

The Ancient Jewish Wedding

*...and the Return of Messiah
for His Bride*

by Jamie Lash



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Dedication

In loving memory of my dear friend Sylvia Candib Hurston who has been like a mother to me, always encouraging, loving and giving in simplicity and selflessness.

Thank you, Sylvia, for loving our Messiah and for loving Neil and me with so much fervor and faithfulness. May the Lord be your portion and your delight forever.

Acknowledgments

I am deeply grateful to my bridegroom Neil for being such a wonderful, giving husband and for bearing with me in love as Yeshua prepares and perfects me in Him.

My thanks also to our dedicated *Jewish Jewels* staff, especially our Administrator, Sheryl Campo. Each labors tirelessly and selflessly so that God's People Israel can come to know Him in a personal way.

I also owe a debt of gratitude to the *Jewish Jewels* Prayer Roses and other faithful friends who have prayed for us behind the scenes for years—unseen by men perhaps, but not by God. May your labor of love in His Name be richly rewarded!

A final word of thanks is due to Freiman Fisher Stoltzfus for blessing us with beautiful, anointed illustrations. May the Lord open many doors for your outstanding artistic gift.

Preface

My fascination with brides and weddings goes back to my childhood. When an occasion called for dressing up in costume, my first choice was always to be a bride. Once, as a young girl, I caught the bouquet at a wedding. I was thrilled and kept the bouquet for years.

Because of my love of weddings, I've had three of them with the same man! My husband Neil married me the first time on Feb. 7, 1971 in my parents' home in Valhalla, NY. We were remarried under a huppah on our 7th anniversary in a Messianic ceremony at Temple Aron HaKodesh in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. We celebrated our 25th anniversary in 1996 by re-enacting the ancient Jewish wedding customs in Israel on a hillside overlooking the old city of Jerusalem.

Since receiving the Messiah in 1973, weddings have taken on an even deeper meaning for me as I have come to understand what it means for believers in Jesus (whom I call by His Hebrew name, *Yeshua*) to be His "bride." This bridal relationship with the Messiah has become the greatest source of joy in my life. I pray that this same joy will be yours!

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The Ancient Jewish Wedding

The ancient Jewish wedding has special relevance for the days in which we live because these are the days immediately preceding the return of the Messiah Yeshua for His bride. When He comes in the clouds to take us away with Him, He will not come as a carpenter, nor as a rabbi, teacher, shepherd, nor even a high priest. He is coming again as a Bridegroom/King. At this very moment, His heart is longing for the day when He will gather His bride unto Himself. This union has been in the heart and plan of God from the beginning of time.

The Bible chronicles the love relationship between God and His people. It tells us of the marriage of God to Israel and the marriage covenant that He kept, even though His people did not (Jeremiah 31:32). It also tells us of a new marriage covenant for both Jews and non-Jews. The entire Bible is actually a marriage covenant, both "Old" and "New." When seen in this light, the need to understand Jewish marriage customs at the time of Yeshua comes into focus.

Our Messiah followed the steps of a Jewish bridegroom in taking a bride for Himself. Much has been lost to the body of believers by not seeing Jesus in His original Jewish context. The ancient Jewish wedding customs are a case in point. As you learn of these customs, you will sense an added richness in your relationship with the One whom your soul loves. The Apostle Paul gave beautiful expression to the richness and anointing in the Jewish root of belief in Yeshua as Messiah in Romans 11:17. This richness is part of your adorning as Messiah's bride. One of our goals as the coming of our Bridegroom draws near should be to adorn ourselves with the Jewish jewels of God's Word. Let the adorning begin, and let Isaiah 61:10 be our confession:

"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels."

A Bridal Relationship

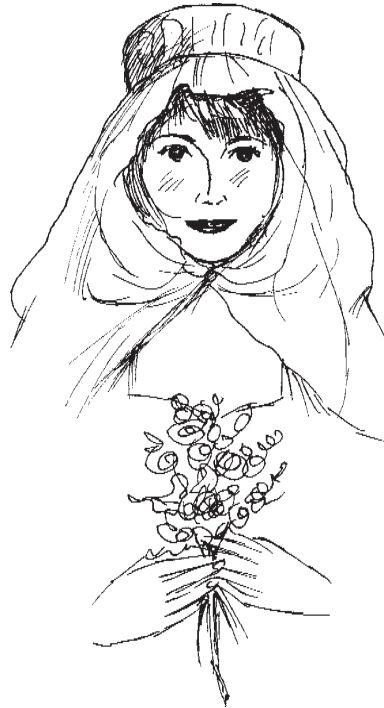
Two verses in the New Covenant Scriptures highlight the bridal relationship that Yeshua has with the individual believer. The first is 2 Corinthians 11:2. The Apostle Paul speaks in this verse to all believers, both women and men: *"For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to the Messiah."* Betrothed means engaged. In some way, believers, both male and female, are spiritually engaged to a bridegroom. We are to be like virgins, spiritually, as we relate to this "husband."

Paul continues with the analogy in Romans 7:4: *"Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Messiah, that you may be married to another – to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God."* We are married to One who has been raised from the dead. That One is Yeshua, the Son of God, the Messiah. The purpose of our union is to bear fruit to God . . . fruit in terms of souls (Proverbs 11:30), works that glorify God (Ephesians 2:10), as well as the fruit of the Ruach HaKodesh (the Holy Spirit) (Galatians 5:22).

In the fifth chapter of the book of Ephesians, Paul speaks again concerning the relationship between Messiah and His body, using a bridal analogy: *"Wives should submit to their husbands as they do to the Lord; because the husband is head of the wife, just as the Messiah, as head of the Messianic Community, is himself the one who keeps the body safe . . . As for husbands, love your wives, just as the Messiah loved the Messianic Community, indeed gave himself up on its behalf, in order to set it apart for God, making it clean through immersion in the mikveh, so to speak in order to present the Messianic Community to himself as a bride to be proud of, without a spot, wrinkle or any such thing but holy and without defect."* The passage concludes with: *"There is profound truth hidden here, which I say concerns the Messiah and the Messianic Community."* (JNT)

The most intimate of human relationships is the marriage relationship. As such, it is a picture of the intimacy that the individual believer can have with God. Captured by love, cleansed by blood, transformed by His Spirit, Messiah's bride will one day stand before Him without spot or wrinkle. As the bridegroom says in the Song of Songs: *"Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee"* (Song 4:7). He is the One who accomplishes this work in His bride. We can be very thankful for that! As we progress through the steps of the ancient Jewish wedding, we'll find out some more about the sanctification of the bride. Let's begin at the beginning, now, with the selection of the bride.

***"I have betrothed you
to one husband..."***
2 Corinthians 11:2



Selection of the Bride

In ancient Israel, brides were usually chosen by the father of the bridegroom. He would send his most trusted servant to search for a bride for his son. We see in the book of Genesis, for example, that Abraham sent his most trusted servant Eliezer (whose name means "God's helper") to find a wife for his son Isaac (Genesis 24:2-9). The servant found Rebekah, who became the very first Jewish bride. Eliezer was perhaps the forerunner of what later became known as the *shadkhan* or matchmaker.

The bridegroom's father would, of course, act in his son's best interest in choosing a bride. Perhaps, if the son was old enough, they would confer together. In either case, the bridegroom selected the bride (not vice-versa). A verse from the New Covenant elevates this custom to a spiritual level: *"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain . . ."* (John 15:16). We have been chosen to be part of Messiah's bride. If you are gentile by birth, you have been chosen once. If you are Jewish, you have been chosen twice! Both are recipients of the same love.

Many times the bride had not seen her husband-to-be, but had found out about him through the servant. This is the case with the bride of Messiah. We have not seen Yeshua, but God's servant, the Holy

Spirit, has revealed Him to us. We love our Bridegroom, sight unseen as expressed in 1 Peter 1:8: *“Whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory. . .”* We see Yeshua now through eyes of faith. One day we will see him face to face.

In Matthew 22:2-3 we read about a king who prepared a marriage for his son and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding, but they would not come. The same thing happens in the spiritual realm. It is called resisting the Holy Spirit. As the servant of God, the Holy Spirit goes out into the highways and byways seeking a bride for God’s Son. Many resist Him, but not all. As I meditated on this truth one day many years ago when we lived on the beach in Ft. Lauderdale, a car drove up into our driveway. A woman got out, saw me in my beach chair on the upper deck, and asked, “Is this Love Song to the Messiah?” I said it was (our ministry at that time was based in our home). She continued, “I’m Jewish and I’m beginning to believe that perhaps Jesus really is the Messiah, and I was wondering if anyone here could tell me about that.” I invited her in, (The Holy Spirit had already extended the invitation!) and she became a part of the bride of Messiah.

That was in the 1980’s. Since that time the Ruach HaKodesh has begun moving dramatically among God’s ancient people. We are seeing the veil of blindness (Romans 11:25) replaced by a bridal veil almost weekly. A number of the new bridal souls are over seventy years of age. Glory to God!

Yeshua as a Jewish bridegroom always initiates the love. He selects us; we don’t select Him. Scripture tells that *“We love Him because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19)*. Most of us, including myself, were wooed and pursued by the Lord for quite a while before we even began to acknowledge His presence or reach out to Him. His choosing us is indeed a miracle. Why would the King of kings and Lord of lords choose me? This is what the Shulamite maiden asks in the Song of Songs 2:1 when she says: *“I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.”* (In other words, I’m just a common wildflower. What does He see in me?) The King’s answer is: *“Like a lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters” (Song 2:2)*.

He has chosen us because He loves us.

He loves us because He has chosen to.

His selection of us is mysterious, gracious and wonderful!

The Bride Price

Brides in Bible times were purchased. A bride price or *mohar* was paid for a bride. We read in Deuteronomy 24:1 that a man “took” or “acquired” a wife. The term used for this in Hebrew is *kichah*, a business term. The price was paid to the father of the bride, both to compensate him for the loss of a worker in his household and to show how much the bridegroom loved and valued the bride. Virgins brought double the price of widows or divorced women. If the going rate for a bride was two camels, fifty shekels of silver, a tent or whatever, the bridegroom could pay more than was required if he chose to. Sometimes the bride price did not include money or goods. In the case of Jacob and Rachel, the bride price was service to Rachel’s father Laban. We read in Genesis about the price that Jacob paid for his bride: *“So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed only a few days to him because of the love he had for her” (Genesis 29:20)*.

Despite the obvious element of romance seen in the story of Jacob and Rachel, brides were considered possessions in ancient Israel. The word for wife, *be’ulah*, literally means the “owned one.” Husband or *ba’al* means “owner” or “master.” *“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor’s,”* is an exhortation found in the tenth commandment (Exodus 20:17).

Since a wife was purchased, she belonged to her husband.

Although this may seem cruel and unjust in today’s culture and way of thinking, it was actually a step above what was happening in the pagan world at that time. There was no value placed on wives. If a man wanted a wife, he simply took her to his house, had intercourse with her and she became his wife. God introduced sanctity and permanence into the marriage relationship, and the *mohar* or bride price was part

of raising a standard of righteousness. Women had value. They were to be cherished. This important truth is beautifully expressed by Maurice Lamm in his book, **The Jewish Way in Love and Marriage**, “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. 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 [and merits] capital punishment. If he wishes to separate from her, he requires a divorce.”

There are seven different verses in the Bible which say: “...And when a man taketh a wife...” (KJV). From these and other verses, such as Jeremiah 31:22, “... a woman shall encompass a man,” a custom developed in the ancient Jewish wedding called the “seven circuits.” The bride circled her bridegroom seven times, showing her submission to him, her protection of him, her belonging to him, and his belonging to her. This custom is still part of many Jewish weddings today.

The concept of being purchased and belonging to another has a powerful spiritual application. We, as the bride of Messiah, have also been purchased. A very high *mohar* was paid for us – the blood of Yeshua Himself. The Messiah wrestled with that price in the Garden of Gethsemane. It was as if He were asking that fateful night, “Father, do you know what they’re asking for her?” Our Bridegroom chose to pay the very high price because of the “*joy set before him*,” the joy of seeing each one of us redeemed, whole, new creations, a pure, spotless bride. We were the joy set before Yeshua in the Garden.

The New Covenant mentions our *mohar* a number of times. In 1 Peter 1:18-19 we read: “*Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things like silver or gold... but with the precious blood of Messiah, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*” Ephesians 1:14 speaks of the “*redemption of the purchased possession*” referring to the bride of Messiah.

1 Corinthians 7:23 states that since we are bought with a price, we should not become slaves of men. Our *mohar* is also mentioned in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: “*Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.*” In Luke 22:19-20, Yeshua mentions the bride price at His last Passover seder on earth, immediately before He paid the price in full: “*And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is My body which is given for you... This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.’*” The following scripture is an exhortation to leaders in the body of Messiah: “*Watch out for yourselves, and for all the flock in which the Ruach HaKodesh has placed you as leaders, to shepherd God’s Messianic Community, which he won for himself at the cost of his own Son’s blood*” (Acts 20:28 JNT).

Yielding to and accepting the fact that we no longer belong to ourselves because we have been “*bought with a price*” is a key to entering into the abundant life that our Bridegroom has for us. When we give Him all of us, He freely gives us all of Him. How can we withhold anything from Him when the high price He paid for us shows us how valuable we are to Him?

When Yeshua died on the tree, paying the *mohar* for His bride, He said: “*It is finished!*” (John 19:30). The word that He spoke as His final thought is from the Hebrew root *ka’lal* which means to complete, make perfect or finish. It is the same root of the word for bride: *kallah*. Could Yeshua’s last words on the cross have had bridal overtones? Was His bride His last thought as He paid the bride price for her?

We were on His heart, why not on His lips?

Betrothal/Ketubah

The ancient Jewish marriage ceremony consisted of two main parts, beginning with betrothal or engagement. The Hebrew word for betrothal is *erusin*. Another word, *kidushin*, was also used to describe this step in the marriage process. *Kidushin* literally means sanctification or holiness with the idea of being

set apart. It comes from the Hebrew word for holy, *kadosh*. The God of the Hebrews elevated marriage to a holy state and introduced Himself as a part of the relationship. This was the beginning of the concept of “holy matrimony.” The word for the betrothed woman was also related to the word holy: a bride was *m’kudeshet*.

Betrothal occurred up to twelve months before the actual wedding and involved covenant (“*brit*” in Hebrew). It was like our engagement today, but with a much greater sense of commitment because of the covenant entered into. Covenant in Bible times was serious, final, sealed in blood, and legally binding. Covenants could not be easily broken. Once a couple entered into covenant at betrothal, they were legally married in all aspects except for the physical consummation of the marriage. If joint checking accounts had existed in ancient times, the couple could have had one.

At the betrothal ceremony, a marriage contract or *ketubah* was presented to the father of the bride. This contract was actually a covenant which stipulated the bride price and other provisions that the bridegroom was prepared to make for his bride. Before the *ketubah* was introduced, women had no rights, no security, no guarantee of protection and provision. The *ketubah* as a covenantal document elevated women to a new status in society. In it, the bridegroom promised to work for honor, support and maintain his bride in truth, provide her food, clothing and necessities, and live together with her as husband and wife. The *ketubah* is still very much a part of Jewish weddings today. Many times it is read publicly and serves as an interlude between the prenuptial or betrothal ceremony of *erusin* and the nuptial ceremony of *nisuin*. A bride cherishes her *ketubah* both for its meaning and beauty.

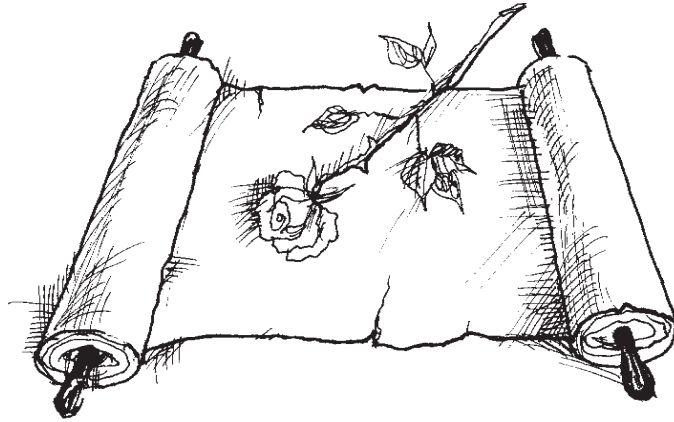
Just as the *ketubah* was the inalienable right of the bride, the New Testament, our *ketubah*, contains promises for us from our soon coming Bridegroom. So many times people look at the Bible as a big book of “don’ts.” It is not that at all. The New Covenant is a marriage contract that shows us all we are entitled to as part of Yeshua’s bride. All the promises in this Book, (which is actually a love letter to the bride), are for us to receive by faith. For example, in Matthew 6:28-30 our Heavenly Bridegroom says to us: “*So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?*” Our Bridegroom promises to clothe us, feed us, provide shelter for us, and live with us as husband and wife. He is in covenant with us. Our *ketubah* testifies to this.

We read in Jeremiah 31:31-34 of the New *Ketubah* (Covenant) that God promised to make with His people Israel: “*Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah – not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.*”

This *ketubah* or marriage contract was first promised to the house of Israel, and later opened up to “*whosoever will.*” This meant that non-Jews who at one time were strangers to God’s covenants and promises could enter in and fully partake of His blessings, including the blessings of the New (“marriage”) Covenant. The New Covenant is built on even better promises than the one God gave the Jewish people at Mt. Sinai according to Hebrews 8:6. Through this covenant, our Bridegroom promises to take God’s law from the outside and place it on the inside so that we might “*know Him.*” The Hebrew word “to know” used here is *yada*. It speaks of intimacy of relationship in the deepest sense. This is the same Hebrew word used for sexual intercourse in the Scriptures, i.e. “*And Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch*” (Genesis 4:17). Such intimacy with a Holy God is available to all who enter into the New Covenant and accept His *Ketubah*. That includes you!

**“I will put My law in their minds,
and write it on their hearts . . . ”**

Jeremiah 31:33



The Bride’s Consent

Although a bride was selected for a bridegroom, the prospective girl had some say in responding to a proposed marriage contract. We see this in the example of Rebekah in Genesis 24:57-58. After Abraham’s servant’s encounter with her at the well, she brought Eliezer to her father’s house where they discussed the proposed marriage between Rebekah and Abraham’s son, Isaac. The following morning, they called Rebekah and said to her, “*Will you go with this man?*” She said, “*I will go.*” Rebekah gave her consent – her “I do.” This willing consent in Hebrew is *daat*. Some insight into Jewish thought on the bride’s consent is given to us by Eugene Mihaly in an article entitled “The Jewish View of Marriage”: “Judaism teaches that marriage can take place only by mutual consent. In an age when child marriage was the common practice, the sages ordained: ‘It is forbidden for a man to betroth his minor daughter until she attains her majority and says, *I love this man.*’ ”

The same occurs in our spiritual betrothal to Yeshua HaMashiach. God never forces anyone to say “I do” to His Son Yeshua. He created us with a free will. He is glorified when we choose to do things His way and return the love that He so lavishly bestows upon us. In Romans 10:9-10, we read about the New Covenant “I do:” “*...If you confess with your mouth the Lord Yeshua, the Messiah, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead you will be saved. For with the heart one believes to righteousness and with the mouth confession is made to salvation.*” We believe with our heart and confess with our lips when we say, “*Yes!*” to Yeshua.

This is what happened to me on July 25, 1973. Kneeling by my bed in Bethpage, New York, I said to God: “I do believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. (At that time I called Him Jesus.)

I do believe that You raised Him from the dead.
I do repent of all my sin and desire to turn from it.
I do give You my heart and my whole life.
I do trust You with my future.
I do believe that Yeshua’s death atoned for my sin.
I do receive His total forgiveness and the gift of eternal life.
I do receive Your love and my salvation today.”

Amen.

I was in an intimate place – my bedroom – when I prayed that prayer. My Jewish husband was sit-

ting on the edge of the bed watching me. There was no huppah or wedding canopy over me, but I felt as if there was! Do you cry at weddings? I cried at this one – tears of great joy – as I became part of the bride of Messiah.

If you've never prayed to receive Yeshua, don't delay. His love is reaching out to you. Say "I do" and be eternally blessed.



**“For with the heart one believes
to righteousness . . .”
Romans 10:10**

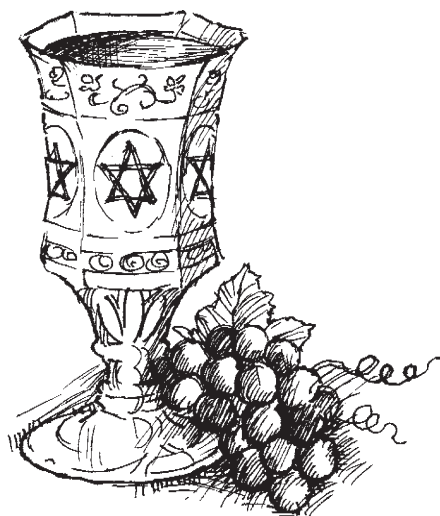
Cup of the Covenant

When the terms of the *ketubah* were accepted (at our 25th anniversary in Jerusalem, a white handkerchief was held up by Neil and the rabbi to indicate the bridegroom's acceptance of all the unilateral obligations of the *ketubah*), a cup of wine was shared to seal the marriage covenant. The Hebrew word for bridegroom, *hatan*, means “one who enters into covenant.” Wine has been blessed for over 2,000 years in the same manner whenever a covenant was entered into, by saying: “*Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha olam borey pre hagafen.*” (Blessed art Thou, O Lord, our God, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.) The blessing of this cup of wine was called *Birkat Erusin*. The bride and groom shared the same cup, symbolizing the shared life that would be theirs. A second cup of wine would be shared many months later. Wine in Judaism has always symbolized joy. Marriage in Jewish thought is the highest source of joy on earth. Wine also symbolized blood. The marriage covenant is a blood covenant in the eyes of God. Two lives become one in a lifelong commitment.

The cup that Yeshua took at His last Passover seder on earth was the cup of the New Marriage Covenant with His bride. We read in Luke 22:20: “*Likewise He also took the cup after supper saying, this cup is the new testament (covenant) in My blood, which is shed for you.*” Yeshua and His disciples were celebrating the anniversary of God's wedding to Israel (the Exodus). He was telling them that the New Marriage Covenant (the one prophesied in Jeremiah 31) would be sealed with His blood. Yeshua and His disciples drank from a common cup in an upper room in Jerusalem. They became one as they drank wine together.

When we partake of that cup at the Lord's Seder (Communion) we remember our Heavenly Bridegroom, the *mohar* paid for us, and our covenantal relationship with Yeshua. Just as two cups of wine were used as part of the ancient Jewish wedding, (the second at the actual hometaking of the bride), Messiah's bride will one day soon drink a cup with Yeshua in person at the second part of our marriage ceremony. Yeshua mentioned this cup in Matthew 26:29 when He said: “*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.*” Until that day, we have the communion cup to remind us of our covenant with our Heavenly Bridegroom. We are to remember His love more than wine . . . (Song of Songs 1:4). It is more precious than anything else this world has to offer.

**“...He took
the cup after
supper...”
Luke 22:20**



Gifts for the Bride

Betrothal included the giving of gifts by the bridegroom to his bride. Abraham's servant Eliezer brought ten camels laden with gifts when he went to find a bride for his master's son: *"Then the servant brought out jewelry of silver, jewelry of gold, and clothing, and gave them to Rebekah . . . "* (Genesis 24:53). (When Rebekah had volunteered to water the ten camels, she had no idea that the camels and their precious cargo would soon be hers, nor that one of these camels would carry her to her bridegroom.)

Many times a bridegroom gave a coin or other object of value to his betrothed bride – something that would help her remember him while they were apart. Eventually the customary gift became a ring. The giving of the ring to the bride constituted the main feature of *erusin* (betrothal). As the bridegroom placed the ring on the bride's index finger he recited the traditional Jewish espousal formula: *"Ha-rey at m'kudeshet lib'taba'at zu k'dat Moshe v'Yisrael."* The most ancient wedding ceremonies contained only the phrase: *"Ha-rey at m'kudeshet li"* (Be thou consecrated unto me.) The phrase: *"K'dat Moshe v'Yisrael"* (according to the law of Moses and Israel) was added later. And *"b'taba'at zu"* (by means of this ring) was added still later.

The real focus of the gift giving was not the gift, but the giver. The object of value, whether a ring, coin or whatever, made the bride think about her bridegroom. Today young men usually give their fiancées a diamond engagement ring. When the young woman looks at the ring she is reminded of the one who gave her the ring. In much the same way, God's Holy Spirit is our spiritual engagement ring who leads us to focus on our Heavenly Bridegroom. He doesn't call attention to Himself, but rather to the One who purchased us. Just as a diamond is many faceted, so is the Holy Spirit. As a living bridal gift, He helps to keep our eyes on our soon-coming, many-faceted Bridegroom.

The Holy Spirit is the greatest gift that Yeshua has given to His Bride. 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 tells us that the Lord has given us the Spirit in our hearts as a deposit – a token of our bridal inheritance. Through Him we receive many gifts: 1 Corinthians 12:8-11 mentions some of them: *"For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills."*

What bride would say to a bridegroom who comes to her with a gift: "Oh, you shouldn't have done that! You know you can't afford that. Why did you get me that gift?!" And yet, the bride of Messiah does this with our Heavenly Bridegroom. So many of us don't know how to receive from Him!! Today is the day to begin to change. Our God is a giver. Every good and perfect gift comes from Him (James 1:17). When

we receive gifts from God, we give Him pleasure. His gifts, given through the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit), are meant to be shared (not consumed on our own lusts). If we are willing to be vessels through which the bridal gifts flow out to touch the lives of others, God will give us as much as we can receive.

God, the Great Giver, is looking for receivers! Do you desire to become one? Pray with me right now: “Dear Heavenly Father – It is easy for me to give, but I have a difficult time receiving. Help me today to see that every good and perfect gift comes from You and to receive from others with knowledge of this truth. I want to receive all that you have for me, every bridal gift with which You want to bless me. Thank you for changing my life, in Yeshua’s name. Amen.”

Some more gifts that Messiah’s bride receives include: eternal life, forgiveness of sins, prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, ruling, mercy (Romans 12), and faith. And there are even more gifts for the bride as she learns more about her Heavenly Bridegroom from God’s servant, the Holy Spirit.

Something to ponder: the gifts of the Holy Spirit are precious jewels that adorn Messiah’s bride.

Mikvah

Brides in ancient Israel as well as brides in Israel today experience a *mikvah* prior to their wedding. The word *mikvah* means a pool of living water used for ritual purification. Jewish brides to this day continue to go to the *mikvah* for a *tevilah* or ritual immersion in water as part of their physical and spiritual preparation for the wedding ceremony. This ancient Jewish custom represents a separation from an old life to a new life – from life as a single woman to life as a married woman. It also symbolizes a change in status and authority; a woman comes out from under the authority of her father to the authority of her husband.

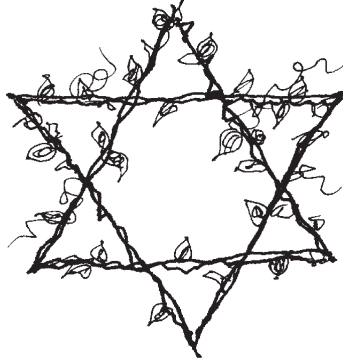
In Matthew chapter 3, people from Jerusalem, all Judea, and the surrounding region came to John for immersion (*tevilah*) by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins. They were coming under the authority of John’s teaching as they did this. But John, upon seeing Yeshua coming toward Him, pointed out to the people that they should come under His authority because He was “*The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29). John was the “*friend of the bridegroom*” (John 3:27-29). Yeshua was the Bridegroom. John wanted the bride to know to whom she should rightfully submit.

Immersion in the *mikvah* in traditional Jewish understanding is a religious ceremony imbued with profound spiritual symbolism. God is praised as the One who purifies His people, the One who sanctifies them through His commandments and has commanded them regarding immersion. In commenting on the *mikvah*, Rabbi Akiva, a famous first century rabbi, said: “May you be praised, O Israel: Before whom are you purifying yourselves? Who purifies you? Your Father in Heaven... Just as the mikvah purifies the impure, so does the Holy One, Blessed be He, purify Israel.”

Should the bride of Messiah go to the waters of the *mikvah*? Absolutely! Water immersion is the New Covenant equivalent of the *mikvah*. The Bible says in Mark 16:16: “*He who believes and is baptized (immersed, goes to the mikvah) will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.*” When we as believers are immersed in water we reckon our old selves dead to sin, no longer under the authority of the evil one. We are alive to God, submitted to a new master: Yeshua, our Bridegroom/King. We have been cleansed by His blood, and a new beginning is ours as a part of the bride of Messiah. Yeshua experienced immersion in the Jordan as recorded in Matthew 3:16. As He entered the waters of the *mikvah* the Spirit of God descended on him like a dove. As we follow Yeshua in the *mikvah*, the Spirit of God does something new in us as well!

It is always a thrill to accompany pilgrims on our Israel tours as we conduct a *mikvah* service at the Jordan River. One of the young women on our 1996 Bridal Tour asked God to send two doves when she was immersed in the Jordan River. As she prepared to enter the waters of the *mikvah*, an entire flock of doves flew overhead. Tears streamed down her face as she realized the abundance of blessings that God desires to shower upon His bride.

P.S. When Jewish believers go to the *mikvah*, they do not become gentiles. Gentiles, on the other hand, do become spiritual Jews! The Jewish believers are coming under the authority of a Jewish Messiah. Non-Jews are actually making a public statement that they have become children of Abraham by faith in Yeshua. Both have experienced a circumcision of the heart. In a very real sense, the non-Jew has “converted” and the Jew has been “completed.” See Romans 2:28-29, Romans 11:13-18, and Ephesians 2:11-13.



Departure of the Bridegroom

Once the marriage covenant was sealed, the bridegroom in ancient Israel left his beloved to go to his father’s house to prepare a wedding chamber, *chadar*, for her. He would be gone for up to twelve months. During this time, his wife-to-be would prepare herself to leave her parents’ home to live with her husband’s family and become part of their household. This reminds me of Psalm 45:10-11: *“Hearken, O daughter; and consider and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house; so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty...”*

When Yeshua spoke to his disciples before He left earth to return to His Father’s house, He used a bridal metaphor with which all of them were intimately acquainted. We read His words in John 14:2-3: *“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.”*

Yeshua, our Heavenly Bridegroom, left His bride to go prepare a wedding chamber for her. He promised to return for her. Although that was nearly 2,000 years ago, His promise is still good and His return is near. We live in the day when Israel has been reborn as a nation, when Hebrew has been resurrected as a language, when God has brought His people back to Israel from the four corners of the earth, when Jerusalem has become the stone of stumbling prophesied by Zechariah and others. These and many other prophetic signs say to us today: *“Behold, the Bridegroom cometh!”*

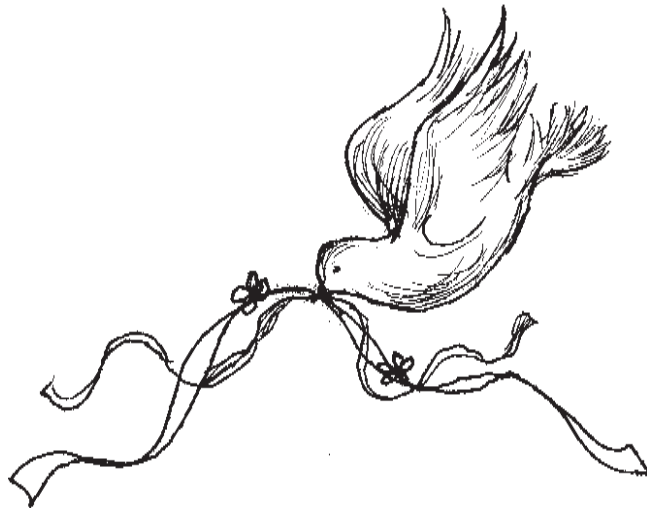
While we await His return, Yeshua’s bride should be faithful and spiritually alert. This is the hour to pray and fast. An interesting verse about fasting is found in Matthew 9:15. Consider these words as an exhortation to the bride of Messiah: *“And Yeshua said to them (the Pharisees), ‘Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.’”* Prayer and fasting . . . a major part of the preparation of Messiah’s bride while she awaits His return.

Although Yeshua is away, preparing a place for us, we are not entirely alone, for His servant the Ruach HaKodesh is with us. This is a source of great comfort to Messiah’s bride. The presence of God’s Spirit keeps our Bridegroom with us, even though He is no longer here on earth. The following words of Yeshua spoken just prior to His departure gladden the heart of His bride: *“It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you... when*

He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you” (John 16:7,13-14).

Our Bridegroom has departed, but through His Spirit He is with us continually. We should be ever grateful for this gift.

“I go to prepare a place for you.”
John 14:2



The Consecrated Bride

The Jewish bride (*kallah* in Hebrew) was set apart, consecrated, separated unto her bridegroom while he was away preparing her wedding chamber. A verse in the Song of Songs (4:12) refers to the bride’s state: *“A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.”* *Kallah* literally means the secluded, or enclosed one. The bride belonged to her beloved, the one who had purchased her, and was to have eyes for none other. In fact, she was to have what the Bible calls “doves’ eyes” (Song of Songs 1:15). What do doves’ eyes symbolize? Faithfulness, singleness of vision (doves have no peripheral vision), gentleness, and loving commitment (doves mate for life). And of course, doves are a symbol of the Ruach HaKodesh. In the case of Messiah’s bride, the Bridegroom longs to see the reflection of His Spirit in His bride’s eyes. As I mentioned before, the Hebrew word for one who is betrothed, faithfully awaiting her beloved, is *m’kudeshet*. This is what we are today in Yeshua.

It was probably easy for a bride in ancient Israel to keep her bridegroom foremost in her heart and mind during the first few months after his departure. After all, she had the gifts he had given her to look at each day. Perhaps he sent letters to her also. But after a while, when his return was delayed, the temptation at the marketplace to look at another handsome man might have been a reality with which she had to struggle. Would her bridegroom keep his promise and return for her? Why hadn’t he come yet? Could he be trusted? These thoughts and others might have been entertained by the bride in ancient Israel. There were undoubtedly scoffers at that time just as the Bible says there will be in our day, who question the integrity and faithfulness of our Bridegroom. 2 Peter 3:3 tells us about them: *“Knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His*

coming?... ‘ “ Though He tarry, we have every confidence that our Bridegroom is coming back for us. We are His consecrated bride, awaiting His return.

The same Spirit that sought the bride of Messiah consecrates and helps to prepare her. A type of the Holy Spirit is seen in the book of Esther, giving us a glimpse of how a bride is prepared. Haggai, the king’s servant, prepared Esther for her union with the king by prescribing six months of oil of myrrh (for purification) and six months of sweet oils (for beautification) (Esther 2:12). Esther did not choose what she would wear, nor how she would prepare herself for the king. She left it up to Haggai and followed his advice. Esther, *hadassah* in Hebrew, means “I will be hidden.” Messiah’s bride, today, is hidden in Him, (Colossians 3:3) hidden in the cleft of the Rock, (Songs 2:14) and submitted to the working of the Holy Spirit in her life. He shows the bride how to live for the Bridegroom, not for herself (2 Cor. 5:15). He is intimately involved in her preparation.

To be “consecrated” is to be “holy.” Holiness comes through yielding to the Holy Spirit in our lives. The consecrated bride of Messiah is God’s treasured possession, His witness, His servant, His worshipper, even His army. She is strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, and does battle with the enemy of her soul. Her consecration is a source of strength and anointing. Yeshua delights in our separation to Him. We may be in the world, but we are not of the world. We belong to our Heavenly Bridegroom.

One of the symbols of a bride’s consecration was a crown. Brides wore either a crown of flowers (the “garden enclosed” mentioned earlier) or a golden “Jerusalem of Gold” bridal crown (which I wore on our 25th Anniversary). Many years ago, a woman in Chicago saw me wearing a floral crown on a Jewish Jewels television program and wrote the following note to me and Neil:

“This evening when I saw the bride dressed with leaves and flowers in her hair, I almost fainted. Not so long ago I had a dream and in it I was dressed in bridal clothes with this kind of headdress. I wore a long white gown and carried calla lillies in my arms. I was crying because I knew I was not worthy of the one I was going to meet. Then I looked down and I was walking on white satin and so also were people in front of me and all around me, all dressed the same way. You see, I was beautiful, young, straight and slim. I am 77 years old, bent, but loving my Savior.” Evelyn J.

God gave this precious lady a vision of His consecrated bride. I also had a vision of His bride, but a different kind of vision. In 1980, I had a vision of a dead bride in a casket, and the Lord spoke to me to lay hands on this bride. She represented two groups of people, as I later came to understand: Yeshua’s bride and Israel, God’s wife. The first was asleep, the second, dead (in trespasses and sins), but they both looked the same. Could Messiah’s bride be asleep as the hour of His coming draws near? We find the answer to this question in the Parable of the Ten Virgins in Matthew chapter 25. The Bible tells us that both the wise and foolish virgins were sleeping while the bridegroom delayed. Even those of us who love the Lord with all our hearts and serve Him full-time in the ministry are not walking in the power, anointing, or blessing that God has for us. Some part of us is asleep. When we get to our Bridegroom’s home in Heaven, we will see how much power was available to us here on earth that we didn’t use.

May we heed the words of the pastors and teachers that God sends to help prepare the bride of Messiah (Ephesians 4:11-13). May we decide today to listen to the counsel of the Holy Spirit who knows the heart of our Bridegroom as no one else does. With His help, we will be a bride without spot and wrinkle, a holy bride who is looking to Yeshua, the Author and Finisher of our faith, and anxiously awaiting His return.



Return of the Bridegroom

A bride in ancient Israel had no idea what day or hour her bridegroom would return for her to take her to the wedding chamber. The groom himself didn't know when he'd go to claim his bride. Only his father knew. The father was the one who would decide when all was ready for the wedding, when the bridal chamber was complete, when the fullness of time had come. My husband Neil always says that if it were up to the bridegroom, he would have hammered a few two-by-fours together and returned at once for his bride. But the father of the bridegroom had the last word. We read about this custom in Mark 13:32 in reference to the hour of Yeshua's return: *"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."*

Jewish bridegrooms usually came for their brides late at night, near the midnight hour. Shofars would break the silence of night. There would be shouts in the streets, and a torch-light procession which would wind its way through the town to the home of the bride. This gave her a few extra moments to make final preparations. In the Parable of the Ten Virgins, we read about the return of the bridegroom: *"And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!'"* The bride and her attendants would trim their lamps and get ready to go.

There is another cry that resounds in my own bridal heart which I also expect to hear when my Heavenly Bridegroom returns. It is: *"Arise, my love, my fair one and come away"* (Song of Songs 2:10). Yeshua will come for us as a thief in the night, calling us to arise to meet Him in the air. What a romantic escape from our sin-stained world!

After brides in ancient Israel heard that their bridegroom was coming, they prepared themselves to enter a bridal litter or palanquin called *aperion* in Hebrew. This *aperion* is mentioned in the Song of Songs chapter 3:9-10: *"Of the wood of Lebanon Solomon the King made himself a palanquin (aperion): He made its pillars of silver; its support of gold, its seat of purple, its interior paved with love, by the daughters of Jerusalem."*

A procession back to the home of the bridegroom began with the bride in the *aperion* accompanied by musicians, singers, dancers, friends, family and bridal attendants carrying torches. The voice of the bridegroom and the bride would be heard in the streets of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 33:11). The bride would be veiled, and the bridegroom would peek in the *aperion* and check under the veil in a ceremony called *bedeken* to make sure he had the right bride. (Read the story of Jacob and Rachel to find out the origin of this custom.) The bride would be attired in her finest clothing, decked with jewels, glowing and beautiful. (There's no such thing as an ugly bride! – because she knows how much she is loved.)

In 1994 we discovered that the *aperion* of the Bible had been recreated by Reuven Prager of HaMishpochah in Jerusalem. I had the great privilege of being carried in it as we re-enacted the ancient Jewish wedding for our 25th Anniversary in 1996. Two shofar blowers, a biblical harpist and a flautist accompanied me as four strong Israelis called *Giborei Yisrael* (heroes of Israel), carried me in the *aperion*. Five bridesmaids followed (reminiscent of the five wise virgins of Matthew 25), carrying multi-wicked havdalah candles, symbolic of the torchlight of ancient times.

Yeshua, our Heavenly Bridegroom, will return for us when the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, His Father, gives Him permission to do so. We too will hear a shout as well as the sound of the shofar. We may also see light, as if from torches. It will all happen quickly at the midnight hour of history – and we won't have time to draw close to God if we haven't already. Our Bridegroom, the same One who made Himself an *aperion* (an earthly body), will appear in the clouds as our King, the Lover of our souls: *"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Messiah will rise first. Then we who are alive and 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"* (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

"For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be." (Matthew 24:27) Let us prepare our hearts for His coming, and look up, for our redemption draws near.

The Huppah

The second half of the ancient Jewish wedding ceremony, *nisuin* or *huppah*, is also called the “hometaking.” *Huppah* refers to both a part of the wedding ceremony and the actual bridal canopy that covers the bridal couple. The original meaning of *huppah* was “room” or “covering.” The *huppah* of ancient times was a special room built in the bridegroom’s father’s home. It is mentioned in the Bible in verses such as Psalm 19:5 and Joel 2:15.

Nisuin comes from the verb *nasah* which means to lift up, to bear or to carry. As mentioned earlier, the bride was lifted up in the *aperion* and carried to her waiting bridegroom. The bridegroom always arrived at the *huppah* before his bride to welcome her to the place he had prepared for her. Bride and bridegroom would greet the guests gathered at his father’s house and then be escorted to the bridal chamber where they would be alone for seven days, the marriage would be consummated, and the second part of the marriage ceremony would be complete. The best man or “friend of the bridegroom” waited outside the wedding chamber to hear the voice of the bridegroom tell him that the marriage was consummated. Then all the guests began a week long celebration. John, referring to Yeshua’s voice, said the following: “*He that has the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled*” (John 3:29). The seven day period was also called the “week of the bride.” This week is mentioned in the story of Jacob, Leah and Rachel in Genesis chapter 29: “. . . and Laban said, ‘It must not be done so in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn. Fulfill her week, and we will give you this one also for the service which you will serve with me still another seven years.’”

The *huppah* as a room in the bridegroom’s father’s house was eventually replaced by a bridal canopy. This canopy was usually a square cloth of silk or velvet, supported by four poles, and held up by four men. It symbolized the new home to which the bridegroom would take his bride. As a symbolic house, open on four sides, the *huppah* represented the Jewish home filled with *hesed* (acts of love) including hospitality to strangers, hence its “openness.”

The *huppah* has taken many forms throughout the centuries. At times a *tallit* (prayer shawl) was spread over the bridal couple to serve as the *huppah*. A *huppah* may be ornately embroidered with Jewish symbols, or constructed of fine silk or velvet. In some Jewish weddings today, the *huppah* is made entirely of flowers. In ancient times the poles of the *huppah* were made from trees that were planted at the birth of the bridegroom or, sometimes, at the birth of both bridegroom and bride (cedar tree for a male child, pine for a female).

Today at Jewish weddings seven blessings (*Sheva B’rachot*) are chanted as the couple stands under the *huppah*. These blessings have been part of the Jewish wedding ceremony for hundreds of years. They are also called *Birkot Nisuin*. The end of the seven blessings traditionally marks the beginning of married life. Perhaps the friend of the bridegroom originally chanted the *Sheva B’rachot* while the couple spent seven days in the bridal chamber. The first of the seven blessings is the blessing over the second cup of wine that seals the marriage covenant. We enjoyed hearing the blessings chanted over us in Jerusalem. They are as follows:

1. Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine. (blessing over the second cup)
2. Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has Created all things to Thy Glory.
3. Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, Creator of man.
4. Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has made man in thine image, after Thy likeness, and has prepared unto him, out of his very self, a perpetual fabric. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, Creator of man.
5. May she who was barren (Zion) be exceedingly glad and exult, when her children are gathered within her in joy. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who makest Zion joyful through her children.
6. O make these loved companions greatly to rejoice, even as of old Thou didst gladden Thy creatures in the Garden of Eden. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who makest bridegroom and bride to rejoice.

7. Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast created joy and gladness, bridegroom and bride, mirth and exultation, pleasure and delight, love, brotherhood, peace and fellowship. Soon O Lord our God, may there be heard in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of joy and gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the jubilant voice of bridegrooms from their canopies, and of youths from their feasts of song. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who makest the bridegroom to rejoice with the bride.

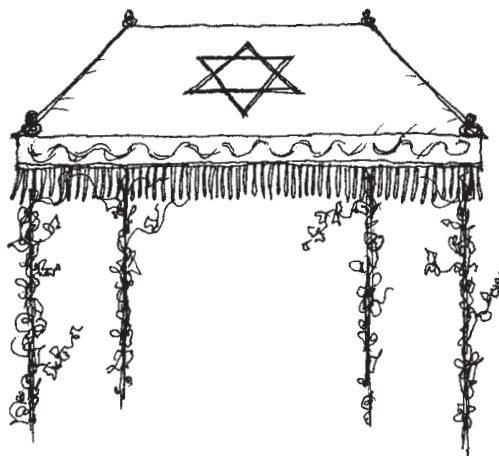
Although the blessing over the wine was the first one chanted under the *huppah*, the second cup is not taken until all the other blessings are chanted. Then bride and bridegroom sip the wine and the marriage covenant is sealed forever. Since ancient times, bridegrooms have broken a glass at the end of the *huppah* ceremony. This custom is still a part of Jewish weddings today. A thin glass is usually wrapped in a napkin to contain the fragments as it is smashed under foot by the bridegroom. At one time in history, the glass that was broken under the *huppah* was the one used to seal the pre-nuptial covenant of *kidushin*. The betrothal was over, the marriage had begun and the two lives would never be the same. The broken glass symbolized this reality. Since there are still two cups of wine taken at a Jewish wedding today, symbolizing the two parts of the Jewish wedding, it would be nice to have one of very thin glass and one of silver. The first would be the one that is broken as in ancient times. The second cup, made of silver could be kept and passed down through generations. Perhaps we should start that tradition!

Since the *huppah* was originally the place of marital union and therefore required privacy, a custom developed in which the couple met privately after the wedding ceremony to spend the first few minutes alone together as husband and wife. This custom is called *yihud* and is still practiced among some Jewish groups today.

The spiritual parallel to the *huppah* for the bride of Messiah begins as we are lifted up off the earth to be taken to our heavenly wedding chamber. We will spend one week (seven years) with our Bridegroom/King, and we will become one, *echad*, with Him. We shall be like our Bridegroom in that day: *“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like him, for we shall see Him as He is”* (1 John 3:2).

Richard Booker has suggested in his book, **Here Comes the Bride**, that the New Jerusalem is the wedding chamber that our Bridegroom is preparing for us, an eternal *huppah* that will one day descend from heaven with us (Rev. 21:9-10). What an awesome thought! Imagine a *huppah* that is a city approximately 1,500 miles long, 1,500 miles wide, and 1,500 miles high! While the bride of Messiah is in this bridal chamber with Yeshua, the rest of the world will be in a time of tribulation. Isaiah 26:20-21 speaks about this time: *“Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; Hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is passed. For behold, the Lord comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity... .”*

Scripture seems to indicate that the bride of Messiah will be hidden away with her Bridegroom while the wrath of God is poured out on the earth (See Zephaniah 1:14-17). We can be sure of one thing – If we’re hidden in the Beloved now, we’ll be hidden in Him no matter what devastation comes upon the earth. His banner (*huppah*) over us is love (Song of Songs 2:4)!



The Marriage Supper

Following the seven days in the *huppah* or bridal chamber, the bride and bridegroom in ancient Israel joined their guests (called ‘children of the bridechamber’ or *b’nai huppah*) for a joyous marriage feast. The first meal that the bride and bridegroom shared with their guests was called a *seudat mitzvah*, a festive meal, and had religious significance. The purpose of the meal was to instill joy in the hearts of the bride and bridegroom. The roots of this meal go back to Jacob’s father-in-law Laban who invited all the local people to a party after Jacob and Leah’s wedding (Genesis 29:22).

The playing of music at the wedding feast was considered a religious duty. Flutes were traditionally played before the bridal pair, and dancing before the bride was a regular part of the celebration.

Will there be a marriage supper for the bride of Messiah? There certainly will be, according to Revelation 19:6-9. Let’s read about it: “*And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, ‘Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! 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. Then he said to me, ‘Write: “Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb”!’ And he said to me, ‘These are the true sayings of God’.*”

Will the guests at the marriage supper of the Lamb be Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the prophets, the apostles and all the Old Testament saints? Will we all rejoice together as we celebrate our oneness with our God? What will it be like to see Miriam dance with her tambourine and Peter dance a *mitzvah tantz* with Yeshua’s bride? Imagine dancing with Yeshua Himself! Such joy is beyond comprehension, but it will soon be ours!

Yeshua’s bride will rule and reign with Him for 1,000 years during what is called the millennium. She will tabernacle with him, under another symbolic covering – like a *huppah*, but actually a *sukkah* (booth or tabernacle). Our God will cover us forever. He is our Bridegroom and we are His bride. In our great joy, our feasting will go on and on.

Until that glorious day, let us draw near by faith to our Heavenly Bridegroom with a heart filled with love and gratitude. We have the great privilege of feasting on Yeshua’s words of life even now. He beckons to us by His Spirit saying: “*Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.*”

Those of us who look forward to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9) must extend an invitation to others to come. We as Yeshua’s bride should have the word “Come!” in our hearts and on our lips in increasing measure. Reach out, along with the Ruach HaKodesh, and call others who don’t know the Messiah to the marriage supper of the Lamb: “*And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come, and whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely*” (Revelation 22:17).



The Jewish People: His First Choice

The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob took a bride for Himself when He redeemed the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. Israel was His first love. He said to her: *“I will take you as My people, and I will be your God”* (Exodus 6:7). The bridal relationship between God and Israel can be traced throughout the Holy Scriptures:

God is compared to a bridegroom, Israel to His bride (Isaiah 62:5).

God selected Israel as His bride (Exodus 19:4-5).

God purchased Israel, His bride (Psalm 74:2).

Israel gave her consent to the marriage (Exodus 19:7-8).

Israel was consecrated (*m'kudeshet*) to her Lord (Exodus 19:6,10).

God entered into covenant with Israel and she became His (Genesis 17:7; Ezekiel 16:8; Jeremiah 31:35-36).

God was jealous over his bride, Israel (Deuteronomy 4:24).

God, as Bridegroom, came to the *huppah* first (Deuteronomy 33:2).

God presented Israel with a *ketubah* at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19:5).

Israel was given bridal gifts (Exodus 3:22).

God and Israel had a marriage supper (Exodus 24:11).

Israel was not faithful to the marriage covenant (Malachi 2:14; Ezekiel 16).

God promised Israel a new marriage covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

Israel will return to her Bridegroom in the latter days (Hosea 2:16, 19-20).

The marriage supper of the Lamb will be the most joyous Jewish wedding ever! If you are Jewish by birth, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob extends an invitation to this wedding to you today. (Even if you aren't Jewish by birth, the invitation is still extended!) Accept the invitation, by accepting the “New Covenant” and the One who sealed that covenant with His own blood – Yeshua HaMashiach, the Son of God and the Bridegroom of your soul.

SHALOM

***Thy beloved, Lord, are we;
Thou our Lover e'er shall
be. (High Holiday hymn)***

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About the Author

Jamie Suzanne Lash has been involved in full-time ministry with her husband Neil since 1979. They are the directors of Jewish Jewels, a Messianic Jewish ministry based in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, which shares the Good News of Yeshua with the Jewish people and teaches the Church about its Jewish roots.

Jamie graduated from Ohio Wesleyan University with a B.A. in Spanish and from the University of Missouri with an M.Ed. in Early Childhood Education. She ministers, together with Neil, at worship services and marriage retreats, and by herself at women's groups and seminars.

Jamie is the researcher, writer and co-producer of *Jewish Jewels*, a weekly half-hour Messianic Jewish television program seen all over the United States. She is also the author of **Righteous Rhymes**, a two-volume book and CD series for children which God has used to lead hundreds of children to the Lord, and **A Kiss A Day**, a devotional commentary based on the Song of Songs. **A Kiss A Day** is a seventy-seven day immersion in the Love of God which is being greatly used in the preparation of the Bride of Messiah.

Jamie is the mother of two sons, Jonathan and Jesse. The Lash family lives by faith. Their ministry is supported solely by voluntary contributions and is a non-profit organization. God has been faithful and has always supplied their needs. Jamie's "life verse" is also her testimony: "*Love never fails*" (1 Corinthians 13:8).

God is Love; He never fails.

