

A Study of Pesach: Part 2

Mashiach's Pesach – A Wedding Covenant

The old covenant was consecrated in the form of a wedding between YHWH and Abraham's descendants at Sinai. We have YHWH's offer of marriage (Exod.19:5) and Israel's acceptance (Exod.19:8). In Jer.31:32 YHWH confirms being the husband of Israel and the Torah being the marriage vows. The new covenant was to be consecrated in the same way hence, the whole of Mashiach's Pesach was emblematic of a wedding ceremony. Just as the old covenant was a 'blood cut' marriage covenant, so it was with the new covenant.

We now need to consider further, Mashiach's comment during His Pesach meal with His disciples,

*And as they were eating, Yahusha took bread, and having blessed, broke and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat, this is My body." And taking the cup, and giving thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. "For this is My blood, that of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins. "But I say to you, **I shall certainly not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on till that day when I drink it anew with you in My Father's Kingdom.**" (Matt.26:26-29)*

Some understand the highlighted section to insinuate Pesach celebrations will continue after His return, but this is a misconception. Mashiach understood the new covenant was to be a marriage covenant and His Pesach was to be the confirmation of the marriage. Hence, He performed His Pesach aligning with the ancient Hebrew custom of betrothal leading to a wedding.

What we need to realize is that the Scriptures contain many metaphors relying on knowledge of ancient Hebrew custom for a complete understanding of what is recorded and it is no less with Mashiach's Pesach. Indeed, Mashiach's comment in Rev.3:20 (discussed below) is a perfect example of a Hebraism used to reiterate the Father's desire for a marriage relationship with His chosen, which today is Mashiach's body of believers.

So, let us analyze the ancient custom for a Hebrew wedding and compare this with Mashiach's Pesach. In accordance with ancient custom a Hebrew marriage consisted of two ceremonies each marked by a celebration. First was the betrothal and later, the wedding. It is important for us to realise that at the betrothal the woman was legally married, although she remained in her father's house. Once betrothed she could not belong to another man unless she was given a divorce certificate. The wedding ceremony only signified the transference of the betrothed woman from her father's house to her husband's house where their marriage would be consummated. This would happen at the time of the wedding feast.

In accordance with custom, when the prospective groom decided to officially start the formalities, it was customary for him and his father to visit the potential bride's home. They carried with them a betrothal cup, some wine and the bride price. The wine was not just for celebration. It was customary for four cups of wine to be drunk at specific times during the betrothal proceedings and at the wedding feast. These were in effect 'milestones' sealing the individual stages of commitment reached by the bride and groom as formalities progressed.

The groom with his father would knock on the door and the bride's father would peek through the window and ask the bride whether he should open the door. Her consent signified a commitment to work through the betrothal and marriage processes. If her response was negative the door would not be opened and the groom would make a U-turn and leave. Opening the door was evidence of the bride's willingness to

enter into a covenant of betrothal: it was the initial step towards a marriage. Once the groom and his father had entered the bride's home the betrothal negotiations immediately commenced and the **first cup** of wine: the cup of sanctification or servanthood, was consumed. The groom, his father and every adult member of the bride's family drank this first cup of wine. Each member of each family agreed to serve the other family. In effect they were making a commitment to become one united family. This was the essence of Mashiach's metaphor in Rev.3:20,

*See, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I shall come in to him and **sup (take the wine)** with him, and he with Me. (Rev.3:20).*

Most translations use alternatives for sup such as eat, dine etc. but such mistranslations completely obscure the essence of Mashiach's message. The understanding most readers take from this verse is that Mashiach is appealing to all humanity, standing at their hearts door asking to be let in. As correct as this may be, His words have a far greater impact. He deliberately phrased His comment to reflect the first steps of a betrothal to a marriage. In other words, Mashiach is asking, *"Will you open the door, drink the first cup of wine/sanctification, and enter into a covenant of betrothal with Me"*? But just as with the Hebrew bride it is our choice whether the door is opened or remains closed.

On completion of the betrothal negotiations, including the bride price and agreement to the groom's contribution to the cost of the wedding etc. the **second cup** of wine; the cup of bargaining and friendship would be consumed. This cup was only drunk by the two fathers and the bride and groom; the four were covenanting that the two families would be eternal friends each with the other.

A marriage contract would now be drawn up containing the terms and conditions (vows) of the marriage. In Hebrew it is called a 'ketubah' suffice to say it usually had five sections to it. We said earlier the Torah formed the vows of the marriage contract between YHWH and Israel at Sinai. Once again, we see compliance with custom: Torah consists of five sections (books). Furthermore, YHWH confirms the Torah will be *the basis of the new covenant marriage*,

*"See, the days are coming," declares YHWH, "when I shall make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant I made with their fathers in the day when I strengthened their hand to bring them out of the land of Mitsrayim, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them," declares YHWH. **"For this is the covenant I shall make with the house of Israel after those days, declares YHWH: I shall put My Torah in their inward parts, and write it on their hearts. And I shall be their Elohim, and they shall be My people"**. (Jer.31:31-33).*

The marriage contract was now signed and sealed via a **third cup** of wine; the cup of inheritance. This cup was consumed only by the bride and groom and signified their commitment each to the other. A formal meal would complete the betrothal formalities after which the groom and his father would depart.

Neither the bride nor the groom would consume anymore wine until the wedding ceremony itself when the fourth and final cup would be drunk. This now brings us back to Matt.26:26-28,

*And as they were eating, Yahusha took bread, and having blessed, broke and gave it to the taught ones and said, "Take, eat, this is My body." And taking the cup, and giving thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. "For this is My blood, that of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins. "But I say to you, **I shall certainly not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on till that day when I drink it anew with you in My Father's Kingdom."** (Matt.26:26-29)*

In part 1 we saw how Mashiach and his disciples consumed three cups of wine during their Pesach: the same as with the betrothal procedure. As stated earlier the fourth and final cup was not drunk until the wedding itself. Mashiach was mindful of this custom when He made the above comment to His disciples. The wedding will take place at the end of the millennium on the Eighth Day. Revelation chapter 21 talking about the new millennium city talks of the bride, not the wife. Furthermore, the above passage refers to the Father's kingdom which is the heavenly spiritual kingdom, the passage does not refer to Mashiach's earthly physical millennial kingdom.

After signing the marriage contract the groom now had the responsibility to build a home which was usually in the form of a room annexed to his father's house. Exactly what Mashiach promised,

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 you may be also. (John.14:2-3).

As the room came towards completion the groom would announce his imminent wedding and would select his groomsmen. The groomsmen were themselves all virgins and his relatives, (the 144,000 in Revelation comes to mind). Around this time the bride's family would begin to prepare a feast. Just before the actual feast the bridesmaids would buy oil for their lamps in readiness for the groom's arrival to collect his bride and escort her to the feast. The groom would come between 6:00pm and midnight, having collected his groomsmen. When the bridesmaids learnt the groom was coming, they would light their lamps to show him the way and forewarn the bride the groom was on his way. The lit lamps were also a sign that the bride had not changed her mind – no lights meant no wedding. Does this not recall the parable of the wise and foolish virgins?

A further parallel with custom performed by Mashiach during His Pesach meal was the washing of feet described in John chapter 13,

He rose from supper and laid aside His garments, and having taken a towel, He girded Himself. After that He put water into a basin and began to wash the feet of the disciples, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. And so He came to Simon Peter, and Peter said to Him, "Master, do You wash my feet?" Yahusha answered and said to him, "You do not know what I am doing now, but you shall know after this." (John.13:4-7)

Remember the betrothal formalities were completed with the bride and groom sharing the third (inheritance) cup of wine. It was after drinking the third cup that Mashiach removed the sandals and washed the disciple's feet. In so doing He was acknowledging the ancient covenant tradition known as the 'sandal covenant of inheritance.' In performing this act Mashiach assured the disciples of their inheritance with Him.

It was at this Pesach meal that Mashiach sealed the new marriage covenant via the wine and bread. But Mashiach was not bonding only with those present, but through them He was bonding to his future bride: the disciples represented the 'whole bride' at that meal. Just as with ancient custom this meal marked a definitive milestone in the betrothal proceedings thus the bride had to be present.

Finally on the aspect of betrothal and marriage, immediately before the wedding ceremony itself the bridesmaids would escort the bride to the mikveh, after bathing, the bridesmaids would anoint her with fragrant oils and dress her in her wedding garments. The bride is now ready for the actual wedding itself. Here again we have another parallel when believers undergo the 'seventh Day' cleansing promised by YHWH, before entering the Land and joining the groom: Mashiach,

For I will take you from among the nations, gather you from all the countries and return you to your own soil. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your uncleanness and from all your idols. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my judgments, and do them. (Ezek.36:24-27)

Furthermore, YHWH will clothe believers with his 'robe of righteousness' (Isa.61:10) which constitutes the bridal wedding garment. This robe must be worn by all attending the wedding, in conformance with ancient custom and confirmed in Matt.22:10-13.

And those servants went out into the street corners and gathered all whom they found, both wicked and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests. And when the king came in to view the guests, he saw there a man who had not put on a wedding garment, and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here not having a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and throw him out into the outer darkness' – there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt.22:10-13).

Matthew 22 is a parable, the purpose of which is to illustrate that those in the 'Body of Mashiach' can be identified by their dress – YHWH's 'robe of righteousness'. All who qualify for life in the Land with Mashiach in the millennium will be dressed this way.

But why is there much weeping and gnashing of teeth? This comment follows the ejection of a person who believed he had the right to be included but did not qualify in the eyes of the host. The message we can take from this passage is that there will be those who think they will be accepted by Mashiach but they will be judged unworthy,

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Master, Master,' shall enter into the reign of the heavens, but he who is doing the desire of My Father in the heavens. Many shall say to Me in that day, 'Master, Master, have we not prophesied in Your Name, and cast out demons in Your Name, and done many mighty works in Your Name?' And then I shall declare to them, 'I never knew you, depart from Me, you who work lawlessness!' (Matt.7:21-23)

Conclusion

The new covenant promised to Abraham's descendants by YHWH through His prophet Jeremiah is a marriage covenant and necessary because Israel broke for former marriage covenant. Both the old and new marriage covenants were cut in blood, the latter by Mashiach's blood. Israel broke the former marriage covenant first at Sinai and by their repeated adultery as reported throughout the Old Testament. Israel's adultery required the death of the nation but Abraham's descendant escaped death via the vicarious atonement offered by a specific descendant of Abraham – Yahusha HaMashiach. Mashiach's sacrifice was necessary to bring closure to the old covenant and enable a new marriage covenant through which YHWH will fulfill His promise to Abraham and His descendants that they would be many and live in peace in the Land. It is for this reason a replacement marriage covenant was necessary.

Mashiach's Pesach represented the betrothal proceedings leading to the new marriage covenant and He has given all the opportunity to 'open the door'. via His command,

*And taking bread, giving thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you, **do this in remembrance of Me.**" (Luke.22:19).*

Today, our Pesach celebration is our acceptance of Mashiach's offer of betrothal: it is the only mechanism decreed for us to show our acceptance. Such is the importance of performing a Pesach celebration.

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