



Heart's Desire

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR SHARING JESUS WITH OUR JEWISH FRIENDS

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." (Romans 10:1)

EIGHT THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT JEWISH WEDDINGS

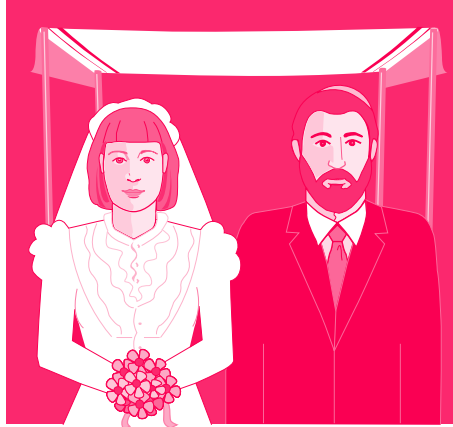
1. The wedding ceremony itself may be held in any one of several locations: the synagogue, outdoors (in keeping with the setting of God's promise to Abraham that his descendants would be as innumerable as the stars, Genesis 15:5), or in a rented hall.
2. The ceremony is preceded by the signing of a marriage contract, the **ketubbah**, by the groom in the presence of two witnesses. This document stipulates the husband's obligations to his wife, but traditionally does not address the wife's obligations to her husband and is, therefore, signed only by the groom. The ketubbah is read as part of the wedding ceremony. The preparation of ketubbot (plural of ketubbah) has become an art form and these beautifully decorated documents are framed and presented to the bride and groom as a prized possession to be displayed in the home.
3. The bride and groom stand under a canopy consisting of a large piece of cloth (or sometimes a prayer-shawl, or **talit**, is used) supported by four poles. This canopy, called the **chupah**, may be a vestige of the Israelites' nomadic experience as they dwelled in tents on their way to the Promised Land, though a number of other explanations have been offered as to the origin of this custom.
4. The bride and groom are led to the chupah by their respective parents, or both mothers leading the bride and both fathers, the groom. Usually the parents are carrying lit candles as they direct their child to the wedding canopy.
5. A long-standing practice is for the bride, followed by her parents, to circle the groom seven times under the chupah before the ceremony begins. There are various explanations of the meaning of the tradition, but the most likely has to do with the superstition that demons who would desire to harm the groom and destroy the marriage will be warded off by the formation of seven (the perfect number) circles (impenetrable to the forces of evil).
6. Twice during the ceremony the bride and groom take a sip of wine while a blessing is recited by the officiating rabbi. (The goblet used, called the **Kiddush Cup**, is often decorated with the Hebrew text of Song of Solomon 6:3, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is

mine. . .” and also becomes a prized memento of the wedding day.) The two sips of wine signify the original Jewish practice of two distinct steps in marriage, the betrothal period and the later time when the groom came to the bride’s home and took her to his home (or his father’s home, John 14:1-3) to

live as his wife. After the first sip of wine, the groom places a ring on the bride’s right index finger, the finger used most commonly for pointing. It is, therefore, the most prominent digit and the place where the ring will be most obvious for all to see that the bride and groom are now committed to each other. Later the band is moved to the traditional ring finger on the left hand.

7. Seven wedding blessings are recited over the second cup of wine, after which the bride and groom take the second sip in the ceremony. The groom then smashes under foot another cup (or a light bulb which breaks more easily with a louder noise) wrapped in a cloth as the concluding part of the wedding. Like other practices, this one has been variously exegeted, but the most commonly held view is that it is a reference to the tragic destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 A.D. and a reminder that, even

in the midst of a time of greatest joy, we must be mindful of life’s sorrows and be prepared to face both.



8. Another common practice is for the newly married couple to go to a private room immediately following the ceremony for **yichud**, meaning “oneness.” This custom is symbolic of the consummation of

the marriage in physical union, after which the bride and groom join their guests for a time of joyful celebration.

NOTABLE QUOTE

“When people have tried to move me to share their vision of Christ or to become a ‘completed Jew,’ I tell them that I’m flattered that they care enough to try, but that there are souls far easier to capture than mine will ever be.”

(Michael Horowitz, outspoken advocate of American opposition to persecution of Christians world-wide, in an interview appearing in *Christianity Today*, March 1, 1999.)

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