

A Marriage Made in Heaven

A Play in One Act

By Shirley Harkins

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Drama Drash Ministries
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Approx. Running Time: One Hour

Cast: (6+M, 4+F)

AVI, Father of the Bridegroom

YISRAELA, The Bride

ELIJAH, Friend of the Bridegroom

JACOB, Father of the Bride

MOTHER OF THE BRIDE

JOSHUA, The Bridegroom

BRIDAL ATTENDANTS (10 preferably, but at least 2)

FRIENDS OF THE BRIDEGROOM (4-9 Need at least 4)

Props: Pottery water jug, pottery carafe and two cups, Kiddush cup, (resembles a challis) Chuppah (canopy), ring, up to 10 oil lamps for the BRIDAL ATTENDANTS, ketubah scroll (*must be in JOSHUA's possession for his first entrance*), money bag for bride price, a ring for the betrothal, plastic coins to simulate shekels, Shofar for the FRIEND OF THE BRIDEGROOM.

Wardrobe: Bride needs betrothal veil, first century middle-eastern bridal attire: white dress, veil with dowry coins attached, gold crown, several bracelets on both arms, mantle decorated with rhinestones representing precious stones. Groom wears the wedding ring in the first scene. He needs wedding clothes: kittel (wedding garment) with a multi-colored sash and gold colored crown. All other cast in simple biblical attire. (see illustrations) Kittels for each of the friends of the bridegroom.

Setting: Virtually empty set. Small wooden table and two chairs for Shiddukhin and Betrothal scene. (Cast may carry on and off set pieces.) Podium is needed for NARRATOR, far STAGE LEFT or STAGE RIGHT of action.

Notes: Wedding procession may take place from the rear of the church or auditorium, moving up the center aisle. Darken the stage with a single spot light to simulate the midnight return of the bridegroom.

Try to recruit as many shofar blowers for the bridal procession as possible.

Decorate the fellowship hall like a wedding reception for refreshments after the show.

Suggested dance music:

Shuvu Elai (Return to Me) by B'racha
House of Prayer CD available at brachamusic.com

Dance Instructions:

In a Circle Formation, men in one circle STAGE RIGHT, women in another STAGE LEFT

Facing center of circle, hands held at shoulder level, palms together: Step to the R: R-together, R-together, R-together, R-together

Hands down, step into center: 4 steps (R,L,R, L), hop on last step 1 time with palms up facing in, R foot 1 time with palms up facing in.

Back out of center 4 steps (R,L,R,L), hop on last step 1 times, on R foot 1 time.

Facing CCW, with hands on hips:

Walk 4 steps (R,L,R,L), R heel out (hands in the air-snap fingerL-Heel, (snap fingers) X
4

Joining hands shoulder level, 8 mayims to the R

Repeat entire sequence

Face in, bend at the waist, pointing both hands in, move in. As the circle closes, raise hands and step out. Repeat.

Facing center of circle, hands held at shoulder level, palms together: Step to the R: R-together, R-together, R-together, R-together

Hands down, step into center: 4 steps (R,L,R, L), hop on last step 1 time with palms up facing in, R foot 1 time with palms up facing in.

Back out of center 4 steps (R,L,R,L), hop on last step 1 times, on R foot 1 time. Repeat 2 X's.

Facing CCW, with hands on hips:

Walk 4 steps (R,L,R,L), R heel out (hands in the air-snap fingerL-Heel, (snap fingers) X
4

Joining hands shoulder level, 8 mayims to the R

Face in, bend at the waist, pointing both hands in, move in. As the circle closes, raise hands and step out. Repeat 4 times

Spin in place until song fades.

Mayim

Steps are as follows: Right foot cross over Left, Left to the side, Right behind Left, Left to the side.

For more dance and music ideas, see www.mayimchaim.com

Drama Drash allows producing up to 15 copies of each downloaded script of A Marriage Made in Heaven, for director, cast, and technical crew.

All promotional materials (Press Releases, Flyers, Programs) must include the following information:

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Feel free to call with production questions or email.

A Marriage Made in Heaven

NARRATOR: Marriage is the first and certainly most wonderful of all the traditions appointed by God. Friends and family reunite to share the joy as a loving couple exchanges covenant vows and then gather afterwards to enjoy a celebration with good food, music, and dance!

Playing on this jubilant theme, first century writers paint one of the sweetest images in all of Scripture in the illustration of the Church as the bride of Christ. This analogy, however, is not only an apostolic convention. Through His prophets, God also described His covenant relationship with His people using marriage language—as we read in Isaiah 54—*“For your husband is your Maker, Whose name is the LORD of hosts.”* And again in Hosea, chapter two—*“And it will come about in that day,” declares the LORD, “That you will call Me Ishi, And will no longer call Me Baali.”*—You will call me husband, and no longer call me Master. And in that same chapter, God speaks through the prophet—*“I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, In lovingkindness and in compassion, and I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness. Then you will know the LORD.”*

From a modern perspective—viewed strictly in the context of contemporary Christian courtship and marriage customs—this metaphor loses much of its impact in the translation. If we are to fully understand what Jesus meant when He described His ministry using marriage language or the apostles who later presented the Church as His Bride, we need to explore the courtship and marriage traditions of First Century Judea—where the Master lived and taught. This deeper than surface level study of scripture is referred to, in Hebrew, as a “drash.” The same Hebrew word translated as “seek” in this passage from Deuteronomy Chapter Four: *But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul.* When we apply our

drash to the apostolic text, we will discover that every first century marriage tradition has been or will be prophetically fulfilled by Jesus, our Messiah.

In Genesis 24, we read that Abraham sent his servant out to find a bride for Isaac, a boy who's very life foreshadowed of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. In verse six, Abraham admonishes his servant not to take Isaac out of the land to find a bride, but rather to bring the bride to him. In the same way, the church can't take Jesus Christ out of the context of first century Judea where the Master lived and taught. We must go to Him and study the Bible from His ancient and traditional perspective.

We want to understand our role from His first century perspective to participate more fully in the covenant relationship. We'll discover that because of His great love, Jesus was willing to pay a sacrificial price for His Bride, the Church, and that He will one day return to claim her. We'll learn what we're supposed to be doing in the mean time, why we can't be with Him now, and how we are to prepare for His return. We don't want to get caught sleeping. So, let's carefully examine the first century marriage process, step by step.

The first phase of the process was the *shiddukhin*, (shi-doo-KHEEN) or the marriage arrangement. Parents in first century Judea were obliged to find suitable life partners for their children. The heads of two families negotiated the match with the father of the bridegroom more often taking the initiative. Biblical accounts indicate, however that mothers occasionally played a role in the bridal selection. Hagar did, being left a single mom after Abraham sent her away. We read in Genesis 21 that she found a wife for Ishmael in Egypt. The father, however, most often acted independently, as did Abraham on Isaac's behalf in the Genesis 24 account.

In the case of Jacob and Rachel—ah, now there's a love story—romance might factor in but generally wasn't considered a key variable in the match. Sons and daughters of the first century submitted *completely* to the authority and best judgment of their parents, unlike our modern society.

Of course, family life was much different back then. First century families were largely self sufficient, with farmland, flocks, and sometimes servants. They operated almost like a business and when conditions warranted such extremes, as small army to protect their land and possessions, which is why boy children were always welcomed.

Young men had the vitality and strength to do heavy chores and *speak with their enemies in the gate*, one of the benefits David poses of raising a quiver full of children in Psalm 127:5

(All the following stage business continues as the NARRATOR is speaking)

ENTER STAGE RIGHT: AVI (Enters, with money bag hung from his belt/sash, and begins to pace as if in deep thought)

BRIDAL ATTENDANTS: (During NARRATOR's speech, file in from STAGE RIGHT and cross in front of AVI. The first two or three literally staggering with giggles. Two more, tug or war with a fabric or jar. One wins, both storm out in opposite directions. Another girl enters, wandering aimlessly, maybe tugging petals from a daisy, and finally, two or three very small girls come in, playing tag--racing by the stage)

AVI: (Consider each girl one by one but shake head "No" to each one in turn. Pace, raise open hands as if in prayer, deep in thought.)

NARRATOR: The father's choice for perspective bride was based largely on the economic status of both families. He carefully weighed his young son's means and calculated the bride price he'd be able to afford. In the first century, the minimum going bride price was 50 shekels—roughly two month's wages—but the amount and terms were negotiable, as we read in Genesis 29, where Jacob worked seven years for Rachel's hand. In Joshua 15, Caleb offered Achsah, his daughter, to anyone who could capture Kiriath-Sepher and in 1 Samuel Chapter 17, the king's daughter is offered as part of the compensation package for the slaying of Goliath. Later, however, in chapter 18, Saul adds an additional one hundred foreskins of the Philistines to Mikal's brideprice. Back to the prophet Hosea, he gave fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and half of barley for his bride.

Hospitality and gift giving were two important social functions in first century Judea. Not only did a gift's value establish the prestige of the giver, it also served as pledge between giver and recipient; similar to a blood-covenant. After an equitable

exchange, a relationship was forged. We see the extent of this bond in Genesis 19, when Lot receives two mysterious strangers into his house. When the wicked men of Sodom began beating at the door, Lot offered his virgin daughter before surrendering his guests! The obligation of hospitality took precedence even over family!

Now, while sons did the heavier work, unmarried daughters were not without value. They tended flocks, like Rachel, and Ziporah, the wife of Moses, and her sisters. Young women might have worked in the field, wove fabric and did sewing, or contributed to the family in many other ways. The bride's family surrendered a valuable asset in their daughter, and the groom's family offset the loss with the bride price. This exchange established a binding contract between parties. Paying the bride price also demonstrated the bridegroom's love and gave him with authority over his new wife.

A portion of the bride price was given to the Bride. We read in Genesis 31: 14-16, that Leah and Rachel complained because they didn't receive this portion from their father, Laban. To her eventual detriment, Rachel then absconded with his household gods to even the score.

BRIDAL ATTENDANTS: (Stop procession on this cue)

NARRATOR: Thus narrowing down the perspective brides in the village or town, the father of the groom sought the one young woman who would be an asset to his family.

ENTER STAGE LEFT YISRAELA

YISRAELA: (Finally enters stage left with water jug on left shoulder. She should be dressed plainly, maybe with smudges of dirt on her face. She remains far stage left. Face congregation with a shy smile.)

WHILE

AVI: (Fold arm across chest, rubbing beard, considering YISRAELA)

NARRATOR: Physical appearances might not have impressed the groom's father as much as a virtuous woman who would bring honor to the family. The father of the groom also sought a strong and hardworking woman—one likely to produce healthy offspring—and *survive* childbirth. Abraham's servant in Genesis 24 didn't pray for a *beautiful* maiden but rather for a *woman* willing to water his ten camels. Rebekah didn't make the offer lightly, either. Watering ten camels would be a tall order, with just a wooden bucket or pottery jug—more than say—simply watering the dog. When water becomes available, one camel can consume up to thirty gallons!

YISRAELA: (React)

NARRATOR: Now, THAT'S a hardworking woman.!

ENTER STAGE RIGHT ELIJAH

NARRATOR: Having decided on a bride, the father of the groom might engage a negotiating agent referred to as the “friend of the bridegroom” or in Hebrew, the shaliach (sha-lee-AKH)—or sent one. *PAUSE*

JACOB: ENTER STAGE LEFT Cross to R of YISRAELA, and place loving left hand on YISRAELA's shoulder. Smile and nod proudly.

AT THE SAME TIME

ELIJAH: (Cross to AVI's left, bow.) Shalom, Avi!

AVI: (Bow hastily—excited.) Elijah! Elijah! My prayers have been answered! I have finally found the perfect bride for my son, Joshua!

ELIJAH: Bless the Lord! This is wonderful news! Who have you chosen?

AVI: (gestures to YISRAELA and undo money bag) Yisraela, daughter of Jacob! She is a hardworking, beautiful, and virtuous young woman. Please hurry and speak with Jacob, her father on Joshua's behalf. (Lift money bag proudly). My son can afford to give 50 shekels for Yisraela's hand.

ELIJAH: Ah! My master makes a wise choice and the bride price is reasonable. I will go to Jacob at once. (bow to AVI—Cross to JACOB's RIGHT)

AVI: EXIT STAGE RIGHT

NARRATOR: Like Abraham's servant, the friend of the bridegroom approached the father of the perspective bride to arrange the marriage and negotiate a dowry. *PAUSE*

ELIJAH: (Greet JACOB with a formal bow.) My master, Avi has cast his eye on your daughter, Yisraela for his son, Joshua.

JACOB: (Shoo YISRAELA away.)

YISRAELA: EXIT STAGE LEFT. RETURNS WITH MOTHER OF BRIDE (carrying table. Return, each holding one chair.)

MEANWHILE

JACOB: I see. And how is my good friend, Avi? Is he well?—Prosperous?

ELIJAH: Yes, Bless the Lord, my master does well!

JACOB: Amen! Amen! (Gesture to table and chairs) Then, come! Sit with me and we'll discuss Avi's offer. (Gesture for ELIJAH to sit.)

MOTHER OF BRIDE: (Enter STAGE LEFT with carafe and cups, mime pouring drink.)
Shalom, Elijah! What a blessing! Will you favor us by having some bread and stew?

ELIJAH: (Wave a hand, shake head) I will not eat until I have completed my errand.

MOTHER OF BRIDE: Exit STAGE LEFT with carafe

JACOB and ELIJAH: (Size each other up for the negotiations as the NARRATOR speaks.)

NARRATOR: Sometimes the Friend of the Bridegroom did business with the agent for the Bride's father, as Laban served as agent for Bethuel in Isaac and Rebekah's marriage negotiations. Drink may be offered but the parties won't eat until the negotiations are settled. Genesis 24:33 record's Abraham's servant as having refused Laban's offer of food until the negotiations for Rebekah had been finalized. *PAUSE*

ELIJAH: Your daughter, Yisraela has impressed my master—more than all the other maidens in the village—because she is godly, hardworking, and strong. He would like her to come into his house as his son Joshua's wife. Is this an acceptable match?

JACOB: Indeed! The match is very good! Joshua will make a fine and prosperous husband. (Pause considering his offer) I have long prepared for this day! Not only will Joshua get my daughter as wife, I will give . . . Hmmm . . . one couch of reeds with 4 supports of stone and . . . a new cosmetic box of ivory as dowry. What is Avi's son willing to offer for my daughter's hand?

ELIJAH: (Proudly) 50 shekels

JACOB: (Rising in indignation) What? 50 shekels? For a virgin, fair and strong as my Yisraela? You insult me and dishonor my daughter! She's worth 500 shekels, at least! But—considering my friendship with Avi, I will accept—hmmm—200 shekels.

ELIJAH: (Also rising) My lord! Joshua's means may be modest for now, but he stands to inherit great wealth. Your daughter will live to rejoice in his home. Consider a brideprice of say 100 shekels.

JACOB: (Consider offer and shake head) 200 shekels and be done!

ELIJAH: (Resignedly) Done!

JACOB/ELIJAH RISE DRINK TO THE DECISION AND EMBRACE OVER TABLE—SAY "SHALOM" IN PARTING TO ONE ANOTHER WHILE AVI and JOSHUA (Visible anxious, looking stage left with ketubah scroll and money sack) ENTER STAGE RIGHT

ELIJAH: (Cross stage right. Bow to AVI first, then to JOSHUA)

MEANWHILE, JACOB picks up cups and one chair and exits STAGE LEFT

ELIJAH: (Shaking his head) I'm afraid your servant's news may not be good. The dowry is a fair amount—Jacob offers one couch of reeds with 4 supports of stone and a new cosmetic box of ivory but he refused my master's offer of 50 shekels. He demands 200 shekels for his daughter's hand. (Bow and back away)

AVI: (Not visibly phased by the asking price for the bride, remains emotionless)

JOSHUA: (Gasps) 200 shekels? Abba! I love Yisraela! She's a good choice for a bride—beautiful, strong, and pure—I delight in her—but Jacob asks all I have to give! Is Yisraela worthy of such a great price? Will she be faithful? Abba, please! Pick another bride for me if you can. I don't know if I can pay such a price!

AVI: (Pause for effect than say slowly and solemnly) My son, *this* is the bride I have chosen for you.

JOSHUA: (Slowly, clearly, solemnly) Yes, Father. *You're will . . . not mine*. (Look into money bag, examine contents as if counting, then give to ELIJAH with left hand)

ALL THE FOLLOWING ACTION TAKES PLACE WHILE NARRATOR CONTINUES BELOW STAGE DIRECTIONS:

AVI: (Bows to ELIJAH, embraces JOSHUA, and exit STAGE RIGHT)

ELIJAH: (Return AVI's bow)

AT THE SAME TIME, YISRAELA, MOTHER OF BRIDE, and JACOB ENTER STAGE LEFT. (MOTHER OF BRIDE carries veil and cup) YISRAELA sits at table.

JOSHUA: (Unroll ketubah scroll, check it over briefly—confer with ELIJAH)

JOSHUA/ELIJAH cross STAGE LEFT

JACOB: (Bows to JOSHUA and ELIJAH)

ELIJAH: (Give money bag to JACOB)

JACOB: (Bows and accept money bag)

NARRATOR: (Continues) The next step was the reading and signing of the marriage deed called the Ketubah. The Hebrew word “Ketubah” literally means “written document” and may well have been *the* original prenuptial agreement. The groom drafts a

written pledge to support his wife and family. Also included in the ketubah is the amount of the bride price and an itemized list of the contents of dowry.

The ancient Ketubah functioned much differently than the modern day marriage license issued by a court. First Century law recognized that a marriage is a voluntary, exclusive agreement between two parties; the husband and the wife. Likewise, a decree of divorce from any court wouldn't be viewed as legitimate, either. The husband marries; likewise the husband divorces. The option of ending the marriage was strictly the husband's prerogative, so the ketubah included an "alimony" settlement, in the case of a divorce. Of course, Jesus reminds us that the divorce clause was added because of man's hard heart. God intended the marriage covenant to be eternally binding.

The written marriage covenant also protected the welfare of the bride, containing the provisions and conditions of the proposed marriage—leaving no surprises—no false expectations. The bride knew exactly what she'd receive from the groom and what was expected of her in the marriage relationship.

By taking the bride under the wings of his authority, the bridegroom accepted the awesome responsibility of providing complete love, care, protection, and support of his new wife. In order to fully submit to his authority, the bride had to trust in his ability to care for her explicitly and she judged his integrity by the terms of the Ketubah. Before the bridegroom read the Ketubah . . .

MOTHER OF BRIDE: Place cup on table before the YISRAELA

NARRATOR: a cup of wine was placed before the bride. Joshua's ketubah was based on the wording of an actual marriage deed dated 440 BCE *PAUSE*

JOSHUA: On this 14th day of Nissan in the year 3762, comes JOSHUA the son of AVI, to JACOB, father of YISRAELA saying: I come to your house that you give me your daughter YISRAELA to wife. She is my wife and I am her husband from this day and forever. I have given as a marriage settlement for your daughter, YISRAELA, the sum of two hundred shekels; it is accepted by you and your heart is content therewith. (Glance up at JACOB)

JACOB: (Hold up sack and nod back at JOSHUA)

JOSHUA: (Continue) I deliver into the hand of your daughter, YISRAELA one golden ring worth a half shekel. There is accepted by me and my heart is content therewith 1 couch of reeds with 4 supports of stone and 1 new cosmetic box of ivory.

JACOB: (While JOSHUA lists the contents of the dowry, smile and nod proudly)

JOSHUA: If tomorrow or any other day, I shall die having no issue whether male or female by YISRAELA my wife, YISRAELA shall have full right over my house, my goods and all that I have on the face of the earth without exception. I shall have no power to say: I have another wife than YISRAELA and other children than the children which YISRAELA shall bear to me. ELIJAH, Friend of the Bridegroom, the son of Tish has written this deed at the dictation of JOSHUA, son of AVI, and witnesses thereto. (Look up anxiously at YISRAELA)

(During NARRATOR's next speech, YISRAELA can be considering the KETUBAH—reaching for the cup—pulling back and so on—glancing over at ELIJAH, who offers non-verbal prompts for her to drink. MOTHER OF BRIDE, JACOB, JOSHUA, AND ELIJAH gradually lean in closer as YISRAELA makes her decision.)

NARRATOR: After the reading of the Ketubah, all the attention went to the bride, who was in no way compelled to accept the marriage proposal. A woman was rarely forced to marry against her will. She had the option to refuse, as we see in the case of Rebekah—In Genesis 24:5, Abraham's servant of asks him, "*Suppose the woman will not be willing to follow me to this land?*" And in Genesis 24:58, Rebekah is given the choice to return to the Negev. However, the bride had no liberty to negotiate the terms of the ketubah, either. It was a take-it-or-leave-it-proposition. The bride either accepted all the conditions exactly as written, or she refused. If she agreed with all the terms of the ketubah, thus

accepting the marriage proposal, she drank from the cup. If she declined, she simply pushed the cup away. *CONTINUE READING*

(This business continues as NARRATOR is speaking.)

YISRAELA: (Take a drink)

JOSHUA, ELIJAH, MOTHER OF BRIDE AND JACOB: (React)

MOTHER OF BRIDE: (Place the veil over YISRAELA's head and across her face)

NARRATOR: The *Bedekken* (be-deh-KEN) or veiling of the bride celebrates Rebekah and Issac's first meeting when she modestly covered her face with a veil as he crossed the field toward her. The bride wore wear her veil whenever she left the house to alert would be suitors that she had been ceremonially set apart for marriage and promised to a man. The bride was bought for a price and bound to reject all other advances as she awaited the return of her one true love who paid a sacrificial price for her. She was his and his alone. In Hebrew, a betrothed woman is called *kudeshet* (koo-deh-SHET) Which means "sanctified and dedicated to another." *KEEP READING*

JOSHUA: (Take ring off finger and place on right, index finger of the bride. Keep holding her hand.)

NARRATOR: The bridegroom presented the bride with a ring or some other token of value as a pledge of his return. Then he went to his father's house. *PAUSE*

JOSHUA: (LOUDLY, GRANDLY, and SUCCINCTLY) *Now—I go to prepare a place for you.* (Squeeze YISRAELA's hand gently and slowly let go, as if hesitant to leave her. Bow to JACOB, nod to MOTHER OF BRIDE, cross SR and exit STAGE RIGHT)

ELIJAH: Bow to JACOB, turn and follow JOSHUA, exit STAGE RIGHT)

(At the same time) YISRAELA, JACOB, and MOTHER OF BRIDE exit STAGE LEFT with props.

NARRATOR: Eyrusin, (ee-roo-SEEN) the time of preparation, lasted about a year—enough time to establish the bride’s virtue. Pregnancy, after all, would become evident over a year’s time. Jesus’s mother turned up pregnant during this time of Eyrusin—forcing Joseph to make some rather serious decisions. The bride and groom remained in the homes of their parents, apart and without intimate contact. Yet, they were considered married and a religious divorce called a “get” was required in order to annul the marriage deed.

The groom spent most the year preparing for the arrival of his wife, often building a house on his father's property. If he couldn’t afford a free standing structure, he added on to or simply redecorated an existing room in the family home. The groom labored to make the bridal chamber especially beautiful and inviting. He also laid in plenty of sumptuous provisions, since he and the bride would remain sequestered there for seven days. This bridal week is referenced in Genesis 29:27, when Laban asks the duped and disgruntled Jacob to fulfill Leah’s week before rightfully taking Rachel as his wife.

While she waited for her groom to return, the bride helped her mother make splendid wedding garments. Costly fabric and precious stones were saved for the bride, perhaps since before her birth and were her inheritance from her father. Because the bride was legally allowed to keep her clothes if the bridegroom was not pleased with her, the precious stones were woven into the fabric and coins were sewed into her headdress. She was also adorned with fine jewelry and all this became wealth for her if the marriage failed. In Luke 15:8, 9 Jesus tells a parable about a woman distraught over a lost coin. It may have been part of her dowry—her inheritance.

Eyrusin was also a time of purification. The bride took part in a Mikveh (MIK-vah) or ritual bath. What made this bath distinctive is that it could only be taken in moving or “Living Water.” Still today, Israeli brides in Orthodox communities are required to present a certificate confirming that they have participated in a Mikveh before the wedding ceremony.

For his part, the bridegroom worked on the bridal chamber for most of the year. Now, left up to young Joshua, he would have just thrown something together quickly and hurried back for his bride but the father of the groom was final judge of when the chamber was finished-fit, sound, and livable. When the father was satisfied, he sent the young man to claim his bride. But of that day and hour no one knew, not the friends of the bridegroom, nor the bridegroom himself, but only the father.

The bride anxiously looked forward to the return of the bridegroom but as the days and months wore on, she might have experienced some doubt and anxiety, thinking that he might not return for her. But, toward the end of the year, she began anticipating his arrival, knowing the time was drawing so close. *CONTINUE READING*

ENTER YISRAELA STAGE LEFT (in white tunic) WITH BRIDAL ATTENDANTS. ALL WITH OIL LAMPS (Move to CENTER STAGE. Sit along proscenium with YISRAELA in the center. Mime giggling and looking for JOSHUA)

NARRATOR: Jesus's tender interactions with women in the four gospels demonstrate the Jewish understanding and appreciation of a woman's heart. The first century bridegroom made every effort to make his return memorable for his bride. He may have returned at midnight to surprise her, and to romantically simulate abduction—and how thrilling for her—to be carried off into the night by a man who loved her so much that he paid a great price for her!

The procession back to the bridal chamber through the unlit streets was hazardous, so the bridal attendants continually had their oil lamps trimmed and ready, with plenty of extra oil—hence Jesus' parable about the 10 virgins in Matthew 25.

Lighting the way with torches, the groom and his attendants came through the village, announcing their arrival with a shout and the sound of the trumpet. *PAUSE*

FRIEND OF THE BRIDEGROOM: (Blow shofar and cry out loudly) Behold, the bridegroom is coming!

FRIENDS OF BRIDEGROOM: (Blow shofars, cheers as the procession moves-- two carrying the chuppah)

MOTHER OF BRIDE: (Hustle in from STAGE LEFT with bridal mantle and headdress. Help BRIDAL ATTENDANTS dress YISRAELA for wedding. All squealing and giggling.)

JOSHUA: (In wedding clothes, follow the FRIENDS OF BRIDEGROOM into the sanctuary AVI: (Walking slightly behind him)

JACOB: (Enter STAGE LEFT with Kiddush cup—stand beside MOTHER OF BRIDE—and hand off cup to AVI when he approaches.)

NARRATOR: The men were dressed in Kittels—wedding garments, like the ones Jesus referenced in His parable about the wedding guest in Matthew 22. The King in the story came across a guest who was not dressed in a kittel, and put him out in the darkness with the others, weeping and gnashing their teeth. Jewish men wear kittels yet today for weddings, feasts, and funerals and are traditionally buried in the kittel.

JOSHUA: (Approach JACOB) Give me my wife! (May step up on the riser or onto stage with his attendants)

NARRATOR: In addition to his kittel, the Groom, or as he was known in Hebrew, *Chatan*, (khah-TAHN) was dressed as much like a king as his family could afford. He wore a golden crown—otherwise a ring of flowers and a brightly colored sash. His garments were scented with frankincense and myrrh—like Solomon was perfumed when he came for his beloved in the Song of Songs 3:6. His arrival signaled his intention of "taking the woman to wife," referred to as *nissuin*, (niss-oo-EEN) which literally means "taking".

First, Chatan raised the veil of the bride or Kallah, (kah-LAH) as she is known in Hebrew, to make sure he had the RIGHT woman, because his father, Jacob was fooled by

Laban and married Leah first, thinking she was Rachel. Seeing Yisraela's veil, you can understand how Jacob came to be deceived. *KEEP READING*

JOSHUA: (Cross to YISRAELA, raise veil briefly)

FRIENDS OF THE BRIDEGROOM: (Raise the chuppah over the YISRAELA and JOSHUA, as he gently tows her in.)

NARRATOR: Having claimed his bride, Chatan guided Kallah in the procession to his father's house, where a *chuppah* (KHOO-pah) had been made ready. Chatan took Kallah into the bridal chamber to signify her coming into his household; covered by his love, authority, and protection.

The chuppah is still used in modern Jewish wedding ceremonies. The poles holding up the corners of the chuppah canopy were often made from trees planted by the couple's parents when they were born; cedar for the groom and pine for the bride. Psalms 19.5 speaks of *the coming forth from his chuppah*.

The Groom's father made a traditional blessing over the wine before giving it to his son. *PAUSE*

AVI: (Raise Kiddush cup) Barukh attah adonai eloheinu, melekh ha olam borei peri ha gefen. Amein. (bah-ROOK ah-TAH, ah-do-NAI ayl-o-HAY-noo mel-EKH hah oh-LAHM bo-RAY pree hah GEH-fen. Ah-MAYN) (Hands cup to BRIDEGROOM)

NARRATOR: Blessed are You O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

JOSHUA: (Drinks and holds cup for YISRAELA to drink. Hand cup back to AVI)

NARRATOR: Chatan and Kallah shared another cup of wine before entering the chuppah, where they spent seven days together, with the Friend of the Bridegroom

guarding the entrance, like Moses's faithful servant Joshua, who never abandoned his post at the tent of meeting. (Exodus 33:11) The guests enjoyed a feast, with plenty of food and wine—which hopefully didn't run out before the end bridal week, when the bride and groom joined their guests in the celebration. Following the celebration, the couple lived together as one. * CONTINUE READING*

JOSHUA (RIGHT) /YISRAELA (LEFT): Turn to audience, side-by-side, under the Chuppah. AVI/ FRIENDS OF BRIDEGROOM gather STAGE RIGHT of JOSHUA, JACOB, MOTHER OF BRIDE, BRIDAL ATTENDANTS gather STAGE LEFT of YISRAELA as if posing for a picture.

NARRATOR: Having observed the first century Judean wedding, let's examine the parallels to modern church:

First, the Shiddukhin: The arrangement. We saw that the father selects the Bride. God chose a bride for His Son, too, and Jesus attests to His Father's choice when He prays at His last Passover meal with His disciples: *"Father, I desire that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, in order that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou didst love Me before the foundation of the world."* John 17:24

Earlier we learned that the Hebrew word "Shaliach," means "sent one"—the same word translated into Greek as apostolos and rendered apostle in our modern New Testament translations. In the same way, Jesus commissioned his apostles to gather in His church—the Bride of Christ.

As Joshua wrestled with paying an additional 150 shekels for Yisraela. Jesus agonized at Gethsemane, considering the tremendous brideprice He would pay—a slow excruciating and humiliating death; hung on a tree in the sight of His disciples and His mother. Luke 22:44 reads: *"And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground."*

Like Elijah, Jesus would not eat the betrothal feast until all the arrangements were settled. He says in Luke 22: 15-16, "*I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.*"

Jesus presents us with a ketubah—a written marriage covenant. Recall that the ketubah is non-negotiable—the written specification of the bride price, the promises of the groom, and the rights of the bride. God's Word is His Ketubah. Jesus summarized the marriage deed when He quoted Deuteronomy 6:4 in Matt 22:38. "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

Love God, love yourself, love others. Those are His terms.

If we choose to accept them, the covenant is sealed with a drink from the Cup of Acceptance. Our covenant with Jesus was initially sealed when the disciples shared a cup of wine with Jesus at the Passover dinner. Matthew 26:27-28 reads--- "*And when He had taken a cup and given thanks . . .*" *PAUSE*

AVI: (Recite blessing over the wine in Hebrew)

NARRATOR: (Continue) "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 forgiveness of sins.'" We make our intention to accept Jesus' marriage proposal known whenever we drink from a communion or Passover cup with our Bridegroom in mind.

Before returning to the Father, Jesus offers gifts to us as pledges of His return:

By His death and resurrection, Jesus has given us Eternal life: "*And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.*" (John 10:28)

He gives us peace: *"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful."* (John 14:27)

He sent a Comforter: *"Now He who established us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge."* (2 Cor. 1:21-22)

He gives us anything we ask: *"If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it."* (John 14:14)

Jesus has returned to His Father's house and is engaged in preparing a place to bring us, His bride. He left us with these tender words in John 14:1-2--- *"Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 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."*

Only the Groom's Father will decide when our Bridegroom can return for us, as the Master tells us in Mark 13:32--- *"But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone."*

During this season, we are set apart for our Bridegroom for a season to demonstrate our purity and to prepare for His return. Paul writes in 2 Cor. 11:2--- *For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.*

We are not to be distracted by other suitors as we read in 2 Pet. 3:17---*You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard lest, being carried away by the error of unprincipled men, you fall from your own steadfastness...*

... nor are we to covet the world and the things in it as John writes in 1 John 2:15---*"Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If*

anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

At a time determined by the Father and unknown to us, the Bridegroom will return to "take" His bride, and his arrival will be announced by a shout and the sound of a trumpet, as we read in 1 Thess. 4:16--- *"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God . . ."*

FRIENDS OF THE BRIDEGROOM: (The best shofar player should blow the shofar now to underscore the previous line)

NARRATOR: (Continues) The Bride and the Groom will be dressed in wedding garments and will wear crowns. The bride is dressed in gold, silver, and jewels, just like Israel was adorned in the plunder of Egypt, when she went out to Sinai to meet with God. Peter tells us that we are to demonstrate the *imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit*. (1 Peter 3:4) As the bride wears jewels, silver, and gold, we as Christians adorn ourselves in our good works. 1 Cor 3:12-15 reads, *"Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire."*

Christ the King and his Bride will also be adorned for the wedding feast. Let's look at Revelation 14:14-15--- *"And I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head, and a sharp sickle in His hand."*

And in Revelation 19:8---"*And 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.*"

Our Bridegroom will take us to that special place that He has prepared in His Father's house. The Master reassures us in John 14:3---"*And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*"

Then, we have a great marriage feast to look forward to according to Revelation 19:6-9--- "*Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty reigns. 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.*"

And we shall dwell with Him, forever and ever. Revelation 21:3 reads--- "*Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.*

According to Deuteronomy, the men of Israel were excused from work and military service for one year after marriage—to give happiness to the wives they had taken.¹ Imagine the ecstasy of a millennial year with our Messiah!

After many lifetimes of waiting, we may doubt the return of our Messiah. Like Sarah, who laughed at the notion that God would fulfill His promise of a son after years of waiting, we are also in danger of losing our faith. As we live out these tumultuous last days, we must not fear the catastrophic events occurring daily around the globe, but must look forward to and make ready for our Bridegroom's appearance.

The Body of Messiah must unite—agreeing on biblical wisdom and principle, rather than splitting over doctrinal differences. Once we agree that God is sovereign, the Jesus is our Savior, and that the Bible is true, the rest is open for discussion. Solomon

writes that “iron sharpens iron.”² There is so much insight to be gained when channels for dialogue and fellowship open among the various Bible believing congregations.

In all holiness and in unity of thought and purpose, the church must distance herself from the world . . . like the congregation of Israel, who departed from the rebellious sons of Korah . . . lest we also get swept away with the rest of the sinful nations.

Let’s prepare for the glorious day of Messiah’s return by setting ourselves apart, reviving our first love, speaking truth, treating others with kindness, and (lift up a Bible) carefully studying the terms of our marriage contract—with a wise and discerning eye.

While He may tarry, our Bridegroom will arrive at an hour when we least expect Him, even so, the Spirit and the Bride say come.

CUE MUSIC

Dancers take the floor

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¹ Deuteronomy 24:5

² Proverbs 27:17