



Handout for week of 1/14/19 Jn. 2: 2-12 & Is. 62: 1-5

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Is. 62: 1 For Zion's sake will I not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her triumph go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a torch that burneth. 2 And the nations shall see thy triumph, and all kings thy glory; and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall mark out. 3 Thou shalt also be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the open hand of thy God. 4 Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken, neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate; but thou shalt be called, My delight is in her, and thy land, Espoused; for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be espoused. 5 For as a young man espouseth a virgin, so shall thy sons espouse thee; and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.

Jewish Wedding Information <http://www.mechon-mamre.org/jewfaq/marriage.htm>

The Torah provides very little guidance with regard to the procedures of a marriage. The method of finding a spouse, the form of the wedding ceremony, and the nature of the marital relationship are all explained in the Talmud.

Acquiring a Spouse: Mishnah Kiddushin 1,1 specifies that a woman is acquired (i.e., to be a wife) in three ways: through money, a contract, and sexual intercourse. Ordinarily, all three of these conditions are satisfied, although only one is necessary to effect a binding marriage.

Acquisition by money is normally satisfied by the wedding ring. It is important to note that although money is one way of "acquiring" a wife, the woman is not being bought and sold like a piece of property or a slave. This is obvious from the fact that the amount of money involved is nominal (according to the Mishnah, a perutah, a copper coin of the lowest denomination, was sufficient). In addition, if the woman were being purchased like a piece of property, it would be possible for the husband to resell her, and clearly it is not. Rather, the wife's acceptance of the money is a symbolic way of demonstrating her acceptance of the husband, just like acceptance of the contract or the sexual intercourse.

To satisfy the requirements of acquisition by money, the ring must belong to the groom. It cannot be borrowed, although it can be a gift from a relative. It must be given to the wife irrevocably. In addition, the ring's value must be known to the wife, so that there can be no claim that the husband deceived her into marrying by misleading her as to its value. In all cases, the Talmud specifies that a woman can be acquired only with her consent, and not without it. Kiddushin 2a-b.

As part of the wedding ceremony, the husband gives the wife a ketubah. The word "Ketubah" comes from the root Kaf-Tav-Bet, meaning writing. The ketubah is also called the marriage contract. The ketubah spells out the husband's obligations to the wife during marriage, conditions of inheritance upon his death, and obligations regarding the support of children of the marriage. It also provides for the wife's support in the event of divorce. There are standard conditions; however, additional conditions can be included by mutual agreement. Marriage agreements of this sort were commonplace in the ancient Semitic world.

The ketubah has much in common with prenuptial agreements, which are gaining popularity in the West. Such agreements were historically disfavored, because it was believed that planning for divorce would encourage divorce, and that people who considered the possibility of divorce should not be marrying. Although one rabbi in the Talmud expresses a similar opinion, the majority maintained that a ketubah discouraged divorce, by serving as a constant reminder of the husband's substantial financial obligations if he divorced his wife.

The ketubah is often a beautiful work of calligraphy, framed and displayed in the home.

The Process of Marriage: Kiddushin and Nisuin

The process of marriage occurs in two distinct stages: kiddushin (commonly translated as betrothal) and nisuin (full-fledged marriage). Kiddushin occurs when the woman accepts the money, contract, or sexual relations offered by the prospective husband. The word "kiddushin" comes from the root Qof-Dalet-Shin, meaning sanctified. It reflects the sanctity of the marital relation. However, the root word also connotes something that is set aside for a specific (sacred) purpose, and the ritual of kiddushin sets aside the woman to be the wife of a particular man and no other.

Kiddushin is far more binding than an engagement as the term is understood in modern customs of the West. Once the kiddushin is completed, the woman is legally the wife of the man. The relationship created by kiddushin can only be dissolved by death or divorce. However, the spouses do not live together at that time, and the mutual obligations created by the marital relationship do not take effect until the nisuin is complete.

The nisuin (from a word meaning elevation) completes the process of marriage. The husband brings the wife into his home and they begin their married life together.

In the past, the kiddushin and nisuin would routinely occur as much as a year apart. During that time, the husband would prepare a home for the new family. There was always a risk that during this long period of separation, the woman would discover that she wanted to marry another man, or the man would disappear, leaving the woman in the awkward state of being married but without a husband. Today, the two ceremonies are normally performed together.

Because marriage under Jewish law is essentially a private contractual agreement between a man and a woman, it does not require the presence of a rabbi or any other religious official. It is common, however, for rabbis to officiate, partly in imitation of the Christian practice and partly because the presence of a religious or civil official is required under Western civil law.

As you can see, it is very easy to make a marriage, so the rabbis instituted severe punishments (usually flogging and compelled divorce) where marriage was undertaken without proper planning and solemnity.

A Typical Wedding Ceremony

It is customary for the bride and groom not to see each other for a week preceding the wedding. On the Shabbat of that week, it is customary among Ashkenazic Jews for the groom to have an aliyah (the honor of reciting a blessing over the Torah reading). This aliyah is known as an ufruf. There are exuberant celebrations in the synagogue at this time.

The day before the wedding, both the bride and the groom customarily fast.

Before the ceremony, the bride is veiled, in remembrance of the idea that Rebecca veiled her face when she was first brought to Isaac to be his wife.

The ceremony itself lasts 20-30 minutes, and consists of the kiddushin and the nisuin. For the kiddushin, the bride approaches and circles the groom. Two blessings are recited over wine: one the standard blessing over wine and the other regarding the commandments related to marriage. The man then places the ring on the woman's finger and says "Be sanctified (mekudeshet) to me with this ring in accordance with the law of Moses and Israel".

After the kiddushin is complete, the ketubah is read aloud.

The nisuin then proceeds. The bride and groom today typically stand beneath the "chuppah", a canopy held up by four poles, symbolic of their dwelling together and of the husband's bringing the wife into his home; the importance of the chuppah is so great that the wedding ceremony is sometimes referred to as the chuppah. Jewish Law does require, however, that the groom bring the bride into the house where they will live (not under a mere symbol of it). The groom (or, more typically, his agent or agents) recite seven blessings (sheva brakhos) in the presence of a minyan (prayer quorum of 10 adult Jewish men). The essence of each of the seven blessings is:

the standard blessing over wine.

... who has created everything for his glory

... who fashioned the Man

... who fashioned the Man in His image

... who gladdens Zion through her children

... who gladdens groom and bride

... who created joy and gladness . . . who gladdens the groom with the bride

The couple then drinks the wine.

The groom customarily smashes a glass (or a small symbolic piece of glass) with his right foot, to symbolize the destruction of the Temple; the correct original practice was to put a bit of ashes on the forehead where the tefillin are placed, as is still practiced by many in Israel today. The destruction of usable things is actually forbidden.

The couple then retires briefly to a completely private room, symbolic of the groom bringing the wife into his home; the correct original practice was to go immediately into the home where they will live and be alone there, which is also still practiced by some in Israel today. This is the most important part of the whole ceremony, and should not be done merely symbolically.

This is followed by a festive meal, which is followed by a repetition of the sheva brakhos. Exuberant music and dancing traditionally accompany the ceremony and the reception.

#### The Marital Relationship

Marriage is vitally important in Judaism. Refraining from marriage is not considered holy, as it is in some other religions. On the contrary, it is considered unnatural. The Talmud says that an unmarried man is constantly thinking of sin. The Talmud tells of a rabbi who was introduced to a young unmarried rabbi. The older rabbi told the younger one not to come into his presence again until he was married.

Marriage is not solely, or even primarily, for the purpose of procreation. Traditional sources recognize that companionship, love, and intimacy are the primary purposes of marriage, noting that woman was created in Genesis 2,18 because "it is not good for man to be alone", rather than because she was necessary for procreation.

According to the Torah and the Talmud, a man is permitted to marry more than one wife, but a woman cannot be married to more than one man at a time. Although polygyny was permitted, it was never common. Around 1000 C.E., Ashkenazic Jewry banned polygyny because of pressure from the predominant Christian culture. It continued to be permitted for Sephardic Jews in Islamic lands for many years. To the present day, Yemenite and Ethiopian Jews continue to practice polygyny; however, the modern state of Israel ordinarily allows only one wife, unless you come to Israel with more than one wife, in which case you can keep the wives you have but you cannot marry new ones.

A husband is responsible for providing his wife with food, clothing, and sexual relations (Exodus 21,10), as well as anything else specified in the ketubah. Marital sexual relations are the woman's right, not the man's. A man cannot force his wife to engage in sexual relations with him, nor is he permitted to abuse his wife in any way (a practice routinely permitted in Christian countries until quite recently).

A married woman retains ownership of any property she brought to the marriage, but the husband has the right to manage the property and to enjoy profits from the property.