



Lesson 4 Jewish wedding

The big picture

The lesson begins by recapping on the shared values of marriage, and then begins to explore these through the Jewish ceremony. The main teaching point of this lesson is how a wedding ceremony is a public display of a personal decision. By sharing their intentions and beliefs with their friends and family, believers have the support to do what they believe is right, even when things are tough.

The lesson gives people the opportunity to draw parallels with their own public lives and the values which they demonstrate.

Before teaching the lesson, you will need to find a video of a Jewish wedding ceremony. Ensure that you have had a chance to watch the video and that all equipment is working correctly.

Learning objective

- To understand why Jewish believers get married and the public ceremony that celebrates this.

Success criteria

Learning about:

- Pupils will know some key features of Jewish wedding ceremonies.

Learning from:

- Pupils will have reflected on the consequences of making vows in public and what making them says about the decisions the believer has made.

Religious Education Council Requirements

A1, A2, A3, B1, B2, B3, C1

Resources

- **CD Image Gallery, page 2:** 'Wedding ceremonies'
- **Resource sheet 3:** 'Marriage contract'
- **Resource sheet 4:** 'Jewish marriage'
- Video clip of a Jewish wedding ceremony

Vocabulary

Accountability, contract, Jewish, ketubah, promise, sincerity, vows

Key questions ?

What happens in preparation for and during a Jewish wedding ceremony?

What are some of the differences between a friendship and a lifelong relationship?

Introduction

Remind the class of the last session. Can they remember the features of a Christian wedding ceremony? How do Christians symbolise that marriage is for ever?

Explain how nearly all wedding ceremonies, religious and non-religious, contain a section where the two people make promises to each other.

Share the learning objective: 'In this lesson we will see how Jewish believers get married and have a chance to think a bit more about why.' Explain that they are going to look at the promises or vows that Jewish couples make to each other, to their families and friends, and to God. Show the picture from a Jewish wedding on CD Image Gallery, page 2.

Activities

Stimulus

Ask the class what they say when they make a promise they really want to keep. What do they do? Go through things like: 'Cross my heart', 'On my life', and so on.

Write the Cub Scout promise on the board and look at it together:

'I promise that I will do my best
To do my duty to God and to the Queen,
To help other people
And to keep the Cub Scout Law.'

Discuss the way that this promise is made in public. Why? Summarise your discussion by putting two words on the board: 'accountability' and 'sincerity' and ensure that everyone understands them.

Explain that this is the same when a couple get married. They make the vows in public so everyone can know they mean it, and can help them to keep the promises if things get tough.

Explain that when Jewish couples get married, they go a stage further. Before the wedding the groom signs a contract. Explain what a contract is, and that it is binding in a Jewish wedding, between the groom, the bride, the community and God. Look at the sample wedding contract on **Resource sheet 3**.

Read together the information on **Resource sheet 4** and then watch a video clip of a Jewish wedding, so that people can see the signing of the contract in context.

Response

Explain that making vows and promises to each other is a way of both giving and receiving love. What one partner promises conveys their depth of feeling to the other.

Ask them to consider the qualities and values you have looked at over the last few weeks. Do they feel they are beginning to get an idea of what one partner can expect to give and receive in marriage?

Ask people to divide a piece of paper in half. On one side they should write:

- I would want my partner to promise to...

And on the other side they can write:

- I would promise to...

They can then compose the promises they feel would be appropriate at a wedding. It is worth discussing that what is being promised at a wedding are things that are often already being done by the couple. The promise is a commitment that these will be a permanent feature of the relationship. The responses will give you a formative assessment opportunity on the level of understanding of the nature of a lifelong relationship.

If you think it appropriate, you could ask the children to complete sentence starters, such as:

- When Jewish couples get married, they believe...
- They show this by...
- They think that God...
- Looking at marriage today has made me think...

Plenary

Ask people to consider the future for a married Jewish couple. Imagine they are going through a tough time. Who are the vows going to help? Will it help if one person tells the other that they should do something because they promised it? Perhaps it would be more helpful if each remembers what they themselves promised?

Emphasise the role of the two words introduced at the beginning: 'accountability' and 'sincerity' and ensure that everyone understands how these have been demonstrated in a Jewish wedding ceremony.

After time to think, people could copy and complete the following sentence:

- Today I have been thinking about...

Differentiation

(By task) some people could be asked to describe, write or draw what they thought was the most important part of the wedding. Ask them to imagine they could pause the video clip at the most important bit. What would be on the screen? Can they explain why they would choose that bit?

Extension

Higher achieving people could write a questionnaire to ask some married couples they know what promises they made to each other when they got married.



Name: _____

Date: _____

Marriage contract

This ketubah witnesses before God and all those present that on the _____ day of the week, the _____ day of the month of _____ in the year five thousand seven hundred and _____ corresponding to the _____ day of the month of _____ in the year two thousand and _____ the Holy Covenant of Marriage was entered into at _____ between the bride, _____ daughter of _____ and _____ and the groom, _____ son of _____ and _____. And both declared: Affirming our people's covenant with God may we be consecrated to each other by this ring. Let our lives be intertwined forever. Let our hearts be united in faith and in hope. Let our home be rich with wisdom and reverence. Limitless is my love for you and my devotion without end. I take you to be mine in love and in tenderness. I take you to be mine in faithfulness. May our hearts beat as one in days of joy as of trouble. May our life together be illumined by our people's heritage. May our home be built on Torah and acts of loving kindness. May my love for you last forever. We also pledge to establish a home that recognizes the spiritual potential in life; a home open to all and filled with learning, love, and generosity. This covenant of marriage has been signed and sealed according to the laws and traditions that began with Abraham and Sarah and continued through Moses and the people of Israel. It is valid and binding.



Name: _____

Date: _____

Jewish marriage

Jewish believers understand from God's laws written in the Torah that marriage is for life. This means that they take it very seriously and only get married when they have decided that they have definitely found the right person.

The bride and bridegroom fast before the wedding. This means they do not eat. They pray to God asking him to forgive them for anything they have done wrong so that the marriage can be a completely fresh start for them both. Also before the wedding, the groom signs a ketubah. This is a contract in which the groom promises to be a good husband, to look after his wife and treat her right. He promises to love, honour and respect her. This is a public promise that the husband knows everyone will expect him to keep, whether life is easy or hard.

A Jewish wedding can take place on any day of the week except Shabbat. It will often happen in a synagogue if both the bride and groom are Jewish believers. If not, it can take place anywhere that is suitable.

During the ceremony, the bride will stand with the groom under a large canopy called the huppah. This canopy represents different things to Jewish believers. The four corners remind believers of how God is in charge of all four corners of the Earth and the covering makes the new couple think of their new home that they will be making together. The bride will often wear a long white dress and the groom a suit with a kippah on his head.

During the ceremony, the ketubah is read out so that everyone can hear what the groom has promised to do. He places a ring on the finger of his bride to



Name: _____

Date: _____

remind her of those promises and they both drink wine together. At the end of the ceremony, the groom will take one of the wine glasses and stamp on it. The broken wine glass reminds the couple that there will be both good times and bad times in the years ahead, but that they have promised to stick together. As this

happens, all the people at the wedding will call out, 'Mazel tov', which means, 'Best wishes'. These words are said to the bride and groom many times during the wedding day.

