



Betrothal Jewish Marriage and the Virgin Mary.

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Betrothal (Jewish) Marriage and the Virgin Mary.

Topics.

- Betrothal and marriage (Encyclopaedia Britannica).
- Jewish betrothal and marriage.
- The perpetual virginity of Mary and the Immaculate Conception.
- Mary the mother of God or mother of Christ.
- Mary and Joseph gave birth to sons and daughters.
- Born of a woman.

BETROTHAL AND MARRIAGE (ENCYCLOPAEDIA BRITANNICA)

Betrothal refers to the action of giving a pledge to marry or to the engagement prior to marrying. It is the promise or engagement between a man and a woman that they will be married. In societies in which premarital sexual relations are accepted or in which consensual union is common, betrothal may be unimportant. But in other societies betrothal is actually part of the marriage process and a change of intention by one of the partners after he or she is betrothed is a serious matter, subject in some instances to a fine or other penalty. Historically marriage has often been a matter of alliance between kinship groups rather than mate selection and more often than not was removed from the hands of the participants and negotiated by important or assigned representatives of each kinship group. In many, but by no means all such cases, betrothal has been marked by various forms and degrees of mutual visits and gift exchanges between the two families especially when two potentially hostile groups are concerned.

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BETROTHAL OF A CHILD

Child betrothal may be adopted to ensure continuing social, economic, or political harmony.

BETROTHAL AND COURTSHIP

Just as it has become difficult to draw the boundary between dating and courtship, so too it is sometimes difficult to draw a rigid distinction between courtship and betrothal.

BETROTHAL AND LIVING TOGETHER

A couple may live together for a number of years before deciding to marry. The betrothal stage and even the marriage itself may thus be reduced from its traditional significance this is especially true in Western societies, particularly for young middle-class couples.

BETROTHAL AND ITS DECLINE

The decline in the importance of betrothal is linked to the greater degree of sexual freedom permitted in many societies today.

BETROTHAL ALLOWED FOR SEXUAL INTIMACY

Previously betrothal often allowed a couple to engage in sexual activities not permitted between those who were merely dating or courting. Even where sexual intercourse was prohibited before marriage other forms of sexual intimacy were permitted for a betrothed couple.

In parts of Scotland and Scandinavia, for example, engaged couples were allowed to sleep in the same bed, but were sewn up in different sleeping bags, a custom known as "bundling."

MARRIAGE INCREASES SEXUAL ACTIVITY

Marriage is usually marked by a sharp increase in sexual activity this no doubt is because for many people for reasons of religion or morality sexual intercourse is permissible only after marriage for others marriage simply makes sexual activity more convenient since sexual access is obviously easier for a married couple living together than for most single people, who tend to live apart from their partners.

JEWISH BETROTHAL AND MARRIAGE (TAKEN FROM THE ENCYCLOPAEDIA BRITANNICA)

JEWISH CIRCUMCISION WAS A COVENANTAL SIGN

A male child is circumcised on the eighth day following birth, as a covenantal sign (Gen. 17). The rite of circumcision (berit mila) is accompanied by appropriate benedictions and ceremonies which also include naming the child. Females are named in the synagogue generally on the Sabbath following birth when the father is called to recite the benedictions over the reading of Torah.

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REDEEMED OF THE FIRSTBORN SON

If a firstborn son does not belong to a priestly or a Levitical family is redeemed at one month (in accordance with (Exod. 13:12–13) and (Num. 18:14–16) by the payment of a stipulated sum to a Cohen (a putative member of the priestly family).

THIRTEEN YEARS OF AGE

Thirteen years is the religious coming-of-age, on arrival at the age of thirteen a boy is called publicly to recite the Torah benedictions, thus signifying his religious coming-of-age. He is thenceforth obligated to observe the commandments as his own responsibility—he is now a Bar Mitzwa (Son of the Commandment).

JEWISH MARRIAGE (HATUNA, ALSO QIDDUSHIN, SANCTIFICATIONS)

Jewish marriage in ancient and modern times involves a double ceremony, performed together in modern times, but separated in ancient times by a year.

JEWISH BETROTHAL

There are two stages to a Jewish betrothal first is the betrothal (erusin) which includes the reading of the marriage contract (ketubba) and the giving of the ring with a declaration, "Behold you are consecrated to me by this ring according to the law of Moses and Israel," accompanied by certain benedictions. This is followed by the marriage proper (nissu'in), consisting of the reciting of the seven marriage benedictions. The ceremony is performed under a huppa, a canopy, that symbolizes the bridal bower.

JEWISH KETUBBA AND JEWISH BETROTHAL CONTRACT

A Jewish Ketubba or Jewish betrothal contract is like a modern-day marriage contract. It is a formal Jewish marriage contract written in Aramaic and guaranteeing a bride certain future rights before her marriage. Since Jewish religious law permits a man to divorce his wife at any time for any reason, the Ketubba was introduced in ancient times to protect a woman's rights and to make divorce a costly matter for the husband. The conditions stipulated in the document also guarantee the woman's right to property when her husband died.

A Jewish wife carefully preserves the Ketubba, not as evidence of marriage but for its future value. In Orthodox and Conservative congregations, the Ketubba is a prerequisite for marriage and must be signed by two witnesses not related to the couple or to each other and in some congregations also by the bridegroom. A summary of the conditions is often added in the vernacular, and this is usually read together with the formal document just before or during the marriage ceremony.

Handwritten Ketubbot with illuminated margins, common in the middle ages have now generally been replaced by printed formulas with a space provided for the specific conditions of the contract. The formula used by conservative Jews obliges the couple to appear before a rabbinic court to settle future marital disputes. This obligation provides an opportunity for counselling and precludes the possibility of immediate divorce agreed to in a state of high emotion. Ketubba also spelled Ketubah, or Kethubah and Plural Ketubbot, Ketuboth, or Ketubbas meaning the Hebrew marriage contract.

THE PERPETUAL VIRGINITY OF MARY AND THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

In a biblical context the word, virgin refers to an unmarried or chaste maiden or woman, distinguished for piety or steadfastness in religion, and regarded as having a special place among the members of the Christian church on account of these merits. In early use it was chiefly used of the Virgin Mary and with reference to early Christian times of a woman (esp. a young woman) who is or remains in a state of pure chastity. The doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary implies that Mary was pure in body and soul so in the opinion of many theologians she was also free of other sins.

Some made the distinction between original sin (i.e., the sin that all men are born with) and actual sin (i.e., the sins that men commit during their life) certain Eastern theologians in the 4th and 5th centuries were willing to attribute actual sins to her, but most theologians in both East and West came to accept the view that she never did anything sinful a view that found expression even among the 16th-century Reformers, but was she free from original sin as well? And if so how since she was born of a man and a woman? Though certain theologians taught that Mary's conception was tarnished in the same way that all men and women are their teaching was opposed by the Roman Catholic Church and the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was finally defined as Roman Catholic dogma by Pope Pius IX in 1854. According to this dogma, Mary was not only pure in her life and in her birth, but at the first instant of her conception was

preserved immaculate from all stain of original sin. Clearly all Christians must honour the Virgin Mary with great respect toward her and out of respect for the Lord, especially since from all women God found Mary worthy to be the mother of His Son, but no Scripture in the Bible teaches that she should be worshipped as the Son she gave birth to, is to be worshipped.

MARY THE MOTHER OF GOD OR MOTHER OF CHRIST

The first widespread theological controversy over Mary had to do with the propriety of applying to her the title of Theotokos, meaning "God-bearer" or "Mother of God." Those who defended the doctrine of the full deity of Christ which was established as a dogma by the determination of the Council of Nicaea in 325 that Christ was not merely the highest of creatures, but was God Himself were responsible for the rapid growth of devotion and speculation attached to Mary as the highest of all creatures since it was a logical deduction to reason that if Jesus was God Mary must be the mother of God. The title, "Mother of God" seems to have arisen in devotional usage, probably in Alexandria, sometime in the 3rd or 4th century.

Since, supporters who believed Mary to be the mother of God were blurring the distinction between the divine and the human in Christ the title, Theotokos (Mother of God) had successfully established itself in various sections of the church by the end of the 4th century. Nestorius, the patriarch of Constantinople, objected to its use, preferring the title Christotokos, meaning "Christ-bearer" or "Mother of Christ."

Along with other aspects of his teaching, Nestorius' objections were condemned at the Council of Ephesus in 431. It is clear that after, the conclusion of events as recorded in the Bible there has followed enormous and ongoing discussions and volumes written concerning Mary's virginity. On the basis of the New Testament Scriptures and the two references to Jesus being conceived in the womb in (Matt. 1:18-25) and (Luke 1:26-38) that give a very detailed and clear account of Mary conceiving and giving birth to Jesus and both making a deliberate point of asserting that Jesus was conceived in the womb of Mary without any human agency. It was the unanimous teaching of all the orthodox fathers of the church that Mary conceived Jesus with her virginity unimpaired. This teaching is enshrined in the early Christian creeds and was agreed upon by the 16th-century reformers as well as by most Protestant churches and believers since the reformation.

MARY AND JOSEPH GAVE BIRTH TO SONS AND DAUGHTERS

The following shows very clearly that Joseph had no part in the actual birth of Jesus and also shows that he and Mary did have sons and daughters after the birth of the Lord:

- When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus (Matt. 1:24-25).

Here is the uniqueness and glory of the Christian faith, "Joseph knew Mary not until she had given birth to a son," Jesus is the Son of God by God's creative power and the Holy Spirit. Notice Matthew says Joseph did not know Mary until Jesus was born. This shines a brilliant spotlight on the truth that after the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ Mary and Joseph had a normal intimate marriage relationship.

In the book of Matthew, we see the Jews saying:

- Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all his sisters with us? (Matthew 13:55-56).

So, we know Jesus had four half-brothers and at least three sisters (if there had been only two, the word 'both' would have been used instead of 'all') who are accepted as half brothers and sisters of Christ. Because of this it follows that Joseph and Mary were a loving intimate couple and very normal mother and father and husband and wife, and that all those mentioned were alive when Jesus was. Added to this we are told while Jesus was speaking to the people:

- His mother and his brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him (Matt. 12:46).

Though there are Scriptural reasons Joseph is not mentioned after Jesus was in the Temple at twelve years of age since the focus of Scripture is upon the true Father of Christ the immortal, invisible, eternal God Almighty and not his foster father, it would not be wrong to suppose that Joseph was already dead when Jesus was crucified especially since Joseph is never mentioned during Jesus' ministry or when he was being crucified and Jesus asked John to look after Mary as if she were his own mother (John 19:26-27). At that time, none of Jesus' family believed in him and his message. Yet afterwards some did believe, and the letters written by two of them, James and Jude (or Judas) are part of the New Testament.

BORN OF A WOMAN

Paul when referring to the birth of Jesus uses of the expression "Born of woman" in in his letter to the Galatians:

- When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law (Gal. 4:4).

This expression parallels verses such the following:

- Man who is born of a woman is few of days and full of trouble (Job 14:1).
- Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist (Matt. 11:11).

The phrase "Born of a woman," is a Hebraic way of speaking about the essential humanity of a person. When the expression "Born of a woman," is applied to Jesus it is intended to assert that he was a real human man since it implies that he was not born of a woman and a man, but of a woman only. Thus, the expression, "Born of woman" shines a spotlight on the truth that Jesus was a human man born of the Virgin Mary, but not born of a human man, but of God. For the ancient world, one human parent was necessary to assure that a person was genuinely human, and from the beginning the human mother of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has been the one to provide this assurance.