



# The Zion Letter

The Monthly Newsletter of For Zion's Sake Ministries, Inc.  
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## Jesus & The Jewish Wedding Ceremony, Part 2

In last month's Zion Letter, we saw that Jesus followed the pattern of the ancient Jewish wedding through the Erusin (betrothal) stage. You may recall the words of Paul in 2Cor.11:2, "For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Messiah I might present you as a pure virgin." Beloved, we are merely betrothed to Messiah in this life. Our wedding ceremony and our bridegroom are yet to come!

The ancient Jewish wedding ceremony had two parts: *Erusin* (betrothal) and *Nissuin* (wedding). In Biblical times, the two parts were held separately. The *Erusin* (betrothal) would come first followed by a one year period in which the bride and groom-to-be would prepare for the *Nissuin* (wedding) ceremony.

In the modern Jewish wedding, the betrothal ceremony and the wedding ceremony have been joined together. The one-year betrothal period has essentially been replaced by the modern concept of "engagement." Most engagements are entered into with very little ceremony.

If you were to go to a traditional Jewish wedding in the 21st century, you could probably expect to hear the Rabbi begin the wedding ceremony by calling forth the bridegroom with these words, "**Baruch Haba Bashem Adonai**" (*Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord*).

I have a little white Jewish prayer-book entitled, *Prayers, Blessings and Hymns*. This little white prayer-book was used at the fiftieth wedding anniversary of my great Aunt Lena and Uncle Marx Spitz on March 16, 1969. This type of prayer-book has been used for decades at Jewish weddings, Bar Mitzvahs, and festivals. On page 99 of the little white prayer book is the section entitled, "Marriage Service". Directly under those words is written in Hebrew,

"**Baruch Haba Bashem Adonai**" (Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord).

You may recall the word of Yeshua (Jesus) in Matthew 23:37-39, when He said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings and you were unwilling. Behold your house is being left to you desolate! For I say to you, from now on you shall not see Me until you say, '**Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!**'" So Yeshua's words in Matthew 23:39 were directly related to the beginning of the Marriage of the Lamb, Jesus is the Jewish Messiah of Nazareth, our heavenly bridegroom!



I assure you that the rabbis are not trying to quote Jesus when they begin the Jewish wedding ceremony with the words, "**Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord**". In fact, when Jesus said those words, He was quoting Psalm 118:26 just like the rabbis. However, Jesus was sending a clear message to the rabbis and to anyone who has ears to hear, that He is Israel's bridegroom and He is not coming back until the Jewish nation acknowledges Him as the Messiah (as the Bridegroom) and as Adonai (Lord). What a wedding that will be!

**Let's Review:** Jesus walked us through each step of the Jewish wedding in the Gospels and throughout the Brit Hadasha (New Testament).

**(1) The Arrangement (shiddach):** In John 15:16 Yeshua said to His disciples, "You did not choose me, but I chose you...". However, in John 14:24, Yeshua said, *These words you hear are not My own, they belong to the Father who sent Me...*. In John 8:27, He said *I do nothing on My own but speak just what the Father has taught me.* Yeshua spoke

only the words of His father, so if He chose us to be His bride, then the Father must have told Him to choose us. God the father chose His Son's bride! The arrangement of the marriage is called the *shiddach*, and the matchmaker is called the *shadkhan*. God the Father is the *shadkhan* between Yeshua and His Bride!

**(2) The Ketubah (agreement):** The Ketubah is the marriage covenant, or agreement, in which the bridegroom promises to take care of and provide for his bride-to-be. The promises of the Ketubah are sealed when the bride and the bridegroom share a cup of wine together. God's first Ketubah was made with Israel at Mt. Sinai (see Exodus 19:5-6). God promised to renew His marriage covenant to Israel in Jeremiah 31:31. Yeshua fulfilled Jeremiah's prophecy to Israel when He spoke of the renewed covenant in Matthew 26:27-28, "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.'" This was the central promise of Yeshua's covenant to His bride.

**(3) The Mohar (bride price):** By pouring out the cup of the New Covenant (Ketubah), Yeshua demonstrated that He was about to lay down His life and pour out His blood as the mohar (bride-price). Paul reminds us of this in 1Cor 6:29-20, when he said, "*Or do you not know... you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.*" We are also reminded of this in 1 Cor. 7:23, "*You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.*"

**(4) Mikva (Ritual bath):** In John 13:10, Yeshua referred to the Mikva which He and His disciples partook of the Last Passover meal when Jesus said to them, "*He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean...*". As I mentioned last month, it is customary for Jewish people to have a mikva before celebrating a holiday, Sabbath or a wedding, and before going up to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem!

**(5) Erusin/Kiddushin (Betrothal):** The Apostle Paul wrote, "*For I 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*" (1Cor 11:2). The Last Supper was actually Christ's betrothal ceremony. During that Passover meal, the Lord gave the terms of His Ketubah by promising His broken body and His shed blood for the remission of His bride's sins (Matthew 26:26-28). He also promised a kingdom (Luke 22:29), the Holy Spirit (John 14:16), and He finished the terms by promising to come back for his bride (John 14:3). Yeshua even sealed the "Erusin Ceremony" by sharing a cup of wine with His bride-to-be, just like it's done in most Jewish betrothal ceremonies, "...and when He had taken a

*cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying 'Drink from it, all of you: for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins'.*" (Mt 26:27-28). We receive the benefits and promises of Messiah's betrothal when we receive Him as Lord of our lives.

**(6) I go to prepare a place for you:** After the betrothal ceremony, the Bridegroom would always depart to begin preparing a new home for his bride-to-be. After Yeshua's erusin, He said, "*In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also*" (John 14:2-3).

In ancient times, while the bridegroom was off preparing a place for his bride-to-be, the bride would be busy about making ready her wedding garment; *we see this illustrated in Rev. 19:7-8, "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!"* In those days the bride and bridegroom would go their separate ways for up to a year to begin preparing for their wedding day!

**(7) Nissuin (The Wedding Ceremony):** Our heavenly bridegroom left us the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit / Comforter) while He went to prepare a place for us. It is not a coincidence that He said we would not see Him again until His own Jewish people say, "**Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord**" (Matthew 23:39). Why is that? It is because that is how the Jewish wedding ceremony begins!

In his book, *God's Appointed Customs*, Barney Kasdan wrote, "The culminating step in the process of the Jewish wedding ceremony is known as *Nissuin*." This word is based on the Hebrew verb *nasa*, which literally means, "to carry". Nissuin is quite a graphic description as the bride would be waiting for the groom to carry her away to their new home. There was great anticipation as the bride waited for the arrival of her betrothed one. This ceremony was to be expected, especially when taking into consideration an element unique to the biblical Jewish wedding, as the time of the groom's arrival was to be a surprise. Any bride who took seriously the betrothal period would be expecting the groom at the end of their year-long engagement. However, the exact hour of the ceremony was uncertain, as it was the father of the groom who would give the final approval for the Nissuin to begin.

The bride and her bridal party would therefore be anxiously watching and waiting for the exact moment of his arrival. Even in the late evening, the bridal party was to keep oil lamps burning just in case the wedding was to begin. How would they know when the time had arrived? One custom was for a member of the groom's party to lead the way from the

groom's house to the home of the bride, and shout, *Behold the Bridegroom comes!* That proclamation would be followed by the sound of the shofar (ram's horn), which was used to proclaim Jewish holy days and special events.

At the sound of shofar, the groom would lead a wedding procession through the streets of the village to the house of his bride. The groomsmen would then nissuin (carry) the bride back to the groom's house where a chuppah (canopy) was set up. The couple would once again, as they did one year previous, say a blessing over a cup of wine (a symbol of joy). The wedding cup was clearly distinguished from the previous cup, as is reflected the traditional sheva b'rakhot (seven blessings) that accompany it. This second stage of the chuppah ceremony, as found in the Nissuin custom, serves as the finalization of the earlier promises and vows. What was promised in the erusin ceremony was now consummated in the nissuin ceremony. For the first time, the couple was free to consummate their marriage by having intimate relations and by living together as husband and wife (see Gen 24:66-67).

The pinnacle of this joyful celebration was the marriage supper. This was more than just a sit-down dinner for all the guests as it included seven full days of food, music, dance and celebration (see Judges 14:1-12). After all the wonderful festivities, the new husband was free to bring his wife to their new home and to live together within the full covenant of marriage.

### **Conclusion:**

Yeshua is returning for a bride without spot or wrinkle. If you think about the Bride of Messiah today, would you say she is ready? Is she without spot or wrinkle in your opinion? I'm just asking what you think. I may answer that question in next month's newsletter as we prepare for the Fall Feasts of Israel which have to do with purification and culminate in the coming of the Bridegroom. That's right, in Jewish teaching the Great Marriage Supper appears to be in the Fall of the year, not a June wedding like those in the West are so inclined to seek, but then when you read the Bible you are reading a 2000-4000 year old Middle Eastern document that's been translated from several languages (Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and Aramaic) into modern English. We have to realize that the customs of our Savior are both Jewish and ancient at the same time. Are your garments without spot or wrinkle? Are you truly ready for your heavenly bridegroom to come? The purification process is a painful one; many are unwilling to allow the Lord to bring them to the point where we say, "I surrender Lord, forgive me, wash me, cleanse me. Do whatever it takes to make me ready to be your bride." Those words may be a good prayer to pray.

*In His Love, Rabbi Joe*

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## ***Ministry Update***

*Shalom!*

*I just want to update you on all that has been happening at For Zion's Sake Ministries. We are in a new season, and much is going on. For many years Joe and I have had to supplement our ministry and family income with other businesses and creative ventures like the Manna Bagel Shop and the apartment rental business. Because of Joe's cancer and ongoing health issues, those things have had to be put aside and we have trusted God to provide. Unfortunately, the congregation and ministry is still not in a place to completely support our family. For this reason it has been necessary for me to seek employment. We have felt, spiritually, that it is the time for me to return to the aviation industry in preparation for the future of our **Aliyah Vision**. With the blessing and approval of For Zion's Sake Ministries board of directors, I began putting out applications in February to different airlines. Subsequently, in March and May I had three interviews with Regional Airlines and received two offers. I am currently in training to fly a jet with a regional airline, and with the Lord's help, I expect to complete training by August first. Although this promises to be a help in providing for the family, it is also putting a strain on the home front and the ministry front. Since the beginning of June, when I started training, I've only had three days at home. When I get a full schedule things will be different, but for the last two months, Joe has been under an extreme amount of pressure to keep all the facets of family and ministry responsibilities running. He is being a real trooper, but the attacks and challenges are still daunting at times. Last week he fell and tore a muscle in his thigh which is limiting his ability to perform his mandatory exercise routine to keep his back from stiffening up. I am sharing this with you, our loyal supporters, because I wish to ask if there might be some on our mailing list that would be willing to answer the call in our genuine need for committed intercessory prayer. There is much attack against our ministry, congregation, and Joe's health because of the vision and mission for Aliyah, and it also comes against the prophetic*

**Ministry Update continued:**

*word that Rabbi Joe has been given concerning the future of America. The enemy hates the Messianic work here in the Bristol region and it seems at times the battle is overwhelming. If you have the time, and hear the Lord's call to be an intercessor, we would really like to hear from you. Just drop Vickie an email at [4znsake1@earthlink.net](mailto:4znsake1@earthlink.net) or call the office at (276) 644-1678.*

*On another note of interest, we plan to sell the synagogue and move to a more centrally located facility sometime in the next year.*

*Love and blessings,  
Dawn Bell*

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Saturday mornings at 10:45 AM**

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