

Bite Size Bible Study

Bride of Christ #129

By Pastor Lee

We often hear the church referred to as the Bride of Christ.

For I am jealous for you with God's kind of jealousy; since I promised to present you as a pure virgin in marriage to your one husband, the Messiah;
2 Corinthians 11:2 CJB

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 (ritual bath), 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. This is how husbands ought to love their wives — like their own bodies; for the man who loves his wife is loving himself. Why, no one ever hated his own flesh! On the contrary, he feeds it well and takes care of it, just as the Messiah does the Messianic Community, Ephesians 5:25-29 CJB

The Jewish wedding is a unique illustration of the Messiah's relationship with his followers. In biblical times, the process of getting married was comprised of three phases that took more than a year to complete.

Shiddukhin, the first phase of the process is called a *shidduk* (making a match) and is performed by a *shad khan* (matchmaker). Women often became matchmakers. Sometimes, the father of the groom would make the match. This is a picture of believers in Yeshua having been chosen by the Father as Messiah's bride

The second phase, *eyrusin*, means "betrothal." It is the formal, one-year period when the two parties receive the betrothal blessings and become officially engaged. They are not to live together, but the commitment is so secure that it would take a religious divorce (*get*) to nullify the agreement. Thus the lesson is clear that believers are eternally secure in Messiah's covenant, because it cannot be broken unless Jesus breaks it, which he says he never will. *"I give them eternal life. They will absolutely never be destroyed, and no one will snatch them from my hands"* John 10:28. During *eyrusin*, the groom has responsibilities—the most pressing being preparing the couple's future home. *"In my Father's house (family) are many places to live. If there weren't, I would have told you; because I am going there to prepare a place for you. Since I am going and preparing a place for you, I will return to take you with me; so that where I am, you may be also"* John 14:1-3.

The *nissuin* completes the process and the spiritual picture of Yeshua, the bridegroom, and his bride.

According to ancient tradition, the groom comes for his bride at the end of the one-year *eyrusin*. Everything is made ready, and the bride eagerly awaits his arrival. The wedding involved dressing up. The bride was literally adorned like a queen. She was bathed, and her hair braided with as many precious stones as the family possessed or could borrow. The girls who had dressed her accompanied her as "companions." The bridegroom too was dressed in finery and jewelry and was accompanied by the "friend of the bridegroom". The bride and groom would look and act like a king and queen.

Another important element of the *nissuin* was the procession at the end of the day. The groom could come for his bride only after the father had given the command. He did not know the hour or day when this would take place. When permission was given the bridegroom would set out from his home to fetch his bride from her parents' home. At this point the bride was wearing a veil. At some point the veil was taken off and laid on the shoulder of the bridegroom, and the declaration was made, "The government shall be upon his shoulder."

With the groom leading the procession, it now sets out from the bride's home through the streets of the village to the couple's new home, and the dark roadway would be lit with oil lamps held by wedding guests. There was singing and music along the way, and sometimes the bride herself would join in the dance. The *shofar* would be sounded to the shouts of "The bridegroom comes!"

At the close of *nissuin*, there is a jubilant celebration. Revelation 19:7-8 describes a time when Yeshua "marries" his bride, the body of believers.

At the wedding feast the Bride and Groom enter under a canopy as they arrive at their house. There they preside over the wedding feast at which a great deal of time is spent in eating and drinking. Festivities often last for seven days or longer. During the festivities, God's blessing is asked upon the couple, and it may well have been for this reason that Jesus was invited to the wedding at Cana. In very wealthy families, guests were often provided with "wedding clothes"

Hopefully seeing the wedding through the eyes of Jewish traditions will give you opportunity to picture in your own mind how the Wedding of the Lamb will look as we participate as His bride.

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