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THE ANCIENT JEWISH WEDDING: A MISSING LINK IN CHRISTIANITY

By Javier Valdivieso

Scoffers have argued that Christians hold a set of scriptures (the Bible) that are just-so stories. God in the person of Jesus is the creator of heavens and Earth, but he also created marriage, *the union of one man and one woman*. This divinely invented institution in our day is under attack. The goal is to redefine marriage, especially by the homosexual movement, which finds the basis of their behavior in evolutionary philosophy. Because they have rejected the scriptures as factual with regards to history (creation), they have rejected the bible's moral teachings as well (Romans 1).

After humankind fell, God got directly involved with the redemption of humanity and the physical realm; someday there will be a new Heavens and new Earth (Revelation 21:1). God used this *one man and one woman union* principle as a blueprint and mirrored it as Jesus (the bridegroom) and the Church (the bride) to let us know His plan. The plan is first mentioned in Genesis 3:15 and then later on in Genesis 15:1-21 where we read an unusual (for us western minded) Covenant between God and Abram. God's plan of redemption for the ages is captured symbolically in the ancient Jewish wedding.

Even though this topic is familiar to many, few Christians have considered the elements of the ancient Jewish wedding and the several biblical feasts from a prophetic viewpoint. The language used by Jesus (Yeshua, the bridegroom) and Hebrew writers of the New Testament in regards to the bride (the Church) will be better understood using a historical understanding of the Jewish roots of the Christian faith.

The Betrothal

In modern western culture we are accustomed to a man choosing a woman or a woman choosing a man for marriage (in the best conservative scenario), but in ancient Israel, families arranged marriages. The Apostle Paul said regarding the church:

"For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused (betrothed) you to one husband that I may



Jewish Wedding Ceremony

present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." (2 Corinthians 11:2)

When a father saw that it was time for his son to marry, he sent a servant to another village to find a wife for him, usually someone his son had never met. This servant went with the best offer his master could afford, maybe ten coins of silver or gold (Luke 15:8), found a woman, and made an offer for her to enter into marriage. If the woman's father was impressed and accepted the bridegroom's offering, he called his daughter for her response. She could say "yes" or "no", but most likely would say "yes" because the opportunities for her to get married and have family were few.

Here I would like to say that in my life I was not looking for God, God approached me through a servant, someone that presented me the "good news of salvation"; that was my chance and I said, "Yes".

"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:44)

The servant would leave part of the agreed payment and went back with the news. Once the groom's father approved the choice of the bride, the bridegroom would go to meet his bride-to-be for the first time. At this point began the betrothal, a one to two year binding engagement that had two stages, one spiritual and the second physical. Betrothal is called also *Erusin* or *Kiddushin* or sanctification (came from Kadosh or Holy).

Shabbath (Sabbath) in Judaism is seen as the bride, Messiah is the bridegroom. In Christianity the body of believers or the Church is the bride, and Yeshua (Jesus), the Messiah, is the bridegroom.

Tenaim or Groom's Promise

The first time that the betrothed saw each other, the groom paid a Mohar or bride-price (like the ring for modern marriage ceremonies) in full and declared in a loud voice, "The price has been paid in full," in front of the village. "For you are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Corinthians 6:20)

The bride was very careful with that payment, not to loose the coins. Those coins were placed on a headpiece, part of the bride's garment that would be part of the betrothal ceremony or kept by the bride in case of divorce.¹

Once the price had been paid by the bridegroom, a Ketubah or contract document (a covenant promise) was signed to record the agreed terms of the betrothal, that the groom would provide for the needs of the bride (us, the Church, His bride-to-be) during the one to two year waiting period. "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah." (Jeremiah 31:31) Symbollically, the price paid for the bride was Christ's life for the redemption for the Church.²

The Ketubah was designed to protect the bride more than the groom. Once the Ketubah was signed, the bridegroom declared in a loud voice, "It is finished," i.e., it is "paid in full."³

Chuppah: The groom's promise to prepare a place for his bride

Once the Mohar was paid and the Ketubah was signed, there was a groom's speech of promise. He would say, "I

¹ Snarey JR, The Jewish Family <<http://www.asa3.org/asa/PSCF/1974/JASA6-74Snarey.html>> Accessed 2009 Sep 04

² The Truth Connection, Ancient Jewish Wedding Ceremony <http://www.thetruthconnection.com/spirit_truth_3.html> Accessed 2009 Sep 04

³ Kelley J, The Bride, <<http://www.raptureready.com/featured/kelley/jack82.html>> Accessed 2009 Sep 04

have to go, I'm going to prepare the Chuppah (bridal's chamber), a place for you at my father's house." This tradition is kept even in our day. The groom went back to his father's house to build an addition to the existing dwelling, where he would receive his wife in about one or two years. In modern Israel you can see many additions that have been made for this purpose. The bride would then say, "Do not go," and the groom would respond, "It is better for you that I'll go but I will come back." "When?" she asked. And the groom would respond, "I do not know, nor the servant, only my father knows the day".⁴

Meanwhile the bridegroom prepared the Chuppah, and the bride had to be ready. The groom sent a chaperone or servant to keep an eye on her, to insure that she would be cared for and watchful for the return of the groom. This alertness was manifested at night, because usually the bridegroom would show up at midnight. She had to have her oil lamp burning all the time. The bride also had other virgins helping and serving her; they were also anticipating the wedding.

With regards to the Chuppah, there is a parallel in the Scriptures. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 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 unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." (John 14:1-4)

"But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." (Mark 13:32-37)

Before the bridegroom left for the one year waiting period, he spent precious time with his bride-to-be. There was joy but also anxiety about unknown things yet to happen. Considering this you may better understand the words of Yeshua, during those short three years of ministry, before he went and paid the Mohar in Calvary, died, rose from the dead and returned to the Father to prepare a place for us.

⁴ Risk B, The Ultimate Wedding <<http://ldolphin.org/risk/ult.shtml>> Accessed, 2009, Septemebr 04

“And they said unto him, ‘Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink?’ And he said unto them, ‘Can ye make the children of the bride chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them?’” (Luke 5:33-34) As John the Baptist was filled with joy when he saw Yeshua, so shall we be when we join Yeshua in the heavenly bridal chamber.

One last element of this stage of the betrothal was the “chaperone” or Holy Spirit (Ruah HaKodesh), who was sent on the Feast of the Pentecost (Shavuot), 50 days after the Feast of the First Fruits. In the first Pentecost (Exodus 34) God gave the Torah, His commandments, or instructions for successful living, His very Word. In this latter Pentecost (Act 2), God sent the Holy Spirit so that we would understand His Word, be on fire for His kingdom’s sake, and be ready for the coming of our bridegroom. He has provided for us and empowered us; we will not be destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6)

NISUIN or CHUPPAH

The coming of the bridegroom, Yeshua HaMashiah, for His bride to fulfill the “Nuptials” or Ceremony, began with the Nisuin which means “to lift up” or “carry”. Christianity calls this “the rapture”, even though this word does not exist in Scriptures. Instead of “rapture”, the scripture says “caught up”. Lifting up the bride was an ancient wedding custom wherein the bride was lifted by poles to the ceremony in a carriage. The Chuppah, or canopy, was not only related to the bridal chamber, but was also “lifted” by poles like the ancient carriage. The present custom of lifting the bride and groom in chairs is rooted in this processional.”⁵

Mikvah

Mikvah was a ritual immersion in “living waters” in a pool called Mayim Chaim. That is the basis for baptism. The water came from a stream or other water source such as a lake, river, or ocean. A man-made Mikva pool had a constant inflow and exit drain. In the Torah, a Mikva was used by a woman for her monthly menstrual cycle. In Judaism it was used for a gentile “proselyte” to convert to Judaism. John the Baptist (the Immerser) did this. There were several Mikvahs at the Temple and in the synagogues. In the Preparation Day before the Shabbath (Sabbath), part of the preparation was to immerse (baptize).

The origin and meaning of baptism comes from the Torah itself; the meaning is “purification”. When the bride-to-be

was immersed in the Mikva, she was considered a new creation with former sins wiped away; no one could remind her of her past again. For gentiles as proselytes, the baptism signified adoption and becoming an heir (Romans 8:17) of the promises of the nation of Israel. This Israel or Church is formed by some “natural branches” or Jews and “wild branches” or gentiles redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ; they accepted Him as their Messiah (Christ), Lord, and Savior. This Israel or Church or Bride-to-be is the “One New Man” of Ephesians 2:14-15. “And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;” (Romans 11:17)

In the first century, when a immigrant or foreigner wanted to be part of the nation of Israel, they would go through a process of new “citizenship” in which they renounced their former nation, customs, idols, family, and past and then learned Judaism (based on the several schools or Yeshivas at the time of Jesus). Finally, they were seen by two witnesses as they went through the Mikva, symbolic of dying and being “born again”. As in natural birth a baby comes through broken waters, Noah in the Ark went through the waters of the Deluge (1 Peter 3:18-21). When Israel crossed the Red Sea it went through waters, as well as when they crossed the Jordan River to the promised land. In the ancient Jewish wedding the bride and groom were immersed in a ritual pool of Mayim Chaim.

Waiting for up to two years

“While the groom builds the new home, the bride waits and wears a veil, and a head band with the coins. This shows she belongs only to the groom, she is no more available. She prepares for her wedding by making blankets, trying to become the Proverb 31: 10-31 woman. She also shows gratitude to her family for raising her, and she mends hurt relationships. No matter what, she had to be ready because he would come at night.”⁵

This stage is awesome, because we (the church) are in that time; our “bridegroom” will soon show up for us. In the ancient Jewish wedding, when the father saw that the time had come for his son to go and get his bride, at the least expected moment of a night, a trumpet would sound, the bridegroom would see in the distance where his bride was waiting for him holding her burning oil lamp. He would then find her and take her to be with him for seven days.

For the Church, the “rapture” is not the second coming. The church will be taken in a “twinkling of an eye” followed by seven years for the “Nuptials”. Meanwhile the antichrist will show up and chaos will begin on the earth for seven years for those who were left behind. At

⁵ Rabbi Ken, The Messiah and the Jewish Wedding < http://www.yeshuatyisrael.com/messiah_wedding%201.htm > Accessed 2009 Jun 20

the end of those seven years, Jesus will return to earth to judge, as King of kings, not on a donkey as a suffering servant, but as the Prince on a white stallion with his armies, to establish His 1000 years reign till the final judgment.

At this point the bride will be celebrating, she will be at the banquet, and she will go with her husband to complete the Nuptials in the Chuppah to become His wife.

“Now this I say, brethren that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” (1 Corinthians 15:50-53)

“Are ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.” (Luke 12:40)

“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.” (Ephesians 5:27)

Kittel

“The Wedding Garment: The Kittel is a white robe; it looks somewhat like a bathrobe. It is a garment worn at Passover. It is also worn by the Groom at a wedding. The word Kittel is rooted in the Hebrew word *Katal* - To Slay. A garment worn by priests during certain sacrifices such as Passover or Yom Kippur Sacrifice”.¹ “And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.” (Matthew 22:11-12)

The Bridesmaids

“The Bridesmaids: Unmarried friends who attend the bride and provide light for the groom who comes at night. This is a traditional custom for friends to light havdalah candles in the processional or during the veiling ceremony. Light is a symbol of God’s presence, the Shekinah Glory.”¹

“Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, ‘Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet

him.’ Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, ‘Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.’ But the wise answered, saying, ‘Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.’ 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. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, opens to us.’ But he answered and said, ‘Verily I say unto you, I know you not.’ Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.” (Matthew 25: 1-13)

The Bridegroom Comes

“The groomsmen would run ahead of the groom, sound the Shofar (trumpet), and shout that he was coming. While the father’s head was turned, the groom would steal the bride. The wedding party then went back to the groom’s house to meet the guests.”¹

“He that hath 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 Bridal Chamber - Chuppah

“The bride and groom enter the bridal chamber where the marriage is consummated. The party waits outside until the groom tells the best man that it is consummated. Then, the guests rejoice for 7 days.”¹

“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 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: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” (1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18)

The Kiddush-(blessing)

“The shared cup of wine is a simcha, joy, at a Jewish Wedding. When the bride drinks from the cup after the bridegroom it is a sign that she is accepting the covenant he has signed during the Ketubah signing.”¹

“And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission

of sins. 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.'" (Matthew 26:27-29)

The very first miracle of Yeshua was to make wine from water in a wedding (John 2). The blessing of the cup says:

Baruch atah, Adony Eloheynu, Melech Ha-Olam. Borey P'ree Hagafen: Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who creates the fruit of the vine. Amen.

Breaking of the Glass

"A symbol of the destruction of the Temple. Also a sign that the covenant broken can not be put back together.

"The Temple was destroyed in the year 70 A.D.

"A Traditional end to a Jewish wedding serves as a reminder of the fragility of life, even during the most joyous of celebrations. Life is fragile. We break this glass as a symbol of our past. In the theater that says go break a leg. In a Jewish wedding we break a glass. Forgiveness is an end to a shattered past. As the Groom smashes the glass everyone will shout Mazel Tov! Which means Good Fortune, may your lives here on out not be shattered, but full of fortune and joy."¹

Married Life Begins

"New couple goes to the father's home to begin married life.

"We too, will go to the Father's house for the Marriage Feast of The Lamb, and then go with The Messiah in His reign in His kingdom here on earth for 1,000 years."¹

Yichud - Seclusion

"After the Wedding Ceremony the Bride and Groom now retreat to a private room to enjoy one another. This is a time of togetherness before the great feast that awaits them."¹

"And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great." (Revelation 19:5)

The autumn biblical Feasts are prophetic

The Feast of Trumpets, New Year (Rosh Hashanah). Prior to Rosh HaShanah, the Shofar (ram's horn) is blown 100 times to call people to repent and remind them of the arrival the Ten Days of Repentance, sometimes referred to Day of Judgment. Jewish tradition says that God writes every person's words, deeds, and thoughts in the Book of Life, which He opens and examines on this day. If good deeds outnumber sinful ones for the year, that person's name will be inscribed in the book for another year on Yom Kippur. So during Rosh HaShanah and the Ten Days

of Repentance, people can repent of their sins and do good deeds to increase their chances of being inscribed in the Book of Life.

Yeshua said he has the authority to judge people (John 5:24-27), to judge "the living and dead" (2 Tim: 4:1). Revelation 21:27 mentions the "Lamb's book of life", and the only way to be inscribed in that book is through faith in Jesus as Savior from sin, and this salvation is permanent (John 10:27-30). Those not inscribed in the book of life, will be thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15).

Finally the Feast of the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) signifies many elements of the final restoration of Israel, and the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkoth) signifies the final Harvest when all nations will share in the joy and blessing of God's Kingdom. During that time, all believers will celebrate this feast (Zechariah 14:16-19).

Conclusions

Once understood, the parallels between the ancient Jewish wedding and Biblical feasts with God's plan of redemption for humankind represented by marriage of the Church (as the bride) and Jesus (the bridegroom) facilitate a deeper understanding of marriage as something more than the union of one man and one woman; it is a covenant or betrothal. The gospel has a deeper meaning with this understanding.

God created marriage and He used the same concept as a blue print of His plan of salvation. Furthermore, the authority of the Scriptures is confirmed in that the pattern of redemption in the New Testament mirrors the historical Jewish wedding rituals. Any aberrant redefinition of marriage, as pushed by the homosexual or animal rights movements, ultimately destroys the true meaning of this this God-given institution.

As Christians, we should see God's creation not just in the physical realm but beyond; otherwise, physical reality will be the only ground for new ideas, missing the final goal to bring people to salvation in Jesus Christ. God created non-materialistic elements such as marriage, love, forgiveness, free will, freedom, moral laws, and the power of thinking and reasoning to makes us fit to survive and have much purpose in life.

Without knowing the Jewish roots of the Christian faith, Christians may have faith but lack some of the deeper knowledge. (Isaiah 49:22; Acts 15:13-21, Zech. 8:23, Rom. 10:18-21;11:1-14) In contrast, our unsaved Jewish friends have some of the knowledge, but lack faith in Messiah Yeshua (Ephesians 4: 11-13). Put these two perspectives together and we will better understand prophetic events that may be fulfilled in this very generation. The "one new

man" (Ephesians 2:15) may be established when Yeshua will "catch us up" in a "twinkling of an eye". Are you ready?🔗

COMING EVENTS

Thursday, October 8, 7:00 P.M., Providence Baptist Church, 6339 Glenwood Ave., Raleigh, Room 631
Joe Spears will present evidence of design in nature. Privileged Planet, Rare Earth, and other sources mention astronomical and physics laws and constants that are "just right". We will also go into biology to see similar evidence.

Contributions can be made at the TASC web site at www.tasc-creationscience.org through any of these major credit cards or through PayPal.



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