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A [Jewish](gen-jew.html) Wedding

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In this [study](study.html) I would like to learn the details of a [Jewish](gen-jew.html) wedding.

What is a [Jewish](gen-jew.html) wedding like?

Many marriages were arranged by parents from the [time](time.html) that their children were infants. Others, however, went through the following process: At marrying age, the young man might be attracted to a young woman, or his parents might have chosen an appropriate bride for him. The procedure could be followed by [one](one.html) of [three](three.html) different parties: the father making the arrangements for his son, as Samson’s father did for him:

***Shoftim (Judges) 14:1-10*** *Samson went down to Timnah and saw there a young Philistine woman. When he returned, he said to his father and mother, “I have seen a Philistine woman in Timnah; now get her for me as my wife.” His father and mother replied, “Isn’t there an acceptable woman among your relatives or among all our people? Must you go to the* [*uncircumcised*](circumcz.html) *Philistines to get a wife?” But Samson said to his father, “Get her for me. She’s the right* [*one*](one.html) *for me (His parents did not* [*know*](daat.html) *that this was from* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*, who was seeking an occasion to confront the Philistines; for at that* [*time*](time.html) *they were ruling over Israel.) Samson went down to Timnah together with his father and mother. As they approached the vineyards of Timnah, suddenly a young lion came roaring toward him. The* [*Spirit*](spirit.html) *of* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *came upon him in power so that he tore the lion apart with his bare* [*hands*](fourteen.html) *as he might have torn a young goat. But he told neither his father nor his mother what he had done. Then he went down and talked with the woman, and he liked her. Some* [*time*](time.html) *later, when he went back to marry her, he turned aside to look at the lion’s carcass. In it was a swarm of bees and some honey, Which he scooped out with his* [*hands*](fourteen.html) *and* [*ate*](eating.html) *as he went along. When he rejoined his parents, he gave them some, and they too* [*ate*](eating.html) *it. But he did not tell them that he had taken the honey from the lion’s carcass. Now his father went down to see the woman. And Samson made a feast there, as was customary for bridegrooms.*

An agent working on behalf of the father, as Eliezer did on behalf of [Avraham](avraham.html):

***Bereshit (Genesis) 24:1-67***[*Abraham*](avraham.html) *was now old and well advanced in years, and* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *had blessed him in every way. He said to the chief servant in his* [*household*](househld.html)*, the* [*one*](one.html) *in charge of all that he had, “Put your* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *under my thigh. I want you to swear by* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*, the God of* [*heaven*](heaven.html) *and the God of earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living, But will go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son* [*Isaac*](isaac.html)*.” The servant asked him, “What if the woman is unwilling to come back with me to this land? Shall I then take your son back to the country you came from?” “Make sure that you do not take my son back there,”* [*Abraham*](avraham.html) *said. “*[*HaShem*](hashem.html)*, the God of* [*heaven*](heaven.html)*, who brought me out of my* [*father’s*](fathers.html)[*household*](househld.html) *and my native land and who* [*spoke*](mashal.html) *to me and promised me on oath, saying, ‘To your offspring I will give this land’--he will send his* [*angel*](angels.html) *before you so that you can get a wife for my son from there. If the woman is unwilling to come back with you, then you will be released from this oath of mine. Only do not take my son back there.” So the servant put his* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *under the thigh of his master* [*Abraham*](avraham.html) *and swore an oath to him concerning this matter. Then the servant took* [*ten*](ten.html) *of his master’s camels and left, taking with him all kinds of good things from his master. He set out for Aram Naharaim and made his way to the town of Nahor. He had the camels kneel down near the well outside the town; it was toward evening, the* [*time*](time.html) *the women go out to draw water. Then he* [*prayed*](prayer.html)*, “O* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*, God of my master* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*, give me success today, and show kindness to my master* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*. See, I am* [*standing*](mashal.html) *beside this spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are* [*coming*](coming.html) *out to draw water. May it be that when I say to a girl, ‘Please let down your jar that I may have a drink,’ and she says, ‘Drink, and I’ll water your camels too’--let her be the* [*one*](one.html) *you have chosen for your servant* [*Isaac*](isaac.html)*. By this I will* [*know*](daat.html) *that you have shown kindness to my master.” Before he had finished* [*praying*](prayer.html)*, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah, who was the wife of* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*’s brother Nahor. The girl was very beautiful, a* [*virgin*](virgin.html)*; no man had ever* [*lain with her*](marriageact.html)*. She went down to the spring, filled her jar and came up again. The servant hurried to meet her and said, “Please give me a little water from your jar.” “Drink, my lord,” she said, and quickly lowered the jar to her* [*hands*](fourteen.html) *and gave him a drink. After she had given him a drink, she said, “I’ll draw water for your camels too, until they have finished drinking.” So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough, ran back to the well to draw more water, and drew enough for all his camels. Without saying a word, the man watched her closely to learn whether or not* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *had made his* [*journey*](stages.html) *successful. When the camels had finished drinking, the man took out a gold* [*nose*](body.html) *ring weighing a beka and* [*two*](two.html) *gold bracelets weighing* [*ten*](ten.html) *shekels. Then he asked, “Whose daughter are you? Please tell me, is there room in your father’s house for us to spend the night?” She answered him, “I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son that Milcah bore to Nahor.” And she added, “We have plenty of straw and fodder, as well as room for you to spend the night.” Then the man bowed down and worshiped* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*, Saying, “Praise be to* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*, the God of my master* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*, who has not abandoned his kindness and faithfulness to my master. As for me,* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *has led me on the* [*journey*](stages.html) *to the house of my master’s relatives.” The girl ran and told her mother’s* [*household*](househld.html) *about these things. Now Rebekah had a brother named Laban, and he hurried out to the man at the spring. As soon as he had seen the* [*nose*](body.html) *ring, and the bracelets on his sister’s* [*arms*](body.html)*, and had heard Rebekah tell what the man said to her, he went out to the man and found him* [*standing*](mashal.html) *by the camels near the spring. “Come, you who are blessed by* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*,” he said. “Why are you* [*standing*](mashal.html) *out here? I have prepared the house and a place for the camels.” So the man went to the house, and the camels were unloaded. Straw and fodder were brought for the camels, and water for him and his men to wash their* [*feet*](heel.html)*. Then* [*food*](food.html) *was set before him, but he said, “I will not* [*eat*](eating.html) *until I have told you what I have to say.” “Then tell us,” [Laban] said. So he said, “I am* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*’s servant.* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *has blessed my master abundantly, and he has become wealthy. He has given him sheep and cattle, silver and gold, menservants and maidservants, and camels and* [*donkeys*](chamor.html)*. My master’s wife Sarah has borne him a son in her old age, and he has given him everything he owns. And my master made me swear an oath, and said, ‘You must not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I live, But go to my father’s family and to my own clan, and get a wife for my son.’ “Then I asked my master, ‘What if the woman will not come back with me?’ “He replied, ‘*[*HaShem*](hashem.html)*, before whom I have walked, will send his* [*angel*](angels.html) *with you and make your* [*journey*](stages.html) *a success, so that you can get a wife for my son from my own clan and from my father’s family. Then, when you go to my clan, you will be released from my oath even if they refuse to give her to you--you will be released from my oath.’ “When I came to the spring today, I said, ‘O* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*, God of my master* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*, if you will, please grant success to the* [*journey*](stages.html) *on which I have come. See, I am* [*standing*](mashal.html) *beside this spring; if a maiden comes out to draw water and I say to her, “Please let me drink a little water from your jar,” And if she says to me, “Drink, and I’ll draw water for your camels too,” let her be the* [*one*](one.html)[*HaShem*](hashem.html) *has chosen for my master’s son.’ “Before I finished* [*praying*](prayer.html) *in my* [*heart*](body.html)*, Rebekah came out, with her jar on her* [*shoulder*](body.html)*. She went down to the spring and drew water, and I said to her, ‘Please give me a drink.’ “She quickly lowered her jar from her shoulder and said, ‘Drink, and I’ll water your camels too.’ So I drank, and she watered the camels also. “I asked her, ‘Whose daughter are you?’ “She said, ‘The daughter of Bethuel son of Nahor, whom Milcah bore to him.’ “Then I put the ring in her* [*nose*](body.html) *and the bracelets on her* [*arms*](body.html)*, And I bowed down and worshiped* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*. I praised* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*, the God of my master* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*, who had led me on the right road to get the granddaughter of my master’s brother for his son. Now if you will show kindness and faithfulness to my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, so I may* [*know*](daat.html) *which way to turn.” Laban and Bethuel answered, “This is from* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*; we can say nothing to you* [*one*](one.html) *way or the other. Here is Rebekah; take her and go, and let her* [*become the wife*](marriageact.html) *of your master’s son, as* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *has directed.” When* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*’s servant heard what they said, he bowed down to the ground before* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*. Then the servant brought out gold and silver jewelry and articles of clothing and gave them to Rebekah; he also gave costly gifts to her brother and to her mother. Then he and the men who were with him* [*ate*](eating.html) *and drank and spent the night there. When they got up the next morning, he said, “Send me on my way to my master.” But her brother and her mother replied, “Let the girl remain with us* [*ten*](ten.html) *days or so; then you may go.” But he said to them, “Do not detain me, now that* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *has granted success to my* [*journey*](stages.html)*. Send me on my way so I may go to my master.” Then they said, “Let’s call the girl and ask her about it.” So they called Rebekah and asked her, “Will you go with this man?” “I will go,” she said. So they sent their sister Rebekah on her way, along with her nurse and* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*’s servant and his men. And they blessed Rebekah and said to her, “Our sister, may you increase to thousands upon thousands; may your offspring possess the gates of their enemies.” Then Rebekah and her maids got ready and mounted their camels and went back with the man. So the servant took Rebekah and left. Now* [*Isaac*](isaac.html) *had come from Beer Lahai Roi, for he was living in the Negev. He went out to the field*[*one*](one.html)*evening to* [*meditate*](prayer.html)*, and as he looked up, he saw camels approaching. Rebekah also looked up and saw* [*Isaac*](isaac.html)*. She got down from her camel And asked the servant, “Who is that man in the field* [*coming*](coming.html) *to meet us?” “He is my master,” the servant answered. So she took her veil and covered herself. Then the servant told* [*Isaac*](isaac.html) *all he had done.* [*Isaac*](isaac.html) *brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he* [*married*](marriageact.html) *Rebekah. So she* [*became his wife*](marriageact.html)*, and he loved her; and* [*Isaac*](isaac.html) *was comforted after his mother’s death.*

The bride was chosen by the son’s father or by the young man himself. For illustration’s sake, an example of the last possibility will be used.

A young man went to the home of his potential bride-to-be. He carried [three](three.html) things with him: a large sum of money in order to pay the price for his bride, a [betrothal](betroth.html) contract called a Shitre Erusin, and a skin of wine. Of course, anyone arriving with these things would immediately be under suspicion. The man approached the girl’s father and older brothers. The contract was laid out, and the bride-price was discussed. Finally, a glass of wine was poured. If the father approved, then the maiden was called in. If she also approved, then she would drink the wine. In doing so, she committed herself to this man, agreeing to follow the contract that now was a legal document between the [two](two.html). They would be called husband and wife at this [time](time.html), and their union could only be dissolved by a divorce. However, their status was that of [betrothed](betroth.html), rather than that of fully married.

After the wine had been drunk, the man made the statement that he would go to his father’s house and prepare a place for her. This place is [known](daat.html) as chadar (chamber), sometimes referred to as chupah (or honeymoon bed with a canopy). From the [time](time.html) that the Shitre Erusin was ratified, the young woman was consecrated, kiddushin - set apart to her husband. She has been bought with a price.

***I Corinthians 6:20*** *You were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your* [*body*](body.html)*.*

***I Corinthians 7:23*** *You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.*

She must spend her [time](time.html) preparing to live as a wife and mother in Israel. Her days of waiting for her wedding are spent in learning how to please her husband.

Meanwhile, the young man returned to his father’s home, and the chadar goes under construction. The young [Jewish](gen-jew.html) bridegroom would make the following speech as he was leaving:

***Yochanan (John) 14:2-3*** *In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.*

The room is provided with every comfort, as they will retire here for [one](one.html) week following their wedding ceremony. We see this [seven](seven.html) day[[1]](#footnote-1) period in:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 29:22-28*** *So Laban brought together all the people of the place and gave a feast. But when evening came, he took his daughter Leah and gave her to* [*Jacob*](israelja.html)*, and* [*Jacob*](israelja.html)[*lay with*](marriageact.html) *her. And Laban gave his servant girl Zilpah to his daughter as her maidservant. When morning came, there was Leah! So* [*Jacob*](israelja.html) *said to Laban, “What is this you have done to me? I served you for Rachel, didn’t I? Why have you deceived me?” Laban replied, “It is not our custom here to give the younger daughter in* [*marriage*](mashal.html) *before the older* [*one*](one.html)*. Finish this daughter’s bridal week; then we will give you the younger* [*one*](one.html) *also, in return for another* [*seven*](seven.html) *years of work.” And* [*Jacob*](israelja.html) *did so. He finished the week with Leah, and then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife.*

and in:

***Shoftim (Judges) 14:10-18*** *Now his father went down to see the woman. And Samson made a feast there, as was customary for bridegrooms. When he appeared, he was given* [*thirty*](thirty.html) *companions. “Let me tell you a riddle,” Samson said to them. “If you can give me the answer within the* [*seven*](seven.html) *days of the feast, I will give you* [*thirty*](thirty.html) *linen garments and* [*thirty*](thirty.html) *sets of clothes. If you can’t tell me the answer, you must give me* [*thirty*](thirty.html) *linen garments and* [*thirty*](thirty.html) *sets of clothes.” “Tell us your riddle,” they said. “Let’s hear it.” He replied, “Out of the eater, something to* [*eat*](eating.html)*; out of the strong, something sweet.” For* [*three*](three.html) *days they could not give the answer. On the* [*fourth*](four.html) *day, they said to Samson’s wife, “Coax your husband into explaining the riddle for us, or we will burn you and your father’s* [*household*](househld.html) *to death. Did you invite us here to rob us?” Then Samson’s wife threw herself on him, sobbing, “You hate me! You don’t really love me. You’ve given my people a riddle, but you haven’t told me the answer.” “I haven’t even explained it to my father or mother,” he replied, “so why should I explain it to you?” She cried the whole* [*seven*](seven.html) *days of the feast. So on the* [*seventh*](seven.html) *day he finally told her, because she continued to press him. She in turn explained the riddle to her people. Before sunset on the* [*seventh*](seven.html) *day the men of the town said to him, “What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion?” Samson said to them, “If you had not plowed with my* [*heifer*](heifer.html)*, you would not have solved my riddle.”*

The young man, if asked when the day of his wedding will be, replies, “No man [knows](knowledge.html) except my father.” In Israel the father had to be satisfied that every preparation had been made by his son before he gave him permission to go and get his bride.

The groom secured [two](two.html) close friends to assist him in securing his bride and during the actual ceremony. These [two](two.html) are [known](daat.html) as “the friends of the bridegroom.” They functioned as the [two](two.html) witnesses required for a [Jewish](gen-jew.html) wedding. [One](one.html) of them was to assist the bride, and to lead her to the ceremony, while the other was stationed with the groom. He performed a special task when the couple retired into the chadar after the ceremony.

During the ceremony, [known](daat.html) as Kiddushin, a second contract was brought forth called a Ketubah. This [marriage contract](mashal.html) was witnessed by the friends of the bridegroom and turned over to the parents of the bride. It contained the promises that the groom pledged to his wife.

When a couple gets married under the chuppah, the husband proclaims to his wife, *harei at mekudeshes li*, “behold you are [betrothed](betroth.html) to me,” as he places the [ring on her finger](prodigal.html). It is with these words and his action that he accomplishes what is called *kiddushin* ([betrothal](betroth.html)), which comes from the [Hebrew](hebrew.html) word that means holy and separate. [Marriage](mashal.html) sanctifies the relationship by making it exclusive. You are no longer “available;” you are mine and I am yours.

The ceremony was very much like the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) wedding of today. As at all weddings, focus was centered on the bride and groom. For this [one](one.html) day they were looked at as king and queen. Every effort was taken, and every possible expense was made to insure their joy. On this day, [tradition](orallaw.html) says, their [sins](sin.html) are forgiven. They stand pure, without spot or blemish as they are united.

[***Ephesians***](ephesians.html) ***5:25-32*** *Husbands, love your wives, just as* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html) *loved the* [*church*](church.html) *and gave himself up for her To make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, And to present her to himself as a radiant* [*church*](church.html)*, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own* [*bodies*](body.html)*. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no* [*one*](one.html) *ever hated his own* [*body*](body.html)*, but he feeds and cares for it, just as* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html) *does the* [*church*](church.html)*-- For we are members of his* [*body*](body.html)*. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the* [*two*](two.html) *will become* [*one*](one.html) *flesh.” This is a profound mystery--but I am talking about* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html) *and the* [*church*](church.html)*.*

Following the ceremony, the bride and groom entered the chadar. Here the groom gave gifts to the bride:

***Bereshit (Genesis) 34:12*** *Make the price for the bride and the gift I am to bring as great as you like, and I’ll pay whatever you ask me. Only give me the girl as my wife.”*

***Bereshit (Genesis) 24:53*** *Then the servant brought out gold and silver jewelry and articles of clothing and gave them to Rebekah; he also gave costly gifts to her brother and to her mother.*

The couple spent [seven](seven.html) days under the chupah, or literally in the chamber. The friend of the bridegroom stood at the door. All the guests of the wedding assembled outside, waiting for the friend of the bridegroom to announce the [consummation of the marriage](mashal.html), which was related to him by the groom:

***Yochanan (John) 3:26-30*** *They came to John and said to him, “Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the* [*Jordan*](stages.html)*--the* [*one*](one.html) *you testified about--well, he is* [*baptizing*](forty.html)*, and everyone is going to him.” To this John replied, “A man can receive only what is given him from* [*heaven*](heaven.html)*. You yourselves can testify that I said, ‘I am not the* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html) *but am sent ahead of him.’ The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. He must become greater; I must become less.*

At this signal, great rejoicing broke forth in a week long celebration, until the [two](two.html) emerged from the chupah to begin the actual wedding feast.

***Revelation 19:4-9*** *The* [*twenty-four*](twenty.html) *elders and the* [*four*](four.html) *living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried: “Amen, Hallelujah!” Then a voice came from the throne, saying: “Praise our God, all you his servants, you who* [*fear*](fear.html) *him, both small and great!” Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: “Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and* [*clean*](purity.html)*, was given her to wear.” (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) Then the* [*angel*](angels.html) *said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!’” And he added, “These are the true words of God.”*

The other friend of the bridegroom, the [one](one.html) assigned to the bride, is seen in *Shemot (*[*Exodus*](exodus.html)*) 19*, as Moses leads [Israel](gen-jew.html), the bride of the [Messiah](mashiach.html), to meet her God at Mt. [Sinai](stages.html). In fact, [Hag Shavout](shavuot.html) is recorded as the [betrothal](betroth.html) between Israel and [HaShem](hashem.html):

***Yirimiyah (Jeremiah) 2:2-3*** *“Go and proclaim in the hearing of* [*Jerusalem*](city.html)*: “‘I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and* [*followed me through the desert*](stages.html)*, through a land not sown. Israel was holy to* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*, the* [*firstfruits*](shavuot.html) *of his harvest; all who devoured her were held guilty, and disaster overtook them,’” declares* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*.*

Even as the [first](one.html) trump ([shofar](shofar.html)) announced the [betrothal](betroth.html), so the last trump announced the wedding. In *Tehillim (*[*Psalms*](psalms1.html)*) 45* we are brought to the biblical portrayal of not only the wedding of the [Mashiach](mashiach.html) but also his [coronation](teruah.html). The guests are assembled, and gifts are distributed:

***Tehillim (***[***Psalms***](psalms1.html)***) 45:1-17*** *{For the director of music. To [the tune of] “Lilies.” Of the Sons of Korah. A <maskil.> A wedding song.} My* [*heart*](body.html) *is stirred by a noble theme as I recite my verses for the king; my* [*tongue*](spirit.html) *is the pen of a skillful writer You are the most excellent of men and your lips have been anointed with* [*grace*](grace.html)*, since God has blessed you* [*forever*](eternal.html)*. Gird your sword upon your side, O mighty* [*one*](one.html)*; clothe yourself with splendor and majesty. In your majesty ride forth victoriously in behalf of truth, humility and righteousness; let your right* [*hand*](mashal.html) *display* [*awesome*](awesome.html) *deeds. Let your sharp arrows pierce the hearts of the king’s enemies; let the* [*nations*](nations.html) *fall beneath your* [*feet*](heel.html)*. Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom. You love righteousness and hate* [*wickedness*](wicked.html)*; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy. All your robes are fragrant with* [*myrrh*](ketoret.html) *and aloes and* [*cassia*](ketoret.html)*; from palaces adorned with ivory the music of the strings makes you glad. Daughters of kings are among your honored women; at your right* [*hand*](mashal.html) *is the royal bride in gold of Ophir. Listen, O daughter, consider and give ear: Forget your people and your father’s house. The king is enthralled by your beauty; honor him, for he is your lord. The Daughter of Tyre will come with a gift, men of wealth will seek your favor. All glorious is the princess within [her chamber]; her gown is interwoven with gold. In embroidered garments she is led to the king; her* [*virgin*](virgin.html) *companions follow her and are brought to you. They are led in with joy and gladness; they enter the palace of the king. Your sons will take the place of your* [*fathers*](fathers.html)*; you will make them princes throughout the land. I will perpetuate your memory through all* [*generations*](toldot.html)*; therefore the* [*nations*](nations.html) *will praise you for ever and ever.*

The following passage shows the glory of the bride and groom bedecked in all their wedding finery:

***Yeshayah (Isaiah) 61:10 - 62:5*** *I delight greatly in* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of* [*salvation*](salvation.html) *and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his* [*head*](body.html) *like a* [*priest*](priests.html)*, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes* [*seeds*](flower.html) *to grow, so the Sovereign* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *will make righteousness and praise spring up before all* [*nations*](nations.html)*. For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent, for* [*Jerusalem’s*](city.html) *sake I will not remain quiet, till her righteousness shines out like the dawn, her* [*salvation*](salvation.html) *like a blazing torch. The* [*nations*](nations.html) *will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory; you will be called by a* [*new*](new.html)[*name*](name.html) *that the* [*mouth*](body.html) *of* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *will bestow. You will be a crown of splendor in* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*’s* [*hand*](fourteen.html)*, a royal diadem in the* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *of your God. No longer will they call you Deserted, or* [*name*](name.html) *your land Desolate. But you will be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; for* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *will take delight in you, and your land will be married. As a young man* [*marries a maiden*](marriageact.html)*, so will your sons marry you; as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.*

It is interesting to note that the only [time](time.html), in Luqas ([Luke](luke.html)), that [Yeshua](yeshua.html) speaks of the bridegroom is just before the second [Sabbath](sabbath.html) of [Pesach](passover.html) week in:

***Luqas (***[***Luke***](luke.html)***) 5:30-35*** *But the Pharisees and the* [*teachers*](teacher.html) *of the* [*law*](law.html) *who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, “Why do you* [*eat*](eating.html) *and drink with tax collectors and ‘*[*sinners*](sin.html)*‘?”* [*Yeshua*](yeshua.html) *answered them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” They said to him, “John’s disciples often fast and* [*pray*](prayer.html)*, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours go on* [*eating*](eating.html) *and drinking.”* [*Yeshua*](yeshua.html) *answered, “Can you make the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? But the* [*time*](time.html) *will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast.”*

**A chupah is:**

2646 chupah, khoop-paw’; from 2645; a canopy:-chamber, closet, defense.

This word, chupah, is used in only a few places in scripture:

***Tehillim (***[***Psalms***](psalms1.html)***) 19:1-5*** *{For the director of music. A* [*psalm*](psalms1.html) *of David.} The* [*heavens*](heaven.html) *declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his* [*hands*](fourteen.html)*. Day after day they pour forth* [*speech*](mashal.html)*; night after night they display* [*knowledge*](knowledge.html)*. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the* [*world*](worlds.html)*. In the* [*heavens*](heaven.html) *he has pitched a tent for the* [*sun*](hachama.html)*, Which is like a bridegroom* [*coming*](coming.html) *forth from his pavilion, like a champion rejoicing to run his course.*

***Yoel (Joel) 2:16***[*Gather*](gather.html) *the people, consecrate the assembly; bring together the elders,* [*gather*](gather.html) *the children, those nursing at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her chamber.*

***Yeshayah (Isaiah) 4:1-6*** *In that day* [*seven*](seven.html) *women will take hold of* [*one*](one.html) *man and say, “We will* [*eat*](eating.html) *our own* [*food*](food.html) *and provide our own clothes; only let us be called by your* [*name*](name.html)*. Take away our disgrace!” In that day the Branch of* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of the survivors in* [*Israel*](gen-jew.html)*. Those who are left in Zion, who remain in* [*Jerusalem*](city.html)*, will be called holy, all who are recorded among the living in* [*Jerusalem*](city.html)*. The Lord will wash away the filth of the women of Zion; he will cleanse the bloodstains from* [*Jerusalem*](city.html) *by a spirit of judgment and a spirit of* [*fire*](fire.html)*. Then* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *will create over all of Mount Zion and over those who assemble there a* [*cloud*](important.html) *of smoke by day and a glow of flaming* [*fire*](fire.html) *by night; over all the glory will be a canopy. It will be a shelter and shade from the heat of the day, and a refuge and hiding place from the storm and* [*rain*](rains.html)*.*

It is from here that our sages understood that this is exactly what happened when the children of Israel [left Egypt](thebirth.html):

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 13:17-22*** *When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter. For God said, “If they* [*face*](body.html) *war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt.” So God led the people around* [*by the desert road*](stages.html) *toward the* [*Red Sea*](stages.html)*. The Israelites went up* [*out of Egypt*](thebirth.html) *armed for battle. Moses took the bones of* [*Joseph*](joseph.html) *with him because* [*Joseph*](joseph.html) *had made the sons of Israel swear an oath. He had said, “God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up with you from this place.” After leaving* [*Succoth*](succoth.html) *they camped at* [*Etham*](stages.html) *on the edge of the desert. By day* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *went ahead of them in a pillar of* [*cloud*](important.html) *to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of* [*fire*](fire.html) *to give them light, so that they could* [*travel*](mashal.html) *by day or night. Neither the pillar of* [*cloud*](important.html) *by day nor the pillar of* [*fire*](fire.html) *by night left its place in front of the people.*

Our sages understood that the [cloud](important.html) [first](one.html) covered the Israelites at [Succoth](succoth.html) after they left [Ramases](stages.html). So, [Succoth](succoth.html) was aptly named by this [event](feasts.html).

Our sages therefore see this as the [betrothal](betroth.html):

***Vayikra (Leviticus) 22:32-33*** *Do not profane my holy* [*name*](name.html)*. I must be acknowledged as holy by the Israelites. I am* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*, who makes you holy And who* [*brought you out of Egypt*](thebirth.html) *to be your God. I am* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*.”*

The Sfat Emet[[2]](#footnote-2) said that this verse should be translated as:

***Vayikra (Leviticus) 22:32-33*** *I shall be holy in the midst of the* [*Children of Israel*](gen-jew.html)*; I am* [*Hashem*](hashem.html)*, Who betrothed you while taking you* [*out from the land of Egypt*](thebirth.html) *to be for you a God; I am* [*Hashem*](hashem.html)*.*

6942 qadash, kaw-dash’; a prim. root; to be (causat. make, pronounce or observe as) [clean](purity.html) (ceremonially or morally):-appoint, bid, consecrate, dedicate, defile, hallow, (be, keep) holy (-er, place), keep, prepare, proclaim, [purify](purity.html), sanctify (-ied [one](one.html), self), x wholly.

So, a [betrothal](betroth.html) is a kiddushin. The *Encyclopedia Judaica* indicates that a [betrothal](betroth.html) was a [two](two.html) step process. The [betrothal](betroth.html), erusin or shiddukhin, was followed by the kiddushin.

The only [time](time.html) that the word “[betroth](betroth.html)“ is used in relation to [HaShem](hashem.html) and Israel is in Hoshea and is obviously yet [future](future.html):

***Hoshea (Hosea) 2:16-20*** *“In that day,” declares* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*, “you will call me ‘my husband’; you will no longer call me ‘my master.’ I will remove the names of the Baals from her lips; no longer will their names be invoked. In that day I will make a* [*covenant*](covenant.html) *for them with the beasts of the field and the birds of the* [*air*](heaven.html) *and the creatures that move along the ground. Bow and sword and battle I will abolish from the land, so that all may lie down in safety. I will* [*betroth*](betroth.html) *you to me forever; I will* [*betroth*](betroth.html) *you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will* [*betroth*](betroth.html) *you in faithfulness, and you will* [*acknowledge*](knowledge.html)[*HaShem*](hashem.html)*.*

[**Betroth**](betroth.html) 781 ‘aras, aw-ras’; a prim. root; to engage for matrimony:-[betroth](betroth.html), espouse.

It is interesting to note that this was close in [time](time.html) to when [Israel](gen-jew.html) is [first](one.html) called a congregation ([community](community.html)) or [church](church.html):

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 12:1-3***[*HaShem*](hashem.html) *said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, “This month is to be for you* [*the first month*](one.html)*, the* [*first*](one.html) *month of your year. Tell the whole* [*community*](community.html) *of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family,* [*one*](one.html) *for each* [*household*](househld.html)*.*

At the wedding the bride and bridegroom are consecrated (kiddushin) with these words:

“By this ring you are consecrated to me in accordance with the [law](law.html) of Moses and Israel.”

Note the similarity to this passage:

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 19:9-15***[*HaShem*](hashem.html) *said to Moses, “I am going to come to you in a dense* [*cloud*](important.html)*, so that the people will hear me* [*speaking*](mashal.html) *with you and will always put their trust in you.” Then Moses told* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *what the people had said. And* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them* [*wash their clothes*](forty.html) *And be ready by the* [*third*](three.html) *day, because* [*on that day HaShem will come down on Mount Sinai*](stages.html) *in the sight of all the people. Put limits for the people around the mountain and tell them, ‘Be careful that you do not go up the mountain or touch the* [*foot*](heel.html) *of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. He shall surely be stoned or shot with arrows; not a* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *is to be laid on him. Whether man or animal, he shall not be permitted to live.’ Only when the* [*ram’s horn*](shofar.html) *sounds a long blast may they go up to the mountain.” After Moses had gone down the mountain to the people, he consecrated them, and they* [*washed their clothes*](forty.html)*. Then he said to the people, “Prepare yourselves for the* [*third*](three.html) *day. Abstain from* [*sexual relations*](marriageact.html)*.”*

Curiously, this is the [first](one.html) [time](time.html) that the Torah uses this word regarding His people. He used this term in Bereshit (Genesis) to describe [the seventh day](seven.html), and he used it to describe the firstborn at [Pesach](passover.html).

Before the wedding the groom required [three](three.html) days to prepare, according to the encyclopedia Judaica.

**Selected Essays:**

[**SHABBAT**](sabbath.html) **SHALOM: We’re b-a-a-c-k!**

By Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

***Vayikra (Leviticus) 26:32*** *And you will I scatter among the* [*nations*](nations.html)*, and I will draw out the sword after you; and your land shall be a desolation, and your cities a waste.*

The relationship between God and Israel is often compared to a [marriage](mashal.html). The biblical Song of Songs, the Friday evening [Sabbath](sabbath.html) [prayer](prayer.html) “Come my beloved, greet your bride,” and many of the customs linking a [Jewish](gen-jew.html) wedding with the revelation at [Sinai](stages.html) all point toward this stunning metaphor. Indeed, when a [Jew](gen-jew.html) dons his [tefillin](tefillin.html) each morning, he is putting on a wedding ring: “I shall [betroth](betroth.html) you to Me forever; I shall [betroth](betroth.html) you to Me in righteousness and justice, in loving kindness and compassion; I shall [betroth](betroth.html) you to me in faithfulness, and you shall [know](daat.html) God.” (2:21-22)

The problem with these words is that we would like to believe that our relationship to God is an eternal [one](one.html), yet divorce statistics suggest that contemporary [marriage](mashal.html) is more temporary than permanent. Furthermore, add to this fact the [biblical law](law.html) which forbids a husband from taking back a wife who has committed [adultery](marriageact.html), and our metaphor slams the door on the return of Israel to her Husband in [Heaven](heaven.html) after having been involved in foreign entanglements!

What we must do - as indeed the Bible does - is to add to our symbol of husband and wife a second metaphor: the unique bond between the Israelite and the [Land of Israel](city.html).

[One](one.html) of the Torah’s major motifs, constantly repeated in our [prayers](prayer.html), benedictions and [festivals](festivals.html), is the incomparable relationship between the [Jewish people](gen-jew.html) and the Land. Every significant [prayer](prayer.html), from the daily [Amida](amida.html) to the [Grace](grace.html) After Meals, serves as an occasion on which we emphasize the tie between the land and the people, the people and the land.

[Israel](city.html) is a part of the very air we’ve been breathing during our almost 2,000-year [exile](galuyot.html). After all, what better way to keep alive the [dream](dreams.html) of Israel than to thank the Almighty after every meal with bread “for the land [of Israel] and the sustenance,” and to climax each [Yom Kippur](kippur.html) fast and [Pesach Seder](haggada.html) with the declaration: “Next Year in [Jerusalem](city.html)!”

The relationship between the land and the people has a parallel in the relationship between husband and wife. For example, the people have obligations to the land, (the [Sabbatical shmita year](shmita.html), when the land must lie fallow, and various prohibitions of mixed plantings, etc.), just as a husband has obligations towards his wife for [food](food.html), clothing, and [conjugal rights](marriageact.html). In the [sexual relationship](marriageact.html), a wife “gives” herself to her husband, and the land “gives” its produce to the people. The word used for entering the land, [*ki tavo*](annual.html) (Deut. 26:1) comes from the same verb used for [sexual intercourse](marriageact.html), *biya*. Regarding the [jubilee year](yovel.html), the Torah specifically says that in the 50th year, the land is sanctified, and sanctification (*kiddushin*) is the precise [mishnaic](orallaw.html) term for [betrothal](betroth.html).

BETRAYAL between husband and wife results in divorce, and betrayal between the people and the land also results in divorce - [exile](galuyot.html). Hence the Torah portion, [*Behukotai*](annual.html), is [known](daat.html) for its chastisements, and at its climax, the Torah delineates what will happen if the people don’t keep the [land’s sabbaticals](shmita.html): “And your land shall be a desolation, and your cities shall be a waste. Then shall the land be paid back her [disregarded] [sabbaticals](shmita.html).” (Lev. 26:34)

Rashi even calculates that the [seventy](seventy.html) years of [Babylonian](bavel.html) [exile](galuyot.html) correspond to the [number](nchart.html) of [sabbatical](shmita.html) and [jubilee](yovel.html) years ignored by the people during their 430-year presence in the land. The land will insist on being paid.

However, just as the [jubilee](yovel.html) year guarantees that individual parcels of land are eventually returned to their original owners and so the land becomes [redeemed](redemption.html), similarly does the Bible guarantee that ultimately the [land of Israel](city.html) will return to the people of Israel, and then we will be [redeemed](redemption.html). God’s [covenant](covenant.html) with Israel promises an [eternal](eternal.html) relationship between the land and the people, between God and His [nation](nations.html).

Thus the sting of the curses is ameliorated by the eventual affirmation: “Then shall I remember my [covenant](covenant.html) with [Jacob](israelja.html), and also my [covenant](covenant.html) with [Isaac](isaac.html) and so also my [covenant](covenant.html) with [Abraham](avraham.html) will I remember; and I will remember the land.” (Lev. 26:42-43) These verses reflect not only return but [forgiveness](forgive.html). The metaphor of the land holds the possibility of repentance - and therefore [redemption](redemption.html).

The reading from the prophets (Jeremiah 32) gives this idea practical significance. Jeremiah is the prophet of doom, who must foretell the destruction of his beloved [Jerusalem](city.html), and the [exile](galuyot.html) of his errant [nation](nations.html). In the midst of his tear-drenched elegies, his uncle Hanamel asks him to [redeem](redemption.html) his ancestral land in Anatot, outside [Jerusalem](city.html). Jeremiah writes out a contract and pays a high price in order to buy back ([redeem](redemption.html)) his uncle’s property.

At [first](one.html) glance, Jeremiah’s action defies all logic! How can the prophet who foresees Israel’s doom and banishment, pay good money for real estate on the very eve of destruction? [One](one.html) can imagine what a nosedive the real estate market must have taken during the period immediately prior to the prophesied destruction!

But Jeremiah’s action is the ultimate expression of [Jewish](gen-jew.html) faith that the relationship between the people to the land is [eternal](eternal.html). Jeremiah demonstrated by his purchase and “[redemption](redemption.html)” that it’s only a a question of [time](time.html) before the “children shall come back to their own border” (Jer. 31:16), and that “there will yet be heard in the cities of Judea sounds of joy and happiness, sounds of brides and grooms.”

And Jeremiah was right! The children have returned.

\* \* \*

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1. Midrash Rabbah - Genesis III:6, Midrash Rabbah - Ecclesiastes I:35, Kethuboth 4a [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “The Three [Festivals](festivals.html)“ - by Sfat Emes, page 319. Published by Mesorah Publications Ltd. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)