outside or in the next room.
 - iv. The groom hands the bloodied "proof of virginity cloth" to the witnesses chosen by the bride's parents, who then give it to the bride for safekeeping.
 - c. Stage 3: The wedding feast
 - i. After consummation, the entire wedding party walks to the house of the groom in a procession for a wedding feast.
 - ii. At the conclusion of the wedding feast, the couple has completed the ancient ritual of marriage.
 - d. There was no "wedding ceremony" in the synagogue in the first century, performed under a canopy where the bride and groom would hold hands and

say, "I do" before an audience of friends and family. This didn't develop for hundreds of years after Jesus died on the cross as the Passover lamb for the sins of mankind.

4. This ancient ritual is seen from the time of Abraham, right down to the first century:
 - a. Rebekah contract: "But when food was set before him to eat, he said, 'I will not eat until I have told my business.' And he said, 'Speak on.'" (Genesis 24:33)
 - b. Rebekah contract: "'Here is Rebekah before you, take her and go, and let her be the wife of your master's son, as the Lord has spoken.' When Abraham's servant heard their words, he bowed himself to the ground before the Lord. The servant brought out articles of silver and articles of gold, and garments, and gave them to Rebekah; he also gave precious things to her brother and to her mother." (Genesis 24:51–53)
 - c. Rebekah consented: "And they said, 'We will call the girl and consult her wishes.' Then they called Rebekah and said to her, 'Will you go with this man?' And she said, 'I will go.'" (Genesis 24:57–58)
 - d. Rebekah consummation: "Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she dismounted from the camel. She said to the servant, 'Who is that man walking in the field to meet us?' And the servant said, 'He is my master.' Then she took her veil and covered herself. The servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and he took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her; thus Isaac was comforted after his mother's death." (Genesis 24:64–67)
 - e. "Then Laban said to Jacob, 'Because you are my relative, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?' Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. And Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful of form and face. Now Jacob loved Rachel, so he said, 'I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel.' Laban said, 'It is better that I give her to you than to give her to another man; stay with me.' So Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her. Then Jacob said to Laban, 'Give me my wife, for my time is completed, that I may go in to her.' Laban gathered all the men of the place and made a feast. Now in the evening he took his daughter Leah, and brought her to him; and Jacob went in to her. Laban also gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid. So it came about in the morning that, behold, it was Leah! And he said to Laban, 'What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served with you? Why then have you deceived me?' But Laban said, 'It is not the practice in our place to marry off the younger before the firstborn. 'Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also for the service which you shall serve with me for another seven years.' Jacob did so and completed her week, and he gave him his daughter Rachel as his wife. Laban also gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her maid. So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and indeed he loved Rachel more than Leah, and he served with Laban for another seven years." (Genesis 29:15–30)

The three stages of Isaac's marriage to Rebekah: Gen 24		
Contract (stage 1)	Gen 24:33 Gen 24:51-53 Gen 24:57-58	An offer of marriage is proposed. The offer is accepted and Rebekah is married by contract. Gifts and money are given both to the bride and the parents of the bride. Notice that Rebekah was asked if she consented to the marriage.
Consummation (stage 2)	Gen 24:64-67	Rebekah and Isaac go to the tent
Celebration (stage 3)	-	No mention of wedding feast, but one likely happened.
The three stages of Jacob's marriage to Leah: Gen 29		
Contract (stage 1)	Gen 29:15-20	Jacob contracts to work for 7 in advance before he gets the girl.
Consummation (stage 2)	Gen 29:21-26	Jacob pays the dowry price of 7 years and takes Leah into the tent.
Celebration (stage 3)	Gen 29:27-28	He completed the 7 day wedding feast with Leah
The three stages of Jacob's marriage to Rachel: Gen 29		
Contract (stage 1)	Gen 29:27	Jacob contracts to work for 7 MORE years but gets to consummate the wedding at the before he pays the full dowry.
Consummation (stage 2)	Gen 29:30	He took Leah into the tent at the beginning of the 7 day feast, then at the end of the 7 day feast he took Rachel into the tent.
Celebration (stage 3)	Gen 29:27-28	The 7 day wedding feast was for both girls.

I. Stage one: the signing of the legal document called, the "ketubbah"

- The ketubbah (plural is ketubboth) was a legally binding document whose primary purpose was to protect the bride, even though she did not even sign it. The father of the bride would use his wisdom to look out for the best interests of his daughter.
 - The bride was seen as being completely under her father's control.
 - For example, if a man sleeps with a virgin, they generally got married, but her father had to consent.
 - "So then both he [father of the bride] who gives his own virgin daughter in marriage does well, and he who does not give her in marriage will do better." (1 Corinthians 7:38)
- The groom and the father of the bride would negotiate a legal document with conditions that clearly laid out:

- a. The "Dowry": money to be paid to the father by the groom: "Ask me ever so much bridal payment and gift, and I will give according as you say to me; but give me the girl in marriage." (Genesis 34:12)
 - b. The "Bride Price": The bride price was usually set at 50 shekels of silver and was a cash penalty for divorce without cause or taking a second wife without consent and permission of the bride and/or her father. (Polygamy was rare at the time of Christ)
 - c. The bride's Estate Inventory: An accounting of assets (cash, property, livestock, businesses etc.) the bride contributed to the new husband's estate when she married him.
3. The First stage of a Jewish marriage, (the signing of the "ketubbah") is the last stage of modern weddings (the signing of the marriage license that you buy at city hall).
 - a. Since Jewish marriages were sealed when the father of the bride and the groom signed the "ketubbah", with or without the consent or knowledge of the bride, the "dating" (get to know you stage) began after they were "married".
 - b. Just like today's legal documents, the ketubah was signed in triplicate where the father, the groom each got a copy and a third one was "filed" with the court (synagogue) with a seal to be broken only by a judge.
 - c. Many copies of ancient Ketubboth have been unearthed through archeology.
4. Confusion over Jewish Betrothal: When the groom and the father of the bride signed the ketubbah, the couple was 100% legally married.
 - a. The couple was legally married, but sexual co-habitation has not yet begun until stage two up to a year later.
 - b. This is seen in the fact that although Mary and Joseph were betrothed, they had never had sex, even though they were 100% legally married.
 - c. Although called betrothal, it was not equivalent to our modern engagement today, which is nothing more than "monogamous promise dating" with no legal consequences if broken.
5. Once signed, a legal divorce was required to dissolve the "betrothal".
6. Child brides were cultural norms in both Israeli and Arabic cultures:
 - a. Josephus tells of several instances where children were married, sometimes for political advantage:
 - i. "This Sylleus, upon some occasion coming to Herod, and supping with him, saw Salome, and set his heart upon her; and understanding that she was a widow, he discoursed with her. (222) Now because Salome was at this time less in favor with her brother, she looked upon Sylleus with some passion, and was very earnest to be married to him; and on the days following there appeared many, and those very great, indications of their agreement together. (223) Now the women carried this news to the king, and laughed at the indecency of it; whereupon Herod inquired about it further of Pheroras, and desired him to observe them at supper, how their behavior was one towards another; who told him, that by signals which came from their heads and their eyes, they both were evidently in love. (224) After this, Sylleus the Arabian being suspected,

went away, but came again in two or three months afterwards, as it were on that very design, and spake to Herod about it, and desired that Salome might be given him to wife; for that his affinity might not be disadvantageous to his affairs, by a union with Arabia, the government of which country was already in effect under his power, and more evidently would be his hereafter. (225) Accordingly, when Herod discoursed with his sister about it, and asked her whether she were disposed to this match, she immediately agreed to it; but when Sylleus was desired to come over to the Jewish religion, and then he should marry her, and that it was impossible to do it on any other terms, he could not bear that proposal, and went his way; for he said, that if he should do so, he should be stoned by the Arabs. (226) Then did Pheroras reproach Salome for her incontinency, as did the women much more; and said that Sylleus had debauched her. (227) *As for that damsel which the king had betrothed to his brother Pheroras, but he had not taken her, as I have before related, because he was enamored of his former wife, Salome desired of Herod she might be given to her son by Costobarus;* (228) which match he was very willing to, but was dissuaded from it by Pheroras, who pleaded, that this young man would not be kind to her since her father had been slain by him, and that it was more just that his son, who was to be his successor in the tetrarchy, should have her; so he begged his pardon, and persuaded him to do so. Accordingly the damsel, upon this change of her espousals, was disposed of to this young man, the son of Pheroras, the king giving for her portion a hundred talents." (Josephus, Antiquities 16.221–228)

- ii. **2.** (12) Now Herod brought up his sons' children with great care; for Alexander had two sons by Glaphyra; and Aristobulus had three sons by Bernice, Salome's daughter, and two daughters; (13) and as his friends were once with him, he presented the children before them; and deploring the hard fortune of his own sons, he prayed that no such ill fortune should befall these who were their children, but that they might improve in virtue, and obtain what they justly deserved and might make him amends for his care of their education. (14) *He also caused them to be betrothed against they should come to the proper age of marriage;* the elder of Alexander's sons to Pheroras's daughter, and Antipater's daughter to Aristobulus's eldest son. He also allotted one of Aristobulus's daughters to Antipater's son, and Aristobulus's other daughter to Herod, a son of his own, who was born to him by the high priest's daughter; for it is the ancient practice among us to have many wives at the same time. (15) Now, the king made those espousals for the children, out of commiseration of them now they were fatherless, as endeavoring to render Antipater kind to them by these intermarriages. (16) But Antipater did not fail to bear the same temper of mind to his brother's children which he had borne to his brothers themselves; and his father's concern

about them provoked his indignation against them upon his supposal, that they would become greater than ever his brothers had been: while Archelaus, a king, would support his daughter's sons, and Pheroras, a tetrarch, would accept of one of the daughters as a wife to his son. (17) What provoked him also was this, that all the multitude would so commiserate these fatherless children, and so hate him [for making them fatherless], that all would come out, since they were no strangers to his vile disposition towards his brethren. He contrived, therefore, to overturn his father's settlements, as thinking it a terrible thing that they should be so related to him and be so powerful withal. (18) So Herod yielded to him, and changed his resolution at his entreaty; and the determination now was, that Antipater himself should marry Aristobulus's daughter, and Antipater's son should marry Pheroras's daughter. So the espousals for the marriages were changed after this manner, even without the king's real approbation. (Josephus, Antiquities 17.12-18)

- iii. **2.** (556) Accordingly, Herod got together his kindred and friends, and **set before them the children**, and with his eyes full of tears, said thus to them: "It was an unlucky fate that took away from me these children's fathers, which children are recommended to me by that natural commiseration which their orphan condition requires; however, I will endeavor, though I have been a most unfortunate father, to appear a better grandfather, and to leave these children such curators after myself as are dearest to me. (557) **I therefore betroth thy daughter, Pheroras to the eldest of these brethren, the children of Alexander, that thou mayest be obliged to take care of them. I also betroth to thy son, Antipater, the daughter of Aristobulus; be thou therefore a father to that orphan; and my son Herod [Philip] shall have her sister, whose grandfather, by the mother's side, was high priest.** (558) And let every one that loves me be of my sentiments in these dispositions, whom none that hath an affection for me will abrogate. **And I pray God that he will join these children together in marriage, to the advantage of my kingdom, and of my posterity;** and may he look down with eyes more serene upon them than he looked upon their fathers!"
- iv. **3.** (559) While he spake these words, **he wept, and joined the children's right hands together: after which he embraced them every one after an affectionate manner, and dismissed the assembly.** Upon this Antipater was in great disorder immediately, and lamented publicly at what was done; for he supposed that this dignity, which was conferred on these orphans, was for his own destruction, even in his father's lifetime, and that he should run another risk of losing the government if Alexander's sons should have both Archelaus [a king], and Pheroras a tetrarch, to support him. (560) He also considered how he was himself hated by the nation, and how they pitied these orphans; how great affection the Jews bare to those brethren of his when they were alive, and how gladly they

remembered them, now they had perished by his means. **So he resolved by all the ways possible to get these espousals dissolved.** (Josephus, Wars 1.555–560)

- b. Muhammad, the inventor of Islam, married Ayesha or Aisha at age 6 but waited 3 years to consummate the marriage when she was nine years old. (recorded in several Hadiths)
- c. Today in Saudi Arabia, the home country of Islam, child brides as young as one year old are permitted as long as the girl is not consummated until she is older. Notice the language of "marriage contract" is exactly what we see in the Bible.
- d. News report that speaks of **stage 1 Contract** with a delay for **stage 2 Consummation**: "Saudi Marriage Official Says 1-Year-Old Brides OK: Call it marriage, Islamic style. Saudi marriage officiant Dr. Ahmad al-Mu'bi told Lebanese television viewers last week that it's permissible for girls as young as 1 to marry — as long as sex is postponed. Al-Mu'bi's remarkable comments also included an explanation that "there is no minimal age for entering marriage." "You can have a marriage contract even with a 1-year-old girl, not to mention a girl of 9, 7 or 8," he said. "But is the girl ready for sex or not?" What is the appropriate age for sex for the first time? This varies according to environment and tradition," al-Mu'bi said in an interview with LBC-TV." (Fox News, Wednesday, June 25, 2008)

II. Stage two: "chuppah" (sexual consummation): Matt 25:1-13

- 1. When the father consented to the groom, he was allowed to come to the home of the bride and consummate the marriage in her own house. Afterwards, he would lead her in a ceremonial procession to a wedding feast at his house. (Stage 3) The parable of the ten virgins (Mt 25:1f) illustrates both stage 2 and stage 3 of the marriage.
- 2. Once the ketubah was signed, the couple did not have sex until the groom fulfilled his financial obligations to the father of the bride.
 - a. A delay might last years, as in the case of Jacob, who had to work 7 years for Laban, before he could sleep with his wife Rachel. The night Laban tricked Jacob at the end of 7 years by giving him Leah instead of Rachel. Jacob had already made a legal contract with Laban for Rachel and was married to her for 7 years, but not permitted to have sex with her. When he was tricked, he made a second legal contract that at the end of the wedding week, he would be allowed to have sex with Rachel, but would have to work another 7 years afterwards.

- b. "Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife, for my time is completed, that I may go in to her." Laban gathered all the men of the place and made a feast. Now in the evening he took his daughter Leah, and brought her to him; and Jacob went in to her. Laban also gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid. So it came about in the morning that, behold, it was Leah! And he said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served with you? Why then have you deceived me?" But Laban said, "It is not the practice in our place to marry off the younger before the firstborn. "Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also for the service which you shall serve with me for another seven years." Jacob did so and completed her week, and he gave him his daughter Rachel as his wife. Laban also gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her maid. So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and indeed he loved Rachel more than Leah, and he served with Laban for another seven years." (Genesis 29:21–30)
- c. Sometimes the delay between the signing of the ketubah and consummation was because arranged marriages were signed when the bride was a child and the groom had to wait until she reached puberty.
- d. Josephus records that Herod the Great married Mariamne, the daughter of Alexander, but then waited 4 years before consummating. Here is a time of 4 years between stages one and two in Israel at the time of Christ.
 - i. "(240) When Herod had fought against these in the avenues of Judea, he was conqueror in the battle, and drove away Antigonus, and returned to Jerusalem, beloved by everybody for the glorious action he had done; for those who did not before favor him, did join themselves to him now, because of his marriage into the family of Hyrcanus; (241) for as he had formerly married a wife out of his own country of no ignoble blood, who was called Doris, of whom he begat Antipater, **so did he now marry Mariamne, the daughter of Alexander the son of Aristobulus, and the granddaughter of Hyrcanus, and was become thereby a relation of the king.** Wars of the Jews 1.240-241
 - ii. "(325) But Messala contradicted them, on behalf of the young men, and all this in the presence of Hyrcanus, who was Herod's father-in-law already. (Antiquities 14.325) [footnote: We may here take notice that espousals alone were of old esteemed a sufficient foundation for affinity, Hyrcanus being here called *father-in-law* to Herod, **because his granddaughter Mariamne was betrothed to him, although the marriage was not completed till four years afterwards.** See Matt. 1:16. footnote at Antiquities 14.325, The works of Josephus: Complete and unabridged, Josephus, F., & Whiston, W., 1987 AD]
 - iii. "(465) When the rigor of winter was over, Herod removed his army, and came near to Jerusalem, and pitched his camp hard by the city. Now **this was the third year since he had been made king at Rome;** (466) and as he removed his camp, and came near that part of the wall where it could be most easily assaulted, he pitched that camp before the temple,

intending to make his attacks in the same manner as did Pompey. So he encompassed the place with three bulwarks, and erected towers, and employed a great many hands about the work, and cut down the trees that were round about the city; (467) and when he had appointed proper persons to oversee the works, even while the army lay before the city, **he himself went to Samaria, to complete his marriage, and to take to wife the daughter of Alexander, the son of Aristobulus; for he had betrothed her already, as I have before related.** **Chapter 16** How Herod, When He Had Married Mariamne, Took Jerusalem with the Assistance of Sossius, by Force; And How the Government of the Asamoneans Was Put an End to **1.** (468) After the wedding was over, came Sossius through Phoenicia, having sent out his army before him over the midland parts. He also, who was their commander, came himself, with a great number of horsemen and footmen. The king also came himself from Samaria, and brought with him no small army, besides that which was there before, for they were about thirty thousand; (469) and they all met together at the walls of Jerusalem, and encamped at the north wall of the city, being now an army of eleven legions, armed men on foot, and six thousand horsemen, with other auxiliaries out of Syria." (Josephus, Antiquities 14.465–469)

2. A modern Chuppah has many meanings that all have their origin in ancient Jewish wedding custom of the virginity cloth.



- a. The Chuppah has undergone a gradual evolution of meaning. It began as the "virginity cloth" that lay under the bride when she consummated the marriage. Then the cloth change its position from under the bride on the bed, to over the bride on the bed as a canopy. Then it came to symbolize the room metaphorically and finally the sheet was moved from over the couple's bed in a private bedroom, out in public as a four posted canopy over the bridal couple at the modern wedding ceremony. So the sheet began under the bride, then over the bride in private, then over the bridal couple in public.
- b. Originally, the chuppah may have been the "proof of virginity" bedsheet that the couple placed under the bride when they first copulate.
- c. The chuppah is a four posted canopy under which the couple are married in modern Jewish synagogues.

- d. The chuppah, was the "Bridal Suite" where the couple first have sex, similar to the special rooms hotels provide couples on their wedding night.
 - e. The chuppah is a literal canopy sheet over the four bed posts of the bed on which the marriage is consummated
 - f. The chuppah is also known as a Huppah, baldachin or baldaquin.
4. The event of consummation was as complex as it was important:
- a. When the groom satisfied the father of the bride that he had fulfill the financial and legal requirements of the ketubah, he would set a date for the chuppah and notify the bride.
 - b. The chuppah (wedding room with the bed) would be prepared for the couple.
 - c. The bride and the groom might have up to ten friends who would act as witnesses to the event.
 - d. The mother of the bride and/or the bride herself, would sew the name of the couple and possibly the date of the chuppah onto a cloth about 2 feet square. This was called the "proof of virginity cloth" that the bride would bleed onto, as she lay on top of it during copulation.
 - e. Both the groom's parents and the parents of the bride would assign several formal witnesses to the event and would wait outside or in an adjoining room while the couple consummated the marriage in the wedding bed. "He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands [outside the chuppah room] and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. So this joy of mine has been made full." (John 3:29)
 - f. The groom would hand the "proof of virginity cloth" cloth to the witnesses in the room outside and the cloth would be witnessed and kept by the father of the bride as proof of her virginity.
5. The parable of the ten virgins illustrates the tradition of the chuppah:
- a. The brides "ten virgins" served as witnesses and would walk with the bride in a ceremony to the wedding feast in the house of the groom.
 - b. As the bride was waiting for the groom to arrive in the chuppah and join her on the consummation bed, the ten fell asleep due to the unexpected delay of the groom.
 - c. Once the groom arrived, the ten male witnesses of the groom would announce his arrival with a shofar and calls from his own voice to the bride and her maidens.



- d. At this point, they trimmed their lamps, which had been burning, and the wise virgins had extra oil needed because of the delay.

- e. As the groom takes the bride to the chuppah room, a celebration party begins in the outside room and the 5 foolish virgins run to buy extra oil.
- f. The proof of virginity cloth is handed to the witnesses and the bride's parents for safekeeping and the entire wedding party make their way to the groom's house and the door is closed when the last person in the procession enters.
- g. The 5 foolish virgins arrive and knock on the closed door and are told "I never knew you" and are forbidden to enter the wedding feast.
- h. "Jesus says that this kingdom will be like ten girls with torches who were going out to meet the bridegroom. This makes clear that Jesus is speaking of a wedding. Not much is known of the actual wedding ceremony in first-century Palestine. It was preceded by a betrothal that was much more binding than is an engagement in modern societies. It was really the first stage of marriage, and it took divorce proceedings to dissolve it. At the end of the betrothal period the marriage took place, on a Wednesday if the bride was a virgin and on a Thursday if she was a widow. The bridegroom and his party made their way to the home of the bride, or to some other place; there is a record of a wedding in which two parties, one of the bridegroom and his friends and the other of the bride and her people, went out to meet each other at an unspecified place (1 Macc. 9:37–39). When the two groups came together the wedding took place. After this there was a procession, generally to the home of the bridegroom, where feasting took place that might go on for days. The processions often took place at night, when torches made for a spectacular display. Clearly this is presupposed in Jesus' parable. The ten girls were involved in going out to meet the bridegroom, which makes it appear that they belonged to the bride's party. They would then have had their place in the procession to the bridegroom's home for the feast." (Pillar New Testament Commentary, Mt 25:1)
- i. "But after these things they brought word to Jonathan and Simon his brother, that the children of Ambri were making a great marriage, and were bringing the bride from Nadabath with a great train, a daughter of one of the great nobles of Canaan. And they remembered John their brother, and went up, and hid themselves under the covert of the mountain; and they lifted up their eyes, and saw, and behold, a great ado and much baggage; and the bridegroom came forth, and his friends and his brethren to meet them (i.e. those forming the bridal procession) with timbrels, and minstrels, and many weapons." (1 Maccabees 9:37–39)

III. The proof of virginity cloth:

Would you pass the "test of virginity" on your wedding night or be stoned in the morning?

Hey Brides! Imagine having the best man and nine of his friends and your maid of honour and 9 of your best friends, sitting in the hall of your hotel room on your wedding night, waiting to hear your new husband yell for joy when he discovers you are a virgin! After consummation, he takes the bloodied bed sheet and gives it to the witnesses chosen by the father of the bride. This bed sheet is kept in a secure area to be used as proof if your new husband ever accuses you of not being a virgin on your wedding night. Creepy? Today's young women have no idea how highly

past cultures and God values virginity! If she did not bleed, the groom could report this to the father of the bride and she would be stoned to death. Next time you are in the back seat of a 54 Chevy at the drive in theatre, think twice before you lift your skirt! It may cost you your life!

1. In North America 75% of unmarried people under 20 have had sex (fornication), and 1 in 4 of these will get an STD (venereal disease).
 - a. In Israel, 99% of girls were virgins.
 - b. Tamar never married because of her rape, but lived in Absalom's house because she was not a virgin.
2. The bride price was usually set at 50 shekels of silver, making a false claim about your wife's virginity was a 100 shekel fine.
3. If the wife got pregnant before the chuppah (formal stage two consummation ceremony) it was no big deal and the child was not considered a bastard. However, this left the bride vulnerable to future accusations of not being a virgin, since she would have no "virginity cloth". (This is the case of Mary, when she told Joseph she was pregnant.)
4. "Proof of virginity. A blood-stained cloth or chemise was exhibited as a proof of the bride's virginity (Dt. 22:13–21). This custom continues in some places in the Near East. (New Bible Dictionary, Marriage)
5. The Biblical law of proof of virginity cloth:
 - a. "If any man takes a wife and goes in to her and then turns against her, and charges her with shameful deeds and **publicly defames her**, and says, 'I took this woman, but **when I came near her, I did not find her a virgin**,' then the girl's father and her mother shall take and bring out the evidence of the girl's virginity to the elders of the city at the gate. "The girl's father shall say to the elders, 'I gave my daughter to this man for a wife, but he turned against her; and behold, he has charged her with shameful deeds, saying, "I did not find your daughter a virgin." But this is the evidence of my daughter's virginity.' And they shall spread the garment before the elders of the city. "So the elders of that city shall take the man and chastise him, and they shall fine him a hundred shekels of silver and give it to the girl's father, because he publicly defamed a virgin of Israel. And she shall remain his wife; he cannot divorce her all his days. "But if this charge is true, that the girl was not found a virgin, then they shall bring out the girl to the doorway of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death because she has committed an act of folly in Israel by playing the harlot in her father's house; thus you shall purge the evil from among you." (Deuteronomy 22:13–21)
 - b. **This passage is quoted in the Dead Sea Scrolls which adds the comment about the "virginity cloth":** "When a man takes a wife, has sexual intercourse with her and takes a dislike to her, and brings a baseless charge against her, ruining her reputation, and says, 'I have taken this woman, approached her, and did not find the proof of virginity in her', the father or the mother of the girl shall take the girl's proof of virginity and bring it to the elders at the gate. The girl's father shall say to the elders, 'I gave my daughter to be this man's wife; he has taken a dislike to her and has brought a baseless charge against her saying, "I have not found the proof of virginity in your daughter." Here is the proof of my daughter's virginity.' **They shall spread out the garment before the elders of that city.** The elders of that city shall take that man and chastise him. They shall fine him one hundred pieces of silver which they shall give to the father of the girl, because he (the husband) has tried to ruin the reputation of an Israelite virgin." (Dead Sea Scrolls: The Temple Scroll, 11QT = 11Q19)

- c. "These two paragraphs deal with a man who, following his wedding, spreads the charge that he found his wife not to have been a virgin. He probably does so in order to get out of the marriage—should he simply divorce her without cause, he would probably forfeit the bride-price—or perhaps to get the bride-price reduced to that of a nonvirgin (on the bride-price, see Comment to 20:7). ***The bride's parents produce physical evidence of her virginity, namely, a sheet or garment that was spotted with blood when the marriage was consummated.*** Upon this evidence the slandering husband is flogged, fined, and prohibited from ever divorcing the bride." (The JPS Torah Commentary, Accusations of Premarital Unchastity Deuteronomy 22:13-21, 1996 AD)
 - d. "At the time of the second temple, a virgin bride was considered to be worth 50 shekels, and a widow or divorced woman about half that sum. During this period, a virgin bride was normally married in midweek so that, if her husband found her not to be a virgin, he could bring proof to the court the following day, which would still be in advance of the Sabbath. ... Symbolic ceremonies may sometimes have been included as part of the betrothal or wedding ceremonies, such as Ruth's request that Boaz spread his skirt over her to indicate that he was taking her to wife (Ru 3:9). Another ritual may have been the ceremonial removal of the bride's girdle by the groom in the nuptial chamber, which was a room or tent specially prepared for the newly married couple. The marriage was normally consummated on the first night (Gn 29:23; Tb 8:1), and ***the stained linen would be retained as evidence of the bride's virginity.***" (Tyndale Bible dictionary, Marriage customs)
6. "He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. So this joy of mine has been made full." (John 3:29)
- a. "To clarify for his disciples what he meant, therefore, the Baptizer used a typical Jewish type of parable, drawn from Jewish marriage customs. At that time ***the bridegroom normally selected one or two close friends to escort the bride to the bridegroom's marriage chamber and to wait outside the room or tent for the bridegroom's shout and often for receipt of tokens that the marriage had been consummated with his virgin bride.*** Such friends of the bridegroom were thus able to certify to the wedding guests that the consummation of the marriage had taken place and the joyous festivities could continue (cf. 3:29). John gladly accepted his role as a friend of the bridegroom. Just as he had earlier willingly turned over his disciples to Jesus in a self-giving act (1:35–37), here he expressed his genuine joy that Jesus was being accepted by the people. This brief parable, therefore, serves as a powerful illustration." (New American Commentary, John 3:29)

IV. Stage three: the wedding feast: John 2:1-11

"On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; and both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding." (John 2:1–2)

- 1. The wedding feast happened in the home of the groom or in a family member of the groom, like the parents of the groom as seen in the parable of the wedding feast.
- 2. Matthew 22:1-14 has a king throwing a feast for his son:
 - a. "Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. "And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come. "Again he sent out other slaves saying, 'Tell those who have been invited, "Behold, I have prepared my

dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are all butchered and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast.” ‘ ‘ “But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business, and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them. “But the king was enraged, and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire. “Then he said to his slaves, ‘The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. ‘Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find there, invite to the wedding feast.’ “Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered together all they found, both evil and good; and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests. “But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed in wedding clothes, and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?’ And the man was speechless. “Then the king said to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ “For many are called, but few are chosen.”” (Matthew 22:1–14)

3. Jn 2:1-11 illustrates a wedding feast in Cana:
 - a. “On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, “Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.” So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.” Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.” (John 2:1–11)

V. Mary and Joseph: “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed [ketubah] to Joseph, **before they came together** she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. And **Joseph her husband**, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to divorce her away secretly.” (Matthew 1:18–19)

1. **See also:** The [true Bible story of the birth of Jesus](#): separating myth from fact about Christmas.
2. Joseph and the father of Mary had signed a ketubah and were 100 % married:
 - a. The Holy Spirit calls Joseph "her husband" before they had "come together" (she was a virgin)
 - b. Joseph was going to divorce her.

3. Mary was in a vulnerable position at the mercy of her husband: She was pregnant before the chuppah (formal stage two consummation ceremony) and had no "virginity cloth".
 - a. "Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:34–35)
4. Joseph was a "righteous man":
 - a. He did not want to disgrace her even though he believed she was an adulterer.
 - b. He was going to divorce her secretly by merely handing her the "get" (divorce paper) without making an accusation of adultery.
 - c. This meant that Joseph was required to return the inventory of assets the bride had brought into the marriage and pay the "bride price" to her father.
 - d. He was righteous because he had grounds to accuse her, "get even with her" as is the motive in many divorces, keep her inventory of assets and not have to pay the 50 shekel bride price.
 - e. Joseph had everything to gain by openly accusing her and it cost him much to divorce her secretly.
 - f. How many divorcing spouses would give up a solid, winnable legal position in court and adopt the losing position, merely to protect the reputation of their spouse at great personal financial disaster?

Joseph had two choices:

Choice	Whose reputation was harmed?	Who got the bride's dowry	Joseph pays 50 shekel fine?
Choice 1: divorce Mary for cause	Mary's reputation harmed	Joseph kept the dowry for himself	Joseph doesn't have to pay.
Choice 2: divorce Mary for no cause secretly	Joseph's reputation harmed	Joseph gave the dowry back to Mary	Joseph must pay 50 shekels.

Would you make the same choice Joseph did?

VI. The Song of Solomon:

Bride to the Groom:

My companions [like the ten virgins of Mt 25) are listening for your voice— Let me hear it!" **Sos 8:12-14**



"My [Shulammite woman] very own vineyard [body] is at my disposal; The thousand shekels [money] are for you, Solomon, And two hundred are for those who take care of its fruit." [she chooses the shepherd boy and he signs a ketubbah with her father] "O you [she says to the shepherd boy] who sit in the gardens, My companions [like the ten virgins of Mt 15] are listening for your voice— Let me hear it!" "Hurry, my beloved, And be like a gazelle or a young stag On the mountains of spices." (Song of Solomon 8:12–14)

1. In the Song of Solomon, the beautiful Shulammite woman ponders if she should marry Solomon for money and fame or the shepherd boy she grew up with for true love. In the end she chooses the shepherd boy.
2. Notice that she, not her father, made the choice of who she was going to marry. In fact the Shulammite's parents are never actively present in the story.
 - a. This illustrates that a good father will take his daughters advice and feelings into account when making a decision, just like a good husband will take his wife's advice and feelings into account before making a decision.
 - b. It seems her father allowed his daughter the freedom to choose her husband and then sign the ketubbah with the man of her choice.
 - c. The consent of the bride is also seen in Rebekah: Rebekah consented: "And they said, "We will call the girl and consult her wishes." Then they called Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" And she said, "I will go." (Genesis 24:57–58)
3. The figure of the bride waiting with her companions for voice of the groom when he arrives at her house to consummate the marriage (stage 2) is exactly parallel to the parable of the ten virgins of Mt 25:1

VII. Ancient Jewish divorce from Moses to Christ:

1. When the husband divorced his wife for any reason, he gave her a legal document called a "Get".
 - a. If she was guilty of adultery, he kept her inventory of assets she brought in the marriage and did not have to pay the "Bride Price" to her father.
 - b. If the husband divorced his wife for no reason or "cause", or took a second wife without permission, he must return the bride's entire inventory of assets to her and pay the set "Bride Price" cash to the father of the bride.
4. The "Bride Price" was a large sum of money defined in the Ketubbah that the groom had to pay the father of the bride if:
 - a. He divorced her for no cause.
 - b. He was guilty of adultery.
 - c. He takes on a second wife.
5. The husband was not permitted to give his wife the "Get" until he had satisfied all the requirements of the Ketubbah by returning the bride's inventory of assets she brought into the marriage and paid the "Bride Price" to her father.

VIII. The church is the virgin bride of Christ: Our three stage marriage to Christ!

1. The imagery of all these ancient marriage customs is the foundation of our salvation in Christ. Only when you understand the wedding customs of the Bible can you begin to appreciate the rich imagery of our salvation in Christ and our marriage to Christ *as his virgin bride*.

2. Christ supplies His saving blood as a substitute for our own virgin blood that we lack (because we were spiritual harlots) on our wedding night. Before we were saved, we were worthless "harlots" who had lost our virginity. A woman found not to be a virgin on her wedding night was put to death. The blood of Christ makes us into spiritual virgins on our consummation night (second coming) and keeps us from being stoned. Christ allows us to experience a kind of "virginity recaptured" through his blood.
3. There are three stages to our marriage to Christ, exactly like a real marriage.
4. **STAGE 1:** The legal contract of when we became Christians by faith, repentance, confession and baptism by immersion into the Body of Christ. At this moment of water baptism, we are born again and married (betrothed) to Christ. This contract binds each to what they agreed to do: Christians must be obedient to Christ and he will save us!
 - a. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners [spiritual harlots who have lost their virginity], Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood [stage 1: initial salvation], we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." (Romans 5:8–10)
 - b. "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless." (Ephesians 5:25–27)
5. **STAGE 2:** The consummation is the second coming when we, the bride wait to hear the shout of Jesus and his companions. At this time, the faithful will be found to be "pure virgins"
 - a. "For I (Paul) am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed [stage 1: married when born again] you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin [stage 2: second coming]." (2 Corinthians 11:2)
 - b. "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment." (John 5:28–29)
6. **STAGE 3:** The Wedding feast
 - a. ""Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said to me, "These are true words of God."" (Revelation 19:7–9)

Conclusion:

The three C's Marriage in the Bible:		
	Bible Marriage	Church is the bride of Christ

	culture	
Contract (Stage 1)	Genesis 34:12 bride price and dowry gift 1 Cor 7:38 the father controlled the marriage of the daughter, even though she would tell him who she wanted to marry. Rebekah: Gen 24:33; 51-53; 57-58 Leah: Gen 29:15-19 Rachel: Gen 29:27	Initial salvation We come into contract and covenant with Christ when are saved. Mk 16:16 believe and be baptized to be saved Romans 5:8-10 While we were worthless sinners the blood of Christ made us pure virgins. Ephesians 5:25–27 Christ offered a dowry for the bride in that He died for her and shed his blood.
Consummation (stage 2)	Mt 25:1- parable of ten virgins John 3:29 voice of bridegroom outside consummation bedroom Rebekah: Gen 24:64-67 Leah: Gen 29:21-26 Rachel: Gen 29:30	Second Coming Jesus returns for his virgin bride after preparing a place for us to live together in heaven. 2 Corinthians 11:2 the virgin blood we lack is supplied by the blood of Christ. Our proof of virginity is the blood of Christ. John 3:29 Joyful voice of Christ at second coming John 5:28-29 voice of Jesus
Celebration (Stage 3)	John 2:1-11 Wedding feast at Cana Mt 22:1-14 Parable of the wedding feast Leah and Rachel: Gen 29:27-28	Heaven Revelation 19:7-9 wedding feast in heaven

1. What we see in the Bible is the Jewish custom of ARRANGED MARRIAGES. Today, we combine all three customs into one day:
 - a. Contract is the signing of the marriage license
 - b. Wedding feast is the reception
 - c. Consummation happens in the bridal suite that night in the hotel.

Bible marriage vs. modern marriage		
	Bible Marriage	Modern Marriage
Women choses groom	She goes to her father and asks him to arrange the marriage. Notice Rebekah accepted bracelets and a nose ring, give consent to marriage. The Shulammite in SOS chose	No marriage unless the woman says yes and accepts a ring. <i>Weeks or years later the groom prepares for the bride</i>

	her husband.	
Contract (Stage 1)	Groom or agent of groom signs a contract with the father of the bride	The bride and groom sign the marriage license at the wedding ceremony.
Consummation (stage 2)	Weeks or years later when the groom has met the conditions of the contract the father of the bride consents to consummation	Happens in the honeymoon suite of the hotel after reception
Celebration (Stage 3)	Days or weeks	Reception after signing of marriage contract at ceremony.

2. There was no "wedding ceremony" in the synagogue in the first century, performed under a canopy where the bride and groom would hold hands and say, "I do" before an audience of friends and family. This didn't develop for hundreds of years after Jesus died on the cross as the Passover lamb for the sins of mankind.
3. Marriages in the Bible had three steps:
 - a. Legal marriage by signing a written contract (ketubbah) between the father of the bride and the groom. (Once signed, the couple were as married as they will ever be even if they never complete the next two stages. It required a formal legal divorce called a "get" to loose both parties from the marriage bond.)
 - b. Optional step 2: Consummation of the marriage (chuppah) at the bride's home with a "virginity cloth" up to 7 years or more after the contract was signed.
 - c. Optional step 3: Wedding feast at the groom's home.
4. Christians are the church, the virgin bride of Christ. Christ used his blood to make pure virgins (Christians) out of spiritual harlots (non-Christians).
5. No matter how sinful we have been in the past, Christ has chosen us, cleansed us and married us by ketubbah contract:
 - a. There are conditions we must meet in order fulfill the ketubbah legal contract we signed when we became Christians through faith and water Baptism (Mk 16:16; Acts 2:38; Act 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21)
 - b. We must remain faithful until death in obedience to Christ!
5. How incredibly beautiful are Paul's words to the notoriously immoral Corinthian church. The city of Corinth had such a bad reputation of NOT being a virgin, that when a young girl started to sleep around with men and live a wild life of immoral drunkenness, they would say, "She has Corinthized". There was likely a very high percentage of the Christian women at who attended weekly with the church at Corinth, were not virgins on their wedding day yet Paul calls them "pure virgins":
 - a. "For I (Paul) am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a **pure virgin**." (2 Corinthians 11:2)
 - b. "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither **fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals**, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. **Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you**

were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God." (1 Corinthians 6:9–11)

6. The blessings of Salvation are unspeakable in that all our sins are washed away and we now stand before Christ as spiritual virgins, waiting the day he arrives to take us as his wife forever!
7. Just as the Shulammite and Rebekah consented to the arranged marriages, so too Christians much chose Jesus as their groom.
 - a. Shulammite chose, not her parents: Song of Solomon 8:12–14)
 - b. Rebekah consented: "And they said, "We will call the girl and consult her wishes." Then they called Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" And she said, "I will go."" (Genesis 24:57–58)
8. The three "C" of bible weddings:
 - a. **C**ontract
 - b. **C**onsummation
 - c. **C**elebration

Jewish marriage law consists not only of *ishut*, the determination of prohibited and permitted partners, but of *kiddushin*, the legal process of establishing the marriage bond. The Bible has no single word for marriage, as it has none for religion. But the codes define it by these two categories: *ishut* and *kiddushin*, persons and process.

Maimonides begins his code on marriage with the Torah's unconditional requirement that a man and a woman may live together only with the formal sanction of *kiddushin*.

Before the revelation (at Sinai), a man would meet a woman on the street and if both desired marriage, he would bring her into his home and have intercourse privately [without the testimony of witnesses] and she would become his wife. When the Torah was given, the Jews were instructed that in order to marry a woman, the man should "acquire her" in the presence of witnesses and then she would become his wife. As the Torah says, "when a man takes a woman and has intercourse with her." This taking is a positive commandment and is performed in one of three ways—with money, by contract, or by cohabitation... and it is everywhere called *kiddushin* or *erusin*. And a woman who is "acquired" in one of these three ways is called *mc'kudeshet* or *arusah* [a betrothed woman]. And as soon as she is "acquired" and becomes betrothed, even though she has not cohabited and did not even enter the groom's home, she is a married woman. Anyone, other than her husband, who cohabits with her, is guilty of capital punishment. If he wishes to separate from her, he requires a divorce.

Maimonides tells us that a Jewish marriage consists of two stages. The first is betrothal, *kiddushin*. The second is the nuptials, *chuppah*.

Kiddushin (a rabbinic term) is accomplished by *kichah* (a biblical term), the "taking" of a woman by a man, in one of three ways (in ages past):

1. Money (*kessef*). The man gives the woman money, even a low denomination coin, or the equivalent of money—today a ring is customary—before two witnesses and says, "You are

hereby betrothed unto me with this ring in accordance with the laws of Moses and Israel." The bride, by her acceptance, indicates her willingness to be married to the groom.

2. Contract (*she'tar*). The man gives the woman a deed, before two witnesses, which contains the names of the couple and the groom's marriage formula. This deed is not in the nature of evidence of the marriage, but is for the purpose of effecting the bond of marriage. It is not to be confused with the *ketubah*, which is given as protection of the woman after the *kiddushin*.

3. Intercourse (*bi'ah*). After the man has addressed the marriage formula to the woman before two witnesses, the couple retires to a private place with the intent of effecting the betrothal through intercourse. The Sages considered this to be gross, virtually an act of prostitution, and in the third century Rav decreed flogging for those who chose this manner of betrothal. Nonetheless, if the marriage was performed in this way it was legally valid.

Only *kesef* is performed today; both intercourse and contract as forms of betrothal are obsolete.

Kichah ("taking," the formal acquisition) approximates the economic term *kinyan* and seals the marriage. Because this is the first stage in the process of creating a covenant of partnership, unions that are prohibited and void, such as incest, are never referred to in the Torah by the term *kichah*, but as *she'khivah* (sleeping together). In regard to almost all valid marriages, even those that are prohibited, the Torah makes specific reference to *kichah*.

This first stage of marriage is not a preliminary agreement to contract a marriage at a future date (like the western concept of engagement), but an integral component of the two-step marriage process. The betrothal portion is a sort of inchoate marriage; from that point onward, the couple is considered married. Until the second step is taken, however, the bride may not cohabit with the groom (or any other man). In this social suspension that marks the difficult transition from the single life to the married state, the couple is together yet apart. Until the twelfth century, this first stage of marriage lasted up to one year in order to make preparations for the final step. The second stage of the marriage process is the consummation. It is alternatively termed *nissuin*, meaning elevation of status, from *nassa*, coming by carriage from the father's home to the groom's; or *chuppah*, wedding canopy.

The Bible begins to use the term *kichah* as a preliminary to marital intercourse only after the Torah is received at Sinai. From this time forward, all Jewish marriages must have both components in order to be valid. The Rabbis, in order to make this perfectly clear to the couple, framed the betrothal blessing to read: "...who has forbidden us the betrothed [*arusot*], and permitted us those who are married to us by *chuppah* and *kiddushin*."

By the twelfth century in Germany and France, the two elements were no longer separate but were fused into one ceremony and that is how marriage is performed to this day. The wedding ceremony begins with the betrothal, which consists of the blessings; the *kinyan* (the formal acquisition by means of the giving of the ring); and the recitation of the marriage formula. This is followed by a reading of the *ketubah* (the marriage contract). The marriage is finalized by the *chuppah* ceremony, which consists of the seven blessings, and *yichud*, when the bride and groom are brought together in a private room to symbolize the consummation of the marriage.

The reasons for combining the two ceremonies offer interesting insights into the moral concern of the Rabbis, the history of the period, and the economic plight of the Jews of the Middle Ages. *Rashi*, the classic commentator, offers the simple explanation that the costs were too burdensome. The families would be shamed if they could not afford a sumptuous all-day banquet in honor of the betrothal, and still another banquet in celebration of the nuptials. Putting the ceremonies together eliminated the need for two banquets. This also helps to explain the ancient custom of holding the betrothal on Friday afternoon. The Shabbat dinner of Friday night doubled as the betrothal celebration, and the nuptials were held on Saturday night after sundown.

Conditions for medieval Jews were unstable and hazardous. During the year between the betrothal and the nuptials, families might be compelled to flee to distant shores. That would leave the betrothed woman an *agunah*, (literally, a chained woman) married yet not married, and unable to live with her fiancé and not permitted to marry anyone else without a divorce, which, considering the distance and lack of communications, was often quite difficult to arrange. Holding the two ceremonies in quick succession offered a practical solution to this distressing situation.

Morally, the fusion of the two ceremonies accomplished the removal of temptation from the betrothed couple, who were not permitted to cohabit during the year of betrothal. Indeed, we have seen that the betrothal blessing in Talmudic days is worded precisely to prevent that eventuality. In the era when the idea of romantic love spread wildly throughout Europe, the temptations must have been great to relinquish the ideal of chastity in the expectation of the forthcoming marriage. This problem was not confined to the romantic era. In the third century, preventing these intimacies became a widespread problem in Judea, where poor grooms were housed by wealthier in-laws in the home of the prospective bride. The law took recognition of this problem when it refused to allow the complaint from a groom on the day after the *chuppah* that the bride deceived him because she was not a virgin. Because he and the bride lived in the same house, the groom could not be presumed innocent; in fact, it raised the possibility that it was he who deflowered the bride. In the very first chapter of the Talmudic tractate of *Ketubbot* we read: "If in Judea a man boarded with his father-in-law but had no witnesses, he can not institute virginity proceedings against her, because he had already been alone with her."

THE ANCIENT JEWISH WEDDING CEREMONY

How does it picture Messiah Yahushua and His Bride?

John 14:2-3: "In My Father's house are many rooms. I go to prepare a place for you. And, if I go to prepare and place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there you may be also".

Matthew 24:36, 44: "But of the day and hour knows no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only". "Therefore, be also ready: for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of man comes".

Matthew 25:10-13: "...the Bridegroom came: and they that were ready went in with Him to the marriage and the door was shut".

Revelation 7:7-8: "Let us be glad and rejoice and give honor to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come and his wife has made herself ready. And to her was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints".

John 3:29, John the baptiser, referring to himself as the "friend of the Bridegroom" and to Yahushua, the Bridegroom: "He that has the Bride is the Bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatest because of the Bridegroom's voice. This, my joy, therefore is fulfilled".

Psalms 45:6-17 "Upon Your Right Hand (*Yahushua*) did stand the Queen, in gold of Ophir."

Matthew 22:8-14: This is a story of the gathering of the guests. They must be invited, and must have on a "wedding garment". The wedding garment is linen—the "righteousness of the set-apart, "saved".

The Word of Elohim is basically the story of a wedding, from start to finish. It is a love story of a loving Father, seeking the perfect Bride for His Son, Yahushua--a Bride who is totally devoted, pure of heart, in love only to Him, submitted and perfect in His sight. Such a picture of this is found in Genesis 24:1-67--Abraham sending out his servant to find the perfect Bride for Isaac.

In the basic structure of the Ancient Jewish Wedding Ceremony, you will see the Father, and the Bridegroom Yahushua, the "servant", the Ruach Yahuweh, the Bride, the attendant of the Bride (pictured by Moses), and the attendant of the Groom (pictured by Elijah), and the guests.

In most weddings, there are 3 groups of people: 1) the guests, forming the largest group, 2) the attendants of the Bride and the Groom, usually a small group, and 3) the Bride and her Bridegroom. All are content and happy within their situation. But, only the Bride gets to go home with the Bridegroom and live in His House forever. She has an intimacy with Him that no one else has! And, so there is a new earth, which will be created for the "saved" guests. There are the attendants--the "Kings of the earth"--who are "saved" and who represent the guests before the Father and the Bridegroom. And, there is the Bride, who stays with her Husband in the Father's House. (Revelation 21:22-22:5, 14)

This is also mentioned in Revelation 3:7-13: --the letter to the church at Philadelphia, which represents the Bridal remnant in the last days. She does not go onto the new earth, but stays in the presence of the Father and the Son. She is marked, because 1) she is submissive and yielded to her Bridegroom, guarding and obeying the terms of His marriage Covenant, the Torah, 2) because she loves Him with a perfect love, 3) because she follows her Bridegroom (the Lamb) wherever He goes, and 4) because she has made herself ready--purified herself and separated herself totally unto Him. She belongs to Him, and her relationship with Him is intimate. He knows her, and she knows Him, and their fellowship is sweet.

THE CORONATION

- I. Ha Melech – the King! Another name for Rosh ha Shanah, which is the day of His coming--at the Feast of Trumpets, is “Coronation Day”. This Feast usually occurs during the Roman month of September. On this day the Bridegroom comes for His Bride, and at their wedding day, He is crowned the King, and she is crowned the Queen. Thus marriage day is the day of Coronation.
- II. Yahushua will come for His Bride on Rosh ha Shanah--Tishre 1 on the Hebrew calendar. The essential message of this Feast is the reaffirmation of the Kingship of Elohim.
- III. Messiah will be crowned on Rosh ha Shanah and given the heathen for His inheritance, as well as receiving His Kingdom. Daniel 7:13-14 and Psalm 2:6
- IV. Jewish Scripture used for this day: Genesis 49:10 and Zechariah 9:9
- V. Revelation 19:11-16: He comes with the sound of the trumpet and much fan-fare and ceremony. He comes as the trumpet sounds loudly, with His angels, in the wrath of the Father, to destroy His enemies and the enemies of His Bride. He comes as a victorious King to deliver His Bride from the evil one.
- VI. He becomes the King of Kings over all the kingdoms of this world: Revelation 11:15-19; 19:16; Daniel 7:9, 13-14, 27; Revelation 1:7.

- VII. On the wedding day, the Bridegroom and the Bride are called King and Queen – and reference is made to Psalm 45.

THE WEDDING

- I. 1) Either the father arranges the wedding as Samson's father did, or 2) the father sends an agent in his place, as Abraham sent Eleazer, or 3) the young man comes

by himself to the girl's father to arrange the marriage between the two of them.

- II. If the young man goes to the house of the girl, he initially must carry these three things:

- a) A large sum of money (or many expensive items) to pay the price for the Bride
- b) A betrothal contract with his promises to the Bride written on it
- c) A skin of wine

Note: In John 5:8: "For there are three that bear witness in earth: the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one". In prophetic typology, the wine represents the Ruach ha Kodesh (Holy Spirit), the water represents the Word—the marriage contract or Covenant—the Torah given at Sinai—and the blood represents the price paid for our salvation. Acts 20:28, Paul speaking to Pastors: "Take heed to yourselves,...to feed the assembly of Elohim, which He has purchased with His own blood". Ephesians 1:14 tells us that the Ruach's presence with us is the "down-payment of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession..." His Bride was the purchased possession, and He is coming to fully redeem her unto Himself. I Corinthians 6:20; I Corinthians 7:23: "For you are bought with a price".

- III. If the Father approves of the marriage, the girl is called in and they all drink the wine together. In the drinking of the wine, she commits herself to the young man. Jeremiah 31:31 "I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel and the House of Judah". Matthew 26:27-28: "And He took the cup (*the 3^d cup of the Seder—the cup of Redemption*) and gave thanks, and gave it to them saying 'Drink you all of it: for this is My blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins'. Thus, He renewed His Covenant in his own blood, with His remnant Bride—who would be taken from among the whole believing House of Israel.

IV. At this point, the two are considered husband and wife. Their union can only be dissolved by divorce, but their state is still called “betrothal”, as with Mary and

Joseph.

V. After the wine is drunk, the young man says the words of John 14:2-3. He will go away and prepare a room for them--adding on a room to his father’s house. He

promises that when the room is finished, he would come back for her, and she would forever be with him. She belongs to him now, for she has been “bought with a price”, and this purchase has been witnessed and confirmed.

VI. The young man goes to prepare a chador (chamber) in his father’s house, sometimes called a “chuppah” (honeymoon bed).

VII. The girl must now spend her time learning how to be a wife and mother, and to learn how to please her husband. He may be gone for as long as 2 years or more.

**The young man, if asked when the day of his wedding will be, often gets rid of nosey inquirers by saying: “No man knows the day or the hour, only my father

knows”. (Matthew 24:36/Mark 13:32) Thus he puts the responsibility of dealing with nosey friends and family off on his father. It is a personal thing with him, and

he only talks about the timing of his coming for His Bride with his father. He may communicate with his Bride, in secret--perhaps by messenger (represented by the

Ruach ha Kodesh--the go-between between the Bride of Messiah and Yahushua. But, also, the term “no man knows the day or the hour” is a catch-phrase for the

Feast of Trumpets—Rosh ha Shanah—for it is always over 2 days around the earth. Three trumpets are blown during that 2-day time period. And, everyone waits for the “last trump”, when according to Jewish tradition, the gates of heaven open and the righteous ascend to heaven, while the fate of the wicked is sealed.

VIII. The groom designates two close friends to assist him and to assist the bride during the ceremony. They are called “witnesses”. The two witnesses of Revelation 11

also have this aspect to them. Also, during the ceremony the contract containing the groom’s promises are then turned over to the parents of the bride.

- IX. He comes for his bride with great fanfare, trumpets, his servants and friends and family. It is a joyful day when he comes to receive his bride for the wedding

ceremony. There is music and dancing and rejoicing. (John 2)

- X. On their wedding day they are called the King and Queen. On this day, tradition says that they stand without spot or blemish as they are united. For two years or

more (for us, 2000 years approximately since our Bridegroom went back to His Father's house) the servant, represented for us by the Ruach ha Kodesh, works to

prepare the Bride to perfection for her marriage to the perfect Bridegroom, Yahushua. From I Corinthians 1:4-9: "I thank Elohim always concerning you...

that you are not lacking in any gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Master Yahushua Messiah..."

I Thessalonians 5:23: "And the Elohim of peace Himself set you completely apart, and your entire spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of

our Master Yahushua Messiah". From Ephesians 5:25-27: "...Messiah also did love the assembly and gave Himself for it...in order to present it to Himself a splendid

assembly, not having spot or wrinkle,...but that it might be set-apart and blameless". The Bride has purified herself, and made herself set-apart unto Him alone!!

- XI. The words of the wedding ceremony are from Psalm 45, and Isaiah 61:10-62:5--"...as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall Elohim rejoice over you".

- XII. Once the ceremony is over, the two go into the bridal chamber (chuppah) for 7 days. Portions of the Song of Solomon, read during Passover, gives the details of the intimacy between Messiah and His Bride.

- XIII. The seven days in the chamber correspond to the seven days between the end of the Feast of Trumpets, and the Day of Atonement, when the High Priest takes the blood before the altar of Yahuweh, and the sins of the nation of Israel are forgiven. (On the Day of Atonement Messiah will judge all the nations that came against Jerusalem, and separate out the sheep and goat nations, as well as pronouncing the whole House of Jacob/Israel--all 12 tribes--to be saved, redeemed, and restored. Joel 3:1-12; Matthew 25:31-46; Romans 11:26-27; Isaiah 59:20-21; 60:11-22; Jeremiah 31 and 33; Ezekiel 36:24-38; 37, and etc. etc.)

- XIV. At the end of the 7 days, the groom's "friend" (or Elijah--John the baptiser came in the spirit of Elijah, and represented Messiah, and called himself the "friend of the Bridegroom" in John 3:29), or "witness", waits at the chamber door. The guests have arrived and are waiting for the door to be opened, and the wedding banquet to begin. When the groom is ready, he knocks from the inside of the door of the chamber, indicating that they are ready to make their public appearance before everyone. The friend opens the door, and the guests cheer.
- XV. In Revelation 11, the two witnesses have been in the earth witnessing and preparing for 3 ½ years. At the voice of the Bridegroom calling them up, Messiah Yahushua comes out of heaven with a trumpet blast, accompanied by the set-apart ones who have died, to gather His whole Bride for the wedding, and the 7 days in the chuppah. The door of heaven opens and He proceeds out. The "bride has made herself ready". He picks up His Bride who is alive and waiting for Him on the earth. Then after His glorious entrance into Jerusalem, they proceed to the wedding feast. Some believe that the wedding feast will occur at Mt. Sinai, since that is where the terms of the marriage Covenant were given to the Bride. Look at the wording of Revelation 19:8 and 11. The parable of the wise virgins, of Matthew 25:1-11, shows us that only the prepared Bride gets to go into the chuppah with Him. The guests are shut out.
- XVI. John the baptiser saw himself as the groom's "friend"--John 3:28-30. Jewish tradition says that Elijah attends the groom--John was called "Elijah" even by the "Groom"--Yahushua. (Matthew 11:13-14) Elijah's message is one of preparation for the coming Messiah. He stands and waits for the Groom's knock. Matthew 17:3 shows the glorified, radiant Messiah standing with Moses and Elijah.
- XVII. The Bride's attendant according to Jewish tradition is Moses. His function is to escort the Bride to the Bridegroom, as Moses escorted the children of Israel to Sinai to be wed to Elohim there. In Revelation 11:3-7, the two witnesses to come have the characteristics of Elijah and Moses.
- XVIII. After the marriage the Bride goes to live with her Bridegroom as the Queen of the Almighty Elohim and King of Israel. She remains with Him, by His side, for eternity. When Father comes, and brings His city down (Revelation 20-22), the Bride is found still with her Husband (Revelation 22:3-5).

Note: Today is my anniversary of having been born again for 53 years. I dedicate this study on the Bride of Messiah Yahushua to my soon-coming Bridegroom. I await my wedding day with the greatest joy!!!

here are many customs appointed by God as teaching tools. In a unique way, the Jewish Wedding Ceremony (as opposed to any other cultural expression) is a detailed illustration of the Messiah's relationship to His bride.

The Shiddukhin - Arrangements preliminary to Betrothal

What is Shiddukhin?

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

Biblical Example of Shiddukhin - [Genesis 24:1-4](#)

Notice in this passage 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" Written in Hebrew as - hbtK. 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.
- 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", it appears that the consent of the bride was very much a part of the ketubah - ([Gen. 24:5](#)).

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](#)

The Mikveh - or Ritual Immersion

Although not mentioned in the narrative - to prepare for betrothal it was common for the bride and groom to separately take a ritual immersion. The ritual immersion - mikveh -taken from the Hebrew - hwqm was prior to actually entering into the formal betrothal period, and was symbolic of spiritual cleansing.

Illustrated in Messiah's Bride

The shiddukhin starts with the father's selection of a bride for his beloved son. So too - were we selected by the Father to be His Beloved Son's loving precious bride - ([Eph. 1:4](#)). As in the case of Isaac - there is also a matchmaker - ([II Cor. 11:10-12](#)). We also have a legal contract - a ketubah hbtik - which is the New Covenant itself in which:

- The groom promises love and care for His bride - and to give Himself for her . He also has paid the proper price for His bride - (His own life).
- The bride promises to pay her dowry - her financial status - that of her yielded life and to keep herself for Him - ([I Cor. 6:20](#)).

The Mohar - is also illustrated in our relationship to Yeshua - we are told in ([I Cor. 6: 19-20](#)) that we have been redeemed with a price. We are also told that our bride's price is not just silver and gold but His own life ([I Pet. 1:18-19](#))

Both bride and groom have undergone the waters of mikveh or immersion - Yeshua at the beginning of His ministry ([Mat. 3: 13-17](#)) and we His bride in the cleansing waters([Eph.5:26-27](#), [I Cor. 6:11](#)).

The Eyrusin - or Betrothal

What is Eyrusin?

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 - this point will be very important when we view the spiritual implications later.

Aspects of the Betrothal

After the couple had undergone - Mikveh hwtqm (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. 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 - yet did not have sexual relations - and continued to live separately until the end of the betrothal. We see this time of betrothal illustrated in the gospels as reflected in the lives of Yoseph and Miriam - (see [Mat. 1:18-25](#)).

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 ntm - 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.

The Couple's Responsibilities During the Betrothal

During betrothal the groom's responsibility was to focus on preparing a new dwelling place for his bride and family:

- In Biblical times this was most often done not by building a new home - but by simply adding additional rooms to the family's existing home.
- The Rabbi's determined that the place to which the bride was to be taken must be better than the place she had lived before.
- 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.

The bride also was to keep herself busy in preparation for the wedding day - specifically wedding garments were to be sewn and prepared.

Illustrated in Messiah's Betrothal to His Bride

As the betrothal includes the blessings of the wine under the huppah, one of the last of Yeshua's actions was to bless the cup of the New Covenant - the cup of the ketubah hbtik - that contract of marriage. He too stated that He would not taste again until a later time, when he would drink at the wedding feast. The image of our betrothal also answers the question of whether believers can lose their salvation. 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](#)).

How is Messiah fulfilling His betrothal obligations? What was the duty of the bridegroom during the period of the betrothal? To prepare a household for his bride to be. Is this not what He (Yeshua) said He would be doing ?([Jn. 14:1-3](#)). He is fulfilling His part of the betrothal.

Where is the Matan ntm - or bridal gift of love from Messiah - if indeed we are His betrothed. Remember the word Matan ntm means gift or pledge - in Greek the word is Charismata - gift. In ([Eph 1:13-14](#)) Paul tells us that this pledge or gift - is the Holy Spirit - a promise of love and that He

will return for us. Interestingly this pledge was given at Shavuot (Pentecost) - [Acts2:1-4](#). Could He also be telling us not only of His love but just how He is fulfilling ([Jer 31:33](#))?

But what of His bride - what is she to be doing? 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 hbtik - covenant promises and vows?

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 common 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. 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.

The coming of the Bridegroom and the Wedding Begins

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 Yeshua's parable ([Mat. 25:1-13](#)). 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. 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.
- 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.

Messiah's Wedding - Still to Come

Yeshua - 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 - from one of the ruling angels - what might this angel 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 Yeshua's coming wedding - again it is clearly pictured for us in ([I Thess 4:16-18](#)) - where all of Yeshua'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](#)).

One last question needs to be raised - who is the bride of Yeshua?

- From the passage in Hosea (2:19-20) it is clear that Israel is the Bride of God.
- Yet the Newer Covenant Scriptures tell us that the "church" is the bride of Messiah.
- Does God have two brides? Is He a polygamist? No!
- Or, is it possible as some have suggested, God divorced one bride - Israel, to marry another - the church? That cannot be - for God has told us He hates divorce ([Mal 2:16](#)) and Jeremiah affirms God's everlasting covenant with the physical people Israel ([Jer 31:35-37](#)). This too is affirmed by Paul in (Rom 9-11).
- The best solution then is - to affirm the fact that God has always had one bride - His chosen people Israel. This has been enlarged to include those grafted in to Israel ([Rom 11:17](#)) , the gentile believers.

[Additional Resources for further reading on this topic:](#)

Who is the Bride of Christ? by *Eddie Chumney* - read it online by clicking on [this Link](#)
God's Appointed Customs by *Barney*

The Messiah and the Jewish Wedding

Traditional Jewish Wedding Customs

**Relationship to Yeshua and
His Bride, the Body of Believers**

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Part 1- Erusin or Kiddushin - Betrothal or Engagement

Kiddushin is derived from the word Kadosh, meaning holy! Once a bride and bridegroom enter into this initial phase of marriage **they are considered married**. Another words, they would have to get a divorce, called a "get" to break of the engagement. This period lasts from one to two years.

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 **orthodox 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 **orthodox divorce** and would have if the angel had not appeared unto him and explained what was going on. Even though the couple is engaged they do not have a physical relationship and they do not live together either.

1. The Arrangement: The groom's father made and approved choice of the bride. In traditional Jewish customs, marriages were arranged by their fathers. It is quite often that the Bride and Groom have never seen one another before they are engaged.

In Judaism the **Sabbath is seen as the bride**. In Biblical Christianity, the Church, the **Body of Believers is the bride** and the Messiah is the bridegroom. The Father makes and approves the choice.

John 6:44 "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day."

2 Corinthians 11:2 - For I, Paul have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to the Messiah.

2. The Groom's Promise: Tenaim - Conditions

The Groom makes a covenant or contract promise. The Ketubah is a document that is used for the purpose of assuring a bride will be provided for. Once this document was signed and witnessed by two people then it was binding and the couple was considered married.

Drink the cup of wine to seal the covenant. [Kiddush](#)

Groom pays a price to show he is serious.; today the wedding ring is used for this purpose.

Groom's speech of promise to his bride that he would come to claim her soon, this is the Engagement Promise.

A Covenant Relationship -

God made a New Covenant with Israel and Judah to replace one He made with Moses. Yeshua drank cup of redemption at Passover. Yeshua paid the bride price of redemption for us on the cross.

Jeremiah 31:31

Matthew 26:27-29,

1 Corinthians 6:20 John 14:2-3

3. Groom Prepares a Place for His Bride: Chuppah

Groom prepares a bridal chamber where they stay for seven days. He works on it until it pleases his father. Then he may go after his bride. The Chuppah canopy is derived from this type of a bridal chamber.

Yeshua tells us that He does not know when He will come; only His Father knows. We must be alert and ready! For, He is preparing our place now. Be alert: Be ready: Do all He asks while you're here. Develop an active prayer life. Offer yourself in ministry opportunity. Keep ourselves from doubt and failure.

John 14:1-4 "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in Me, believe also in My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for 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. And where I go you will go."

	<i>know, and the way you know."</i>
4. Waiting for up to two years –for the bridegroom to come for the bride.	As John the Baptist was filled with joy when he saw Yeshua, so we too shall be filled when we join Yeshua in the heavenly bridal chamber. Some liken those 7 days in the chamber to the 7 years of tribulation period which we will spend not in agony on earth, but in bliss in heaven. Then we will return as the wife, not the Bride. Jesus Teaches About Fasting Luke 5:33-34 <i>Then they said to Him, "Why do the disciples of John fast often and make prayers, and likewise those of the Pharisees, but Yours eat and drink?"</i> And He said to them, <i>"Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them; then they will fast in those days."</i>

Part 2 Nisuin or Chuppah - Ceremony or Nuptials

The word Nisuin means "to lift up" or "carry". Lifting up the bride is an ancient wedding custom of carrying the bride to the ceremony in a carriage lifted by poles. Although seldom done today, the ceremony bears the name. The Chuppah is not only related to the bridal chamber, is also "lifted" by poles like the ancient carriage. The custom of lifting the bride and now the groom in chairs is rooted in this processional. Due to the expense of having two ceremonies.

5. The Mikvah - Ritual Immersion - Today, the Jewish Bride and even the Groom are immersed in a ritual pool of Mayim Chaim, Living Water, known as a Mikvah. The Mikvah is a pool of water that has a source and exit stream. A river, lake, or sea is a natural mikvah. A man made pool could work as well if there is a constant inflow and exit drain. In the Torah, women were immersed for various reasons such as their monthly menstrual cycle. The immersion is a requirement for Gentile converts to Judaism. The Mikvah was not a ritual started by John the Baptist. This is an ancient Jewish practice dating back to the time of Moses.	Remember John, the Baptist.... He was Jewish. The act of Baptism or immersion did not begin as a Christian concept. It is rooted in the Jewish cleansing rituals from the Torah. It had been a practice of the priests to wash or immerse themselves. John's baptism itself is probably best understood as an adaptation of Jewish ritual washings, with some influence from Qumran in particular. John's baptism was primarily a baptism of <i>repentance</i> (Mt 3:11; Mk. 1:4; Lk. 3:3; Acts 13:24; 19:4).
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6. The Bride Waits: While the groom builds the new home, the bride waits and wears a veil. This shows she belongs only to the groom. She prepares for her wedding by making blankets, etc. She also shows gratitude to her family for raising her and she mends hurt relationships. No matter what, she had to be ready because he would come at night.	We must do His will in our daily lives. We must be committed to our ministries at home and Body of Believers. We must heal wounded relationships and express our agape love to each other. We must exhort! Yeshua tells us that He will come like a thief. So we must be living "His Love" at all times. The Body of Believers is too, is veiled. The world is not sure who the Body of Believers is. When we go, it will know. 2 Corinthians 11:2 Luke 19:13 1 Corinthians 13:1 Luke 12:40
7. Kittel - The Wedding Garment: The Kittel is a white robe, it looks somewhat like a bathrobe. It is a garment worn at Passover. It is also worn by the Groom at a wedding. The word Kittel is rooted in the Hebrew word Katal - To Slay. A garment worn by priests during certain sacrifices such as Passover or Yom Kippur Sacrifice.	In Biblical times the kittel was worn by all the men attending the wedding. The Parable of the Wedding Feast -- Matthew 22:11-12 But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?'
8. The Bridesmaids: Unmarried friends who attend the bride and provide light for the groom who comes at night. This is a traditional custom for friends to light havdalah candles in the processional or during the veiling ceremony. Light is a symbol of God's presence, the Shekinah Glory.	We prepare the bride in our ministry to each other. We groom her. We must be ready in our service and not run out of power or conviction as the bridesmaids did. <i>Parable of the Ten Virgins - Matthew 25:1-13</i> "Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. "
9. The Bridegroom Comes: The groomsmen would run ahead of the groom sound the Shofar, and shout that he was coming. While the father's head was turned, the groom would steal the bride. The wedding party then went back to the groom's house to meet the guests.	The angel, Gabriel, will blow the trumpet of God, and Yeshua will come like a thief to snatch away His Bride. When we arrive in Heaven, a host of people will be waiting for us. John 3:29 He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled.

10. The Bridal Chamber - Chuppah The bride and groom enter the bridal chamber where the marriage is consummated. The party waits outside until the groom tells the best man that it is consummated. Then, the guests rejoice for 7 days.	1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 - For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the Shofar, trumpet of God. And the dead in Messiah will rise first. Then we who are alive <i>and</i> remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.
11. The Kiddush- The shared cup of wine is a simcha, joy, at a Jewish Wedding. When the bride drinks from the cup after the bridegroom it is a sign that she is accepting the covenant he has signed during the Ketubah signing. Blessing of the Cup: Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech Ha-Olam Borey P'ree Hagafen. Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who creates the fruit of the vine. Amen.	Yeshua's first miracle was turning water into wine at a Jewish wedding. - John 2 Matthew 26:27-29 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."

The Seven Wedding Blessings

Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe,
Who has created everything for His glory.

Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who has created mankind.

Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who has made mankind in thy image, in the image
thy likeness and prepared for him - from himself - a building for eternity.
Blessed are You, O Lord, who fashioned the mankind.

Bring intense joy and exultation to the barren one through the ingathering of her children amidst her in
gladness. Blessed are You, O Lord, Who makes Zion joyful through her children. Gladdened the beloved
companions as You gladdened Your creature in the Garden of Eden. Blessed art thou O Lord, who makes the
bridegroom and the bride rejoice.

Blessed art thou, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who created joy and gladness, groom and bride, mirth
glad song, pleasure, delight, love, brotherhood, peace and companionship. O Lord, our God, let there soon be
heard in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem the sound of joy and the sound of gladness, the voice
of the groom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the groom's jubilation from their canopies and of youth
from their song-filled feasts.

Blessed are You, Who gladden the groom with the bride.

Blessed are You O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who creates the fruit of the vine.

13. Breaking of the Glass - A symbol of the destruction of the Temple. Also a sign that the covenant broken can not be put back together.	The Temple was destroyed in the year 70 A. <i>A Traditional end to a Jewish wedding serve fragility of life, even during the most joyous is fragile. We break this glass as a symbol of theater that say go break a leg. In a Jewish glass. Forgiveness is an end to a shattered !</i>
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	<i>smashes the glass everyone will shout Mazel Tov! Which means Good Fortune, may your lives here on out not be shattered, but full of fortune and joy.</i>
14. Married Life Begins: New couple goes to the father's home to begin married life.	We too, will go to the Father's house for the Marriage Feast of The Lamb, then go with The Messiah in His reign in His kingdom here on earth for 1,000 years. Revelation 21: 1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.
15. Yichud - Seclusion- After the Wedding Ceremony the Bride and Groom now retreat to a private room to enjoy one another. This is a time of togetherness before the great feast that awaits them.	Revelation 19:5 Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed <i>are</i> those who are called to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb!'

What does Scripture mean when it refers to the church as a bride and Jesus as a bridegroom? Is this just flowery language? Is it merely indicating God's love for His people? Understanding ancient Jewish wedding practices makes the meaning of Scripture clear. The wedding is a picture of the covenant Jesus made and reveals His plans to return for His bride, the church. The people of ancient Israel understood what Jesus was going to do because they understood the model of the wedding.

The analogy between a wedding and Christ and the Church is described in Ephesians 5:31-32 *"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery -- but I am talking about Christ and the church."*

This article overviews the practices of an ancient Jewish betrothal and wedding. In parallel, it shows how Jesus has fulfilled the betrothal portion of the wedding and how He may fulfill the remainder when He comes again for His bride, the church.

Ancient Wedding Practices	Jesus' Fulfillment
Marriage Covenant and Bride Price When a young man desired to marry a young woman in ancient Israel, he would prepare a contract or covenant to present to the young woman and her father at the young woman's home. The contract showed his willingness to provide for the young woman and described the terms under which he would propose marriage. The most important part of the contract was the bride price, the price that the young man was willing to pay to marry the young woman. This payment was to be made to the young woman's father in exchange for his permission to marry. The bride price was generally quite	Marriage Covenant and Bride Price Jesus came to the home of His bride (earth) to present His marriage contract. The marriage contract provided by Jesus is the new covenant, which provides for the forgiveness of sins of God's people. Jesus paid the bride price with His life. At the last supper, when breaking bread, He spoke of the price He was paying: <i>"...This is my body given for you..."</i> --Luke 22:20. Hebrews 9:15 makes it clear that Jesus died as the price for the new covenant: <i>"...Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance -- now that he has died as a ransom</i>

high. Sons were considered to be more valuable than daughters since they were physically more able to share in the work of farming and other heavy labor. The bride price compensated the young woman's family for the cost to raise a daughter and also indicated the love that the young man had for the young woman -- the young woman was very valuable to the young man! The young man would go to the young woman's house with the contract and present his offer to the young woman and her father.

to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant. Other Scripture references include 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, 1 Peter 1:18-19, Acts 20:28 and John 3:29.

The marriage contract, the new covenant, is described throughout Scripture: *"...This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people... they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."* -- Jeremiah 31:31-34.

The Cup

If the bride price was agreeable to the young woman's father, the young man would pour a glass of wine for the young woman. If the young woman drank the wine, it would indicate her acceptance of the proposal. At this point, the young man and young woman would be betrothed. Betrothal was legally binding, just like a marriage. The only difference was that the marriage was not yet consummated. A typical betrothal period was 1-2 years. During this time the bride and bridegroom each would be preparing for the marriage and wouldn't see each other.

The Cup

Just as the bridegroom would pour a cup of wine for the bride to drink to seal the marriage contract, so Jesus poured wine for His disciples. His words described the significance of the cup in representing the bride price for the marriage contract: *Then He took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."* - Matt. 26:28-29 The disciples drank of the cup, thus accepting the contract.

Gifts for the Bride

Next, the bridegroom would present the bride with special gifts. The purpose of these gifts was to show the bridegroom's appreciation of the bride. They were also intended to help her to remember him during the long betrothal period.

Gifts for the Bride

The gifts that Jesus gave us are the gifts of the Holy Spirit: *We know that we live in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit* -- 1 John 4:13.

Jesus described this gift in John 14:26: *But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*

Mikveh

The bride would next partake of a Mikveh, or cleansing bath. Mikveh is the same word used for baptism. To this day in conservative Judaism a bride cannot marry without a Mikveh.

Mikveh

The Mikveh, or baptism that Jesus provided for His bride was baptism in the Holy Spirit. *On one occasion, while He was eating with them, He gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days*

	you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." -- Acts 1:4.
Preparing a Place During the betrothal period, the bridegroom would prepare a wedding chamber for the honeymoon. This chamber was typically built in the bridegroom's father's house. The wedding chamber had to be a beautiful place to bring the bride. The bride and groom were to spend seven days there. The wedding chamber had to be built to the groom's father's specifications. The young man could go for his bride only when his father approved. If the bridegroom was asked when the wedding was to be, he might well say "it is not for me to know, only my father knows".	Preparing a Place Just as a bridegroom would have told his bride that he would go to prepare a place for her, so Jesus told His disciples: <i>"...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.</i> -- John 14:1-3. Just as in ancient Israel, the bridegroom could go for his bride only after his father approved, so Jesus said: <i>"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert ! You do not know when that time will come --</i> Mark 13:32-33
A Waiting Bride Consecrated While the bridegroom was preparing the wedding chamber, the bride was considered to be consecrated, set apart or "bought with a price". If she went out, she would wear a veil so others would know she was betrothed. During this time she prepared herself for the marriage. She likely had saved money all her life for this time. She would purchase expensive cosmetics and learn to apply them to make herself more beautiful for the bridegroom. She wouldn't know when her groom would come for her, so she always had to be ready. Since bridegrooms typically came for their brides in the middle of the night, to "steal them away", the bride would have to have her lamp and her belongings ready at all times. Her sisters or bridesmaids would also be waiting, keeping their lamps trimmed in anticipation of the late night festivities.	A Waiting Bride Consecrated We, God's people, are now consecrated, or set apart, waiting for the return of our bridegroom. We should be spending this time preparing ourselves for Jesus' return. Jesus used a parable of ten virgins waiting for the bridegroom to describe the need to be alert for His return. <i>"At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom...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 drowsy and fell asleep. "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' "Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.' "'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.' "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. "Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. 'Open the door for us!' "But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.' "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour."</i>
Bridegroom Comes for His Bride When the bridegroom's father deemed the wedding	Bridegroom Comes for His Bride Just as the bridegroom would come for the bride in the

chamber ready, the father would tell the bridegroom that all was ready and to get His bride. The bridegroom would abduct his bride secretly, like a thief at night and take her to the wedding chamber. As the bridegroom approached the bride's home, he would shout and blow the shofar (ram's horn trumpet) so that she had some warning to gather her belongings to take into the wedding chamber. The bridegroom and his friends would come into the bride's house and get the bride and her bridesmaids.

middle of the night, with a shout and the sound of a shofar, so the Lord will come for us. *For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words. Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. -- 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.*

Seven Days in Wedding Chamber

The bridegroom would take his bride to the wedding chamber where they would spend seven days. The bridegroom's friend would wait outside the door of the wedding chamber. When the marriage was consummated, the bridegroom would tell his friend through the door, and the friend would announce it to the assembled guests. The guests would celebrate for seven days until the bride and bridegroom emerged from the wedding chamber.

Seven Days in Wedding Chamber

Ancient Jewish eschatology taught that a seven year "time of trouble" would come upon the earth before the coming of the Messiah. During that time of trouble, the righteous would be resurrected and would enter the wedding chamber where they would be protected from the time of trouble. Today that seven year period is referred to as the tribulation.

Marriage Supper

After seven days in the wedding chamber, the bride and bridegroom would emerge and participate in a feast with friends and family. There would be joyous celebrating during this feast. The feast would conclude the wedding celebration.

Marriage Supper

Just as the bride and bridegroom celebrated with a joyous wedding supper, so Jesus and His bride, the church will celebrate the marriage. *Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. 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!'" -- Revelation 19:6-9.*

Depart for Home

After the marriage supper, the bride and bridegroom would leave the groom's father's house where the groom had built the wedding chamber. They would go to their own home, which the bridegroom had prepared.

Depart for Home

Just as the bride and bridegroom left the marriage supper to go to the home that the bridegroom had prepared, so Jesus and His bride will depart for their new home. *"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new*

	<i>Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes... One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. -- Revelation 21:1-4.</i>
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From the pattern of the ancient wedding practices, we see that, like the bridegroom of ancient times, Jesus came to the home of His bride for the betrothal, made a covenant with His bride and sealed it with a glass of wine, paid the bride price with His life and sent His bride gifts of the Holy Spirit. We, the betrothed (the Church) currently await the return of our Bridegroom to take us to the wedding chamber (the rapture) to spend seven years (while the tribulation occurs on Earth). We will then celebrate the Marriage Supper of the Lamb and depart with our Bridegroom for our new home, the new Jerusalem.

Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.

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- [8] Exodus 22:16-17, Dowry of virgins.
- [9] 2 Samuel 3:14, David paid one hundred Philistine foreskins for Michal.
- [10] Genesis 31:14-19, Laban accepted bride price from Jacob, forfeited claim to Rachael and Leah.
- [11] Deuteronomy 22:23-29. Betrothal was regarded as binding.
- [12] Genesis 29:22, Earliest record of a wedding feast.
- [13] Jeremiah Bride wears a girdle.
- [14] Judges 14:12, 14:17 Seven day wedding feast.
- [15] Genesis 29:27, Marriage contract not final until the bridegroom and bride cohabited for a week.
- [16] Judges 14:20, Father of the espoused woman considers the marriage as null, and gives her to another husband.
- [17] Song of Solomon 3:6-11, Bridegroom procession to fetch his bride patterned after King Solomon.

The Bride of Messiah and Jewish wedding customs

(Part 1 of 2)

The modern wedding is usually quite an event. It requires large amounts of planning, time, energy and money. A date is set, a church or hall is rented, a person is contracted to officiate, invitations are printed, reception plans made, a guest list is prepared, flowers and decorations are selected, tuxedos and dresses are ordered for the attendants, and a wedding gown is chosen. It can be an extremely busy, and sometimes frustrating, experience to say the least. Then there are the various roles played by the parents of the couple. The chief duties fall to the mother of the Bride. She is responsible for assisting the Bride in all of the many plans and preparations. The father of the Bride is also quite involved for he gives the Bride away at the ceremony. Also, he is usually the one who provides the funds needed for the wedding celebration. Meanwhile, the mother of the Bridegroom may assist to some degree with the wedding plans, while the father of the Bridegroom is expected to provide funds for a rehearsal dinner, show up for the wedding, and not cause any trouble.

~ The Ancient Wedding ~

Ancient Hebrew weddings were quite different. First the couple was matched. The parents of both the Bridegroom and Bride were intimately involved in this process, which could take place long before the couple were of marriageable age. Then, when the prospective couple came of age, the Bridegroom would go to the father of the prospective Bride to make the necessary arrangements. However, these were not the kinds of arrangements common to a modern wedding. Rather, they worked out a marriage contract or covenant, called a Ketuvah (Keh-two-vah). Once the details were agreed upon, the father of the prospective Bride called his daughter into the room. A cup of wine was poured and the Bridegroom offered it to her. If she accepted the cup, and drank from it, they were officially betrothed. In the eyes of Hebrew law they were then considered married and only a legal divorce could separate them.

However, they could not yet live together as husband and wife. Instead, the Bridegroom went back to his father's house to prepare a wedding chamber for his Bride. This chamber was called a Chuppah (Who-pah). It was located on the property of the father of the Bridegroom, usually within the father's house. It was the responsibility of the Bridegroom to prepare the Chuppah in a way that would be pleasing to his Bride, and it was the responsibility of his father to examine it at regular intervals and make suggestions on how it could be improved. Also, it had to be well stocked with provisions, for once the couple entered the Chuppah they remained in it for seven days.

The wedding was not announced ahead of time. In fact, only the father of the Bridegroom knew the day or the hour in which the wedding would take place because it was his responsibility to determine when the Chuppah, his son, and the bride were ready. When the father felt all was in order, he would say to his son; "The hour has come, go and get your Bride."

The time span between the Betrothal and the final wedding ceremony was usually about one year. It could be longer if circumstances demanded, but it was usually not shorter unless the Bride was a widow. During the betrothal time the couple (although officially married) normally did not see one another. One

can only imagine the anticipation that must have existed in the hearts of both the Bride and her Husband, as they awaited the final approval of his father. When that day and hour finally came, the couple would enter the Chuppah to consummate their marriage. Then they would truly be able to say:

"I am my beloved's,
And my beloved is mine."
(Song of Songs 6:3)

~ The Bride's Preparation ~

During the time while the Bridegroom was preparing the Chuppah, the Bride also had some important things to accomplish. She needed to begin collecting those items she would need to run the household once they were fully married and living together. This would be the trousseau which she would bring to their permanent home once the seven days in the Chuppah had been accomplished. The Bride also had to prepare her wedding dress and other appropriate articles of clothing. In addition it was an ancient custom for the Bride to learn how to make herself physically beautiful for her husband through the application of cosmetics and perfumes. So, it was during this year of preparation that she learned these arts as well. This practice is mentioned in the book of Esther, the beautiful young Jewess who became the Queen of Persia.

"Each young woman's turn came to go in to King Ahasuerus after she had completed twelve months' preparation, according to the regulations for the women, for thus were the days of their preparation apportioned: six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with perfumes and preparations for beautifying women. Thus prepared, each young woman went to the king, and she was given whatever she desired to take with her from the women's quarters to the king's palace. In the evening she went, and in the morning she returned to the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch who kept the concubines. She would not go in to the king again unless the king delighted in her and called for her by name." (Est. 2:12)

It must be remembered that each of these women who came to King

Ahasuerus' chamber became his legal wife. They were called concubines and were considered to be of lower status than a full wife. Esther was not relegated to the status of concubine, rather, she became the highest ranking wife, the Queen of Persia.

~ The Betrothed ~
~ Bride of Messiah ~

At this very moment in time, the Bride of Messiah (the Church of called out ones) finds herself in the same situation as the ancient betrothed Bride. She is in a state of full betrothal to Yeshua, her legal Husband. However, instead of the normal one year wait, the Bride of Messiah has now been waiting almost two thousand physical years for her husband to return and take her to the Chuppah for the consummation of their marriage. We can be assured that Yeshua will come for us, for He promised to do so at the Last Supper when He made His typically Jewish betrothal speech:

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for 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. And where I go you know, and the way you know." (John 14:1-4)

Right now Yeshua is at His Father's house in heaven, awaiting word from His Father as to when He can come back to this earth for his beloved Bride, the Church. Meanwhile the Bride is on earth, waiting for Her Betrothed to return and take her to the Chuppah. (For more complete information on the ancient Hebrew wedding write for the tape series; The Wedding of the Messiah.)

~ Our Wedding Preparations ~

What should we (the Bride) be doing while we wait? Prepare ourselves for our wedding, of course. Since the wedding ceremony itself requires no preparation on our part; (i.e. we need not worry about securing a minister, reserving a hall, ordering flowers, etc.), we need only concern ourselves with becoming a beautiful and acceptable vessel for our Husband, Yeshua.

All analogies begin to break down to some degree at some point. The ancient wedding is no exception, for the Bride of Messiah consists of a multitude of 'called out ones.' Many members of the Bride have already lived their lives and died in the unwavering faith that their Savior--Husband Yeshua will resurrect them from their graves when He returns. Also, the Bride of Messiah will not require a physical wedding gown, or a trousseau of household items for setting up housekeeping. Rather, the preparation for our wedding must be of a spiritual nature.

As it is written:

"Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."

"And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints."

(Rev. 19:7-8)

Three important points, concerning the Bride, leap out from these verses: 1.) "... His wife has made herself ready." 2.) She is; "... arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright..." and 3.) "... the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints."

The Bride of Messiah is to be doing a work while she awaits Yeshua's return. That work is; 1.) to learn what constitutes righteousness, and 2.) to perform righteous acts. In other words, we must learn to live righteously, for it will be the righteous acts of the Saints which will form the Bride's proper wedding gown. Surely, none of us wishes to attend the greatest wedding of all time without a suitable wedding garment, for that could be dangerous, as we can see from the following parable:

"The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. "Again, he sent out other servants, saying, "Tell those who are invited, 'See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.'" "But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. And the rest seized his servants, treated them

spitefully, and killed them. "But when the king heard about it, he was furious, and he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then he said to his servants, "The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding." "So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, "Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?" And he was speechless. "Then the king said to the servants, "Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." For many are called, but few are chosen." (Matt. 22:2-14)

How we are dressed is very important, since we will not be allowed to participate in the wedding if we do not come wearing our gown of righteousness.

~ What Is Righteousness? ~

Before going any further we must come to an understanding of what constitutes righteousness. We can determine the nature of righteousness by looking at a number of verses that tell us about it.

"And the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is this day, Then it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to observe all these commandments before the LORD our God, as He has commanded us." (Deut. 6:24-25)

It is clear from this passage that in order to be righteous it is necessary for one to be "... careful to observe all these commandments ..." that have been given in the Torah. This concept is confirmed by the Psalmist in the following verse:

"My lips shall utter praise,
For you teach me your statutes.
My tongue shall speak of Your word,

For all Your commandments are righteousness.
(Psalm 119:171-172)

All of God's commandments are considered to be righteousness. Not just the big Ten. Not just those which have to do with how we should relate to each other, but also those which teach us how we should relate to God in all facets of our life. All of God's commandments are righteousness.

The Hebrew word translated as commandment is mitzvah (meets-vah, Strong's #4687). It is; "a command whether human or divine." The word can also mean a 'good deed.' In other words, to help someone in need is not only a command, it is also a good deed and to perform any of God's mitzvaot (meets-vah-oat plural form) is also to perform good deeds.

The Hebrew word for statutes is chok (hohk, Strong's #2706). It means; "an enactment; hence an appointment (of time, space, quantity, labor or usage)." Thus, it can also be a reference to the 'appointed times' or festivals set forth in Leviticus 23.

The two previously mentioned verses (Psalm 119:171,172) are a prime example of what is known as 'Hebrew parallelism.' The first line of each verse refers to the willingness of the Psalmist to speak about the glory of God:

"My lips shall utter praise,"
"My tongue shall speak of Your word,"

These two introductory lines are then followed by phrases in which the Psalmist tells us why he is so willing to praise God and teach His word:

"For You teach me Your statutes."
"For all Your commandments are righteousness."

Hebrew parallelism is used to add emphasis to a thought or concept. In this case the thought being emphasized is the greatness and righteousness of God's statutes and commandments, in other words, the greatness of His instructions (Torah) on how to live a righteous life. The Psalmist proclaims his desire to praise God publicly because God's commandments and statutes are so completely

righteous,.

Not only are God's commandments and statutes righteous, His judgments are as well. As the Psalmist says:

"I will praise You with uprightness of heart,
When I learn Your righteous judgments."
(Psalm 119:7)

"I have sworn and confirmed
That I will keep Your righteous judgments."
(Psalm 119:106)

The apostle Shaul (Shaw-ool = Paul) taught us that the Torah was righteous when he said:

"Therefore the law (Torah) is holy, and the commandment
holy and just and good."
(Rom. 7:12)

That which the Psalmist called righteous in Psalm 119 (God's commandments) is now called "holy and just and good" by Shaul. In fact, Shaul went so far as to equate obedience with righteousness when he said:

"What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin to death, or of obedience to righteousness?" (Rom. 6:15-16)

According to Shaul, not only must we, as Believers, be obedient to God's commandments, we must become actual slaves to righteousness:

"And having been set free from sin, you became slaves
of righteousness."
(Rom. 6:18)

In other words, we must continually practice righteousness, for a slave must always do what his master bids.

What then is righteousness? Deuteronomy 6 and Psalm 119 tell us

that the commandments, statutes and judgments are all righteous. Therefore, when we perform them in the manner in which they were intended, we become righteous because we are living righteously through them.

Now, in order to learn what the commandments, statutes and judgments are, we must turn to the Torah. Therein are contained the 613 mitzvaot (commandments), the chok (statutes), and the many judgments. The Writings,* and the Prophets** also instruct us in the ways and desires of our righteous God, as they contain many applications and amplifications on the instructions of God given to Moshe.

[* The Writings include: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, The Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, I & II Chronicles.] [** The Prophets include: Joshua, Judges, I & II Samuel, I & II Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Twelve Minor Prophets. Taken together, the Torah, the Writings and the Prophets make up the `Old Testament, which the Jews call the Tanakh.]

But let us not forget the Brit Chadasha (Renewed Covenant or New Testament) which is said to contain over one thousand commandments, most of them reiterations or amplifications of those found in the Torah. Combined together (codified), we have a complete body of instruction (the Bible) which teaches us the righteousness of God.

~ Who Is Righteous? ~

"As it is written:

`There is none righteous, no, not one;

There is none who understands;

There is none who seeks after God.

They have all gone out of the way;

They have together become unprofitable;

There is none who does good, no, not one."

(Rom. 3:10-12)

We must understand that what mankind considers righteousness does not hold a whole lot of weight with God.

"But we are all like an unclean thing,

And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags;
We all fade as a leaf,
And our iniquities, like the wind,
Have taken us away.

"And there is no one who calls on Your name,
Who stirs himself up to take hold of You;
For you have hidden your face from us,
And have consumed us because of our iniquities."
(Isa. 64:6-7)

The expression "filthy rags" literally means "menstrual cloths."
(See Strong's #5708). The righteousness of men,
apart from God, and as contrasted to God's righteousness, is like the
difference between the menstrual cloth and the wedding gown.

While man is inherently unrighteous, God, on the other hand, is
completely righteous. The scriptures abound with
verses which speak about the righteousness of YHWH. For example:

"The LORD is righteous in all His ways,
Gracious in all His works."
(Psalm 145:17)

"For the LORD is righteous,
He loves righteousness;
His countenance beholds the upright."
(Psalm 11:7)

The Scriptures also teach about the righteousness of the Messiah:

"Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD,
That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness;
A King shall reign and prosper,
And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.
In His days Judah will be saved,
And Israel will dwell safely;
Now this is His name by which He will be called:
THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS"
(Jer. 23:5-6)

"And I heard the angel of the waters saying:

`You are righteous, O Lord,
The One who is and who was and who is to be,
Because You have judged these things."
(Rev. 16:5)

~ Unequally Yoked ~

This presents us with a dilemma. if God the Father is righteous, and His Son, Yeshua HaMashiach (Jesus the Messiah) is righteous, but the Bride is unrighteous (because she is made up of sinful people); how can Yeshua ever even begin to think that He can marry her? Can righteousness be yoked to unrighteousness?

This was the very same problem that occurred when God married the nation of Israel at Mt. Sinai. The Bridegroom was perfect and righteous, while the Bride was imperfect and unrighteous. She proved that very quickly while they were still in the Chuppah at Mt. Sinai, when she went whoring after the golden calf. The results were disastrous. After the bride (Israel) divided into two warring parts (the house of Israel, and the house of Judah), God divorced the house of Israel because of her unrighteousness, and consequent unfaithfulness, through her acts of spiritual idolatry. The only reason He remained married to the house of Judah was so that the prophesied Messiah could be born of that lineage and into their culture, which was primarily derived from God through Torah, Temple Avodah (ah-voh-dah service) and the Synagogue system established by Ezra.

Idolatry was not a major problem during the period of the second Temple. Neither was the breaking of the Sabbath, for the vast majority of the foundational values of Jewish culture were primarily based on Scriptural values, although the Pharisees tended to teach traditions with an over zealous strictness. The primary sins of the house of Judah, during the second Temple period, had to do with uncharitable attitudes toward the poor and downtrodden of their society. Thus, the rules of tradition became more important, to many of the religious leaders, than did expressions of love and charity for those in need.

Yeshua addressed this problem when He said:

"... they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men s

shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers." (Matt. 23:4)

~ Can Men Become Righteous? ~

We have already shown from the scriptures how man's righteousness is nothing more to God than 'filthy rags. Yet the scriptures also abound with passages that extol the virtues of the 'righteous' man, such as:

"Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous!
For praise from the upright is beautiful."
(Psalm 33:1)

"The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous,
And His ears are open to their cry."
(Psalm 34:15)

"The wicked borrows and does not repay,
But the righteous shows mercy and gives."
(Psalm 37:2 1)

"... The effective fervent prayer of a righteous man
avails much." (James 5:16b)

It is obvious from these verses that man can be considered righteous if he performs righteous acts. However, this can only be accomplished by correctly understanding and practicing the righteous commandments, statutes and judgments of God as found in the Scriptures. Man's righteousness, on the other hand, can never make a man righteous in the sight of God.

~ Man's Righteousness ~

~ vs. God's Righteousness ~

Man's righteousness is a mixture of good and evil. It can be found in the laws and traditions of all races, nationalities and cultures. Sometimes it is more good, sometimes it is more evil. It is the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that our first parents partook of in the Garden of Eden, and which each of us has partaken of in our own individual lives. This is not the righteousness God is referring to in the passages above.

The righteousness of God, on the other hand, is defined in the pages of the Torah. However, even if a person was able to keep all of these instructions (laws) of God perfectly, he still would not attain a righteousness that would make him eligible for eternal life by his own merits, for that is impossible. These instructions were set forth to give great blessings and an abundant life to those who would observe them. Even so, it was an impossible goal for anyone to expect to be able to keep all of the instructions perfectly for an entire lifetime.

It was because of this impossibility, that the instructions took on another, even more important function, They now became a 'schoolmaster' or 'tutor' to lead men into the realization of their deep need for a Redeemer; one who could save them from their inability to live totally righteous lives before God.

"But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law (Torah), kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law (Torah) was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3:23-26)

One (and only one) of the benefits of the Torah was to bring us to an understanding that we need to have our Husband's help in order to keep all the instructions of the Torah. Once we have that understanding, we no longer need to keep learning that fact. This is not to say that, as the Betrothed Bride of Messiah, we are to throw out the Torah, for that document is also our Ketuvah or marriage covenant, now written on our hearts.

The instructions of the Torah teach us how live. To follow them is to "choose life."

"For this commandment which I command you today, it is not too mysterious for you nor is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?'

"But the word is very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it. See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess.

"But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them, I announce to you today that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to go in and possess.

"I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to give them." (Deut. 30:11-20)

While it is possible for a man to be considered righteous according to the standards of man's righteousness, no one can ever be considered fully righteous according to God's standard of righteousness through their own merits. For to do so would require the attainment, of the lofty goal of keeping all of God's commandments, statutes and judgments perfectly throughout one's entire life, never slipping up even once. It is just plain impossible, for sinful, fleshly man to accomplish, for as it is written:

"... all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:23)

"If we say they we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." (1 John 1:10)

"Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin

is lawlessness." (1 John 3:4)

To be 'lawless' is to be without law, or outside of the law; in other words, an 'outlaw.' When one is following faithfully the 'law' or instruction of God, he is within the law and is 'law abiding.' So people can and should do their very best to abide by the law (Torah or instruction) of God.

"Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked." (1 John 2:3-6)

(End Part 1 of 2)

The Bride of Messiah and Jewish wedding customs

(Part 2 of 2)

Yeshua HaMashiach, our Beloved Husband, walked faithfully and completely perfect in all the commandments, statutes and judgments of the Torah. He was fully righteous in God's sight. Thus, every time we succeed in 'keeping the law' we too are righteous in God's sight and are walking just as He walked. Once again, this is not the same as performing man's righteousness, since what we are speaking of here is the very instruction of God, or God's righteousness as practiced by His people.

In our own flesh we cannot maintain this level of righteousness day in and day out for an entire lifetime. However, this fact should not deter us from making every effort to live righteous lives, for as we practice righteousness we become more proficient and therefore more righteous. Thus, righteous acts build upon righteous acts to become a way of life; a 'righteous lifestyle.'

Shaul's epistle to Titus expressly instructs the Believers to live, good, honorable and righteous lives. In other words, to live according to the instruction book of God.

"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age ..."
(Titus 2:11-12)

The Bride must be clothed in "...the righteous acts of the saints."
(Rev. 19:8b)

~ What Happens ~

~ When We Sin? ~

But what happens when the Bride (or a member of the Bride) sins? According to Scripture a lifetime of righteousness can be wiped out in a single act of unrighteousness.

A rather extensive passage in the book of Ezekiel clearly lays out the grave problem which each human being faces when he or she acts in an unrighteous manner. This passage follows, quoted in it's entirety:

"Therefore you, O son of man, say to the house of Israel: "Thus you say, 'If our transgressions and our sins lie upon us, and we pine away in them, how can we then live.'"
"Say to them: "As I live," says the Lord GOD, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?"

"Therefore you, O son of man, say to the children of your people: "The righteousness of the righteous man shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression; as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall because of it in the day that he turns from his wickedness; nor shall the righteous be able to live because of his righteousness in the day that he sins."

"When I say to the righteous that he shall surely live, but he trusts in his own righteousness and commits iniquity, none of his righteous works shall be remembered; but because of the iniquity that

he has committed, he shall die.

"`Again, when I say to the wicked, "You shall surely die," if he turns from his sin and does what is lawful and right, if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has stolen, and walks in the statutes of life without committing iniquity, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of his sins which he has committed shall be remembered against him; he has done what is lawful and right; he shall surely live.

"`Yet the children of your people say, "The way of the LORD is not fair." But it is their way which is not fair! When the righteous turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, he shall die because of it. But when the wicked turns from his wickedness and does what is lawful and right, he shall live because of it.

"`Yet you say, "The way of the LORD is not fair." O house of Israel, I will judge every one of you according to his own ways."
(Ezek. 33:10-20)

According to this passage one act of sin, one act of rebelliousness, one wrong motive, can blow an entire lifetime of righteousness. On the other hand, a lifetime of sinfulness and wretchedness can be obliterated by true, heartfelt repentance and by turning from that life of sin to a life of living according to the instruction book of God; in other words, turning to a life of righteousness. Obviously, those who are already practicing righteousness do not need to repent for their righteous acts.

"`Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: "I desire mercy and not sacrifice." For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."" (Matt. 9:12b-13)

This does not mean that Yeshua does not call people who are already practicing righteousness into the Bride. What it does mean is that He also has a way in which sinners can become

righteous.

~ A Crucial Question ~

Is it really possible that a lifetime of sin can be wiped away and forgotten completely by God? Certainly if it were left to the 'righteousness' of men (the 'filthy rags') it could never be so.

For men do rarely forgive, and certainly do not forget. If it were left to men, the sinner (by their definition) would be made to pay every last penny he ever earned and then still have to give up his life in additional payment. Even after all of this had been done, people would still remember his sins and relish talking of them after he was gone.

But the ways of God are far greater than the ways of man and we can rejoice, for God has a plan; He has called, and is yet calling, a body of people to be a righteous Bride for His Son, Yeshua HaMashiach.

~ God's Plan for Righteousness ~

What a marvelous plan. God the Father sent this same Son (His only begotten Son) to earth to negotiate a Ketuvah (wedding covenant or contract) for His Bride. The Bride price that was named in the Ketuvah of Messiah was that He would take upon Himself all the unrighteousness (sins) of the Bride and die because of them, thereby removing those sins from her, thus making her righteous before God and a fitting mate for Himself. All of those sins, which had previously cut the Bride off from being worthy to be Yeshua's wife, are removed. Now there is really only one thing that the Bride has to do in order to be brought into the betrothal state with Yeshua. That is to display the single most important character trait exhibited by her great forefather Avraham (Ahv-rah-hahm = Abraham), the trait of FAITH!

"Just as Abraham 'believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness,' Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that - God would justify the nations by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, 'In you all the nations shall be blessed.' So then those who are of faith

are blessed with believing Abraham." (Gal. 3:6-9)

Once we transgress one of the instructions (laws) of God, that instruction remains broken. It cannot be repaired by any act we do, no matter how good or righteous that act may be. Once we have committed idolatry it is a done deal. No amount of true, spiritual worship can undo the idolatrous act which has been committed. Only the sacrificial blood of Messiah, Yeshua can remove that stain from our record through the forgiveness of sins.

"Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts 13:38-39)

The law of Moses (Torah) did provide a method for the covering of sins. This was accomplished through the blood of bulls and goats. However, those sacrificial elements, while efficacious when performed as proscribed with a contrite heart, had to be continually repeated. Neither could one gain eternal life in spiritual form through the animal sacrifices, for those who practiced them are all dead (asleep) in their graves. These sacrifices were merely a type and shadow of the perfect sacrifice that was yet to come, that of Yeshua HaMashiach, the author and finisher of our Faith.

"And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, called by God as High Priest `according to the order of Melchizedek.'" (Heb. 5:9-10)

No longer must we look to a temporary salvation, now we have a permanent one.

~ Faith and Good Works: ~
~ The Perfect Man ~

So, dear brethren, we are saved from our transgressions (sins) by one method and one method only:

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it

is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.
For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." (Eph. 2:8-10)

This same scripture, that so profoundly teaches that we are saved by grace and grace only, also teaches that we are to be performing good works as well, and even gives us the definition of those good works: "...good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

What good works were "prepared beforehand?" Why none other than those written in the Torah, the Instruction Book of God, for it is within the Torah that we learn what the "good works of God" truly are. So, once again we are brought back to the Torah as being the foundation upon which we are to conduct our lives, not as a method of salvation but as a guidebook on how the Bride is to conduct her life while she waits for her Husband. Yes indeed, Yeshua HaMashiach is the true foundation stone, the Rock on which we are to base our Faith, and it is only by His shed blood that we are saved. But He expects us to go on and perform good works, and in order to fully understand what those 'good works' are, we must study, learn and apply the instructions found in the Torah.

Yes Brethren, we must strive to become perfect men and women. Doing so does not earn us one nickel's worth of salvation, but it is a commission that each of us has been given as a member in the Bride of Messiah, the Body of Christ. Each time we perform one of the instructions of God, as found in the Torah, we are adding one more stitch to the beautiful gown that is being prepared for the Bride's wedding. Each time we transgress against the instructions of God, we are removing a righteous stitch from that gown. Therefore, we are to strive to become perfect, speaking the truth in love.

"And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that

we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ--from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love." (Eph. 4:11-16)

We are to be 'Perfect and Complete Men and Women' through the practice of perfection:

"Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." (Col. 4:12)

We are to strive to make our faith perfect by doing good works:

"But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? "Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? "And the scripture was fulfilled which says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' And he was called the friend of God.

"You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. ... For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." (James 2:20-24,26)

~ Summary ~

Let us review the 'problem' which the Tanakh (Tah-nahkh = Old Testament) presents for those who would look to it as a source for salvation:

Keeping the instructions of God grants blessings in this life but

does not gain a person eternal life.

The blood of bulls and goats covers sins, but only until the next time one sins.

Committing even one sin for which repentance has not been made and/or is not covered by sacrifice requires the death penalty.

As you can see, there is no permanent redemption possible in this order of things, only temporary relief from sin. However, the Messiah Yeshua has taken care of the problem, by shedding His blood and dying in our place:

"For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

(Matt. 26:28)

Therefore: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

(1 John 1:9)

The Bride of Messiah (the Church of the Living God, the Body of Christ) is right now betrothed to this same Yeshua HaMashiach who shed His blood so that our sins could be taken away. The Bride is His legal wife in every sense of the word. However, we (the Bride) do not yet dwell where Yeshua dwells, for we have not yet come to the fullness of the wedding process. The culmination or consummation lies yet before us.

While we wait for Yeshua to return for us, we need to be preparing our wedding gown of righteousness so that we can be properly clothed for the great wedding that is to take place in heaven. We make those preparations by learning righteousness and (even more importantly) living righteous lives. The wedding dress will never be completed through the arguing of doctrine or striving over scripture, but only through righteous acts of loving concern for our Brethren and our neighbors.

"Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers. Be diligent

to present yourself approved to God, a Worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness, and their message will spread like cancer." (II Tim. 2:14-17a)

"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."
(John 13:35)

We desperately need to be fervently working on our wedding dress, adding righteous stitches to it each and every day, as long as we still have the breath of life within us. Let us resolve, through the power of the Holy Spirit of God which indwells us, to do our very best to follow His Spirit into all righteousness so that each of us can add beautiful stitches to our beautiful gown of righteousness.

"Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen." (Heb. 13:20-21)

End Part 2 of 2)