

The Would-Be Bride – Part 1

by Bill and Karen Bishop

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According to the Hebraic Bridal custom:

When a young man would spot the woman he wanted to marry, he would prepare a contract of marriage which would state the terms for both he and the bride. It would include the price he would willingly pay for the privilege of marrying her. The bride would then decide if she wanted to abide by the contract and marry this young man. He would offer her a cup of wine, and if she chose to drink it, she would be agreeing to betrothal to the man, and all of the commitment that went with it, in accordance with the contract. Partaking of the cup settled the matter once and for all. She could not change her mind now. She was betrothed, and the contract was legally binding. She was considered to be his WIFE now. Betrothal was actually considered to be the first phase of the marriage itself, and a decree of divorce was required in order to sever the "Commitment". Such a decree must be issued by the "husband". The "wife" could not initiate it. The "wife" must patiently wait as the "husband" went to prepare a place for her. He would redecorate a room in his father's house or build a separate building on his property as a bridal chamber for his wife, (soon-to-be-bride). The process would take about two years, but he could not make the decision regarding its completion. The bridegroom's father had to approve it, and release him to go bring his wife (to become bride) home. The wife was not given much advance notice of exactly when to expect him. Every Jewish "bride-to-be" was stolen away by the one who would be her bridegroom, often at night, as those around her slept. While she awaited his return, she was not to appear in public without her "veil", as it was a symbol of her betrothal to her bridegroom. It represented that she was not available to be joined to another but was yielded and separated for her awaited one. She was said to be "consecrated", "set apart", or "bought with a price", and was to spend her time preparing for the return of her awaited one. She was to keep her oil lamp lighted and ready, being sure she always had adequate oil for what could be a long trip on his return. All bridegrooms allowed the bride just a tiny bit of notice, so all other preparations having been made, she could properly adorn herself on short notice. Someone in the wedding party would shout, and when she heard the shout, she knew he would be at her window quickly. She would only have time to check her appearance and grab her oil lamp before the abduction occurred. The rejoicing in the streets would awaken the people who slept, and they would realize that the bride had been stolen away.

We will now examine this bridal custom by taking it a segment at a time, capturing the richness of each segment relative to our betrothal to Y'shua. As we proceed, the text above will be put into italics so you can easily identify it.

*When a young man would spot the woman he wanted to marry, he would prepare a contract of marriage which would state the terms for both he and the bride.*

The marriage contract was called a ketubah. Our soon-to-be Bridegroom wanted His body of Believers to be His Bride. Her ketubah (the commitment she was to make at her betrothal) was to keep the commandments, in order to be a chaste virgin for Him, holy and without blemish:

John 14:15

(15) If ye love me, keep my commandments.

Ephesians 5:27

(27) That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

2 Corinthians 11:2

(2) For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

*It would include the price he would willingly pay for the privilege of marrying her.*

1 Peter 1:18-19

(18) Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

(19) But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

Acts 20:28

(28) Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

*The bride would then decide if she wanted to abide by the contract and marry this young man. He would offer her a cup of wine, and if she chose to drink it, she would be agreeing to betrothal to the man, and all of the*

*commitment that went with it, in accordance with the contract. Partaking of the cup settled the matter once and for all. She could not change her mind now. She was betrothed, and the contract was legally binding.*

1 Corinthians 11:25-26

(25) After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

(26) For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

Matthew 26:29

(29) But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

The communion is our betrothal cup. I Corinthians 11 further shows us that when we drink it, we are to understand the commitment to holiness that is incumbent on us for choosing to do so. It is the bridal agreement that we are to honor the commandments while awaiting our Bridegroom, so we will be a suitable Bride for Him:

1 Corinthians 11:27-29

(27) Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

(28) But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

(29) For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

*She was considered to be his WIFE now. Betrothal was actually considered to be the first phase of the marriage itself, and a decree of divorce was required in order to sever the "Commitment". Such a decree must be issued by the "husband". The "wife" could not initiate it.*

Those who choose to depart from the Law may be turning their back on their commitment as the betrothed of Y'shua, and be seen as unworthy in His eyes. Maybe this lawlessness or iniquity would be the cause of His not "knowing" some of His betrothed when He returns, and they will not be received as His Bride at that time per Matthew:

Matthew 7:23

(23) And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

*The "wife" must patiently wait as the "husband" went to prepare a place for her. He would redecorate a room in his father's house or build a separate building on his property as a bridal chamber for his wife, (soon-to-be bride).*

John 14:2-3

(2) 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.

(3) And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

It is in this place (the Father's Kingdom) where Y'shua will take us to our new home and drink again with us of the fruit of the vine, per Matthew 26:29 above.

*The process would take about two years, but he could not make the decision regarding its completion. The bridegroom's father had to approve it, and release him to go bring his wife (to become bride) home.*

The two thousand years between the first coming of Y'shua and the second might be the typology for this two-year process, and we know that it is the Father who determines the timing of Y'shua's return:

Matthew 24:36

(36) But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

*The wife was not given much advanced notice of exactly when to expect him.*

Matthew 24:44

(44) Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

*Every Jewish "bride-to-be" was stolen away by the one who would be her bridegroom, often at night, as those around her slept.*

1 Thessalonians 5:2

(2) For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

*While she awaited his return, she was not to appear in public without her "veil", as it was a symbol of her betrothal to her bridegroom. It represented that she was not available to be joined to another but was yielded and separated for her awaited one.*

1 Corinthians 11:6

(6) For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.

*She was said to be "consecrated", "set apart", or "bought with a price",*

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

(19) What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

(20) For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

*and was to spend her time preparing for the return of her awaited one.*

2 Peter 3:14

(14) Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

*She was to keep her oil lamp lighted and ready, being sure she always had adequate oil for what could be a long trip upon his return.*

Matthew 25:1-4

(1) Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

(2) And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.

(3) They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:

(4) But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

*All bridegrooms allowed the bride just a tiny bit of notice, so all other preparations having been made, she could properly adorn herself on short notice. Someone in the wedding party would shout, and when she heard the shout, she knew he would be at her window quickly.*

1 Thessalonians 4:16

(16) For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

*She would only have time to check her appearance and grab her oil lamp before the abduction occurred.*

Matthew 25:10

(10) And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.

*The rejoicing in the streets would awaken the people who slept, and they would realize that the bride had been stolen away.*

Matthew 25:11-13

(11) Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

(12) But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

(13) Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

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The above was taken from our two-volume book set titled Two Trees, Two Kingdoms, Two Kings and reprinted here in order to provide a quick overview of the cultural understanding at the time of Y'shua. The parallelisms would have been too obvious for them to ignore. However, we have lost much of that understanding today. We need to retrieve it though, as our theology should reflect the mores of Y'shua's day. We think it may be helpful in trying to visualize our role as Y'shua's Bride. Please join us in Part 2 as we come to terms with the expectations of the Would-Be Bride.