

**Wedding rituals in Christianity, Judaism and Islam: A
science of religion perspective**

by

Maryke Strydom

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master of
Theology (Religious Studies)

in the

Department Science of Religion and Missiology

Faculty of Theology

University of Pretoria

2019

Supervisor:

Prof J Beyers

Ethics statement

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this dissertation, has obtained, for the research described in this work, the applicable research ethics approval.

The author declares that he/she has observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's Code of ethics for researchers and the Policy guidelines for responsible research.

Summary

The dissertation considers marriage ceremonial rituals within Christianity, Judaism and Islam. The phenomenological method was used for obtaining and comparing the information on these religious rituals. The dissertation did not make use of field study to obtain the research. Rituals are a part of the living narrative of the people and involves integrating all walks of life religious, civil, cultural and personal.

Within each religion the pre-marriage, marriage, post-marriage rituals and important elements were discussed at length. It should be noted that there will be traditions that differ from this work as some will fall outside the scope of this dissertation. At first glance the marriage rituals will seem very different from one another, until specific elements are compared. The vast phenomena that are similar (not exactly the same) were very surprising even though they do prove the research hypothesis to be correct.

Rituals are important to those who partake in them. This dissertation has shown how one can encourage the creative process by making sure the needs of the people continue to be fulfilled in a way that is unique and relevant to the religions in question. The dissertation has shown that it is possible to help this creative process by having a discussion with the religious other about their religious rituals. The dissertation has also considered how the similarities and differences between the religious rituals can help one better understand oneself and the religious other.

Key Terms

Marriage; Wedding; Christianity; Judaism; Islam; Phenomenology; Rituals;
Tolerance; Narrative; Comparative study.

Declaration

I Maryke Strydom declare that the dissertation, which I hereby submit for the degree MTh Science of Religion and Missiology, at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank God for the inspiration and strength that He gave me to write this dissertation. I would also like to thank Prof Jaco Beyers, for his academic guidance and insight.

I am dedicating this dissertation to my father, Carel David Kruger, who's love and support will always live on in my heart.

Contents

1. Chapter one: Research introduction.....	14
1.1. Background of the study.....	14
1.2. Problem statement	16
1.3. The purpose of this study	17
1.4. The research hypothesis:	18
1.5. Methodology.....	19
1.6. Proposed contribution	20
1.7. Conclusion	20
2. Chapter two: Defining core concepts:.....	21
2.1. Introduction	21
2.2. Religion	21
2.3. Rituals	29
2.4. Comparative study, tolerance and narrative.....	36
2.5. Phenomenology	41
2.6. Marriage	47
2.7. Conclusion	51
3. Chapter three: Marriage ceremonial rituals in Christianity.....	52
3.1. Introduction	52
3.2. Pre-marriage ceremonial traditions	53

3.2.1.	Proposing marriage	53
3.2.2.	The engagement period, ceremonies and banns.....	55
3.2.3.	Kitchen tea and Bachelor party.....	57
3.3.	Marriage ceremonial ritual.....	58
3.3.1.	Entrance	58
3.3.2.	The sermon	61
3.3.3.	Intention stating and vows	68
3.3.4.	Dowry or Las Arras	73
3.3.5.	Crowning	74
3.3.6.	Eucharist.....	75
3.3.7.	Feasting.....	77
3.4.	Post-marriage ceremonial traditions.....	78
3.4.1.	Consummation and honeymoon.....	78
3.4.2.	Ceremonies or church support	79
3.5.	Important elements.....	80
3.5.1.	Wedding attire.....	80
3.5.1.a	Bride.....	81
3.5.1.b	Groom	83
3.5.2.	Participants.....	84
3.5.2.a	Bridesmaids and groomsmen.....	84

3.6. Conclusion	85
4. Chapter four: Marriage ceremonial rituals in Judaism	86
4.1. Introduction	86
4.2. Pre-marriage ceremonial traditions:	87
4.2.1. Aufruf	88
4.2.2. Purifying rituals and religious art.....	89
4.3. Marriage ceremonial rituals:	91
4.3.1. Fasting.....	91
4.3.2. Date and location.....	92
4.3.3. Ketubah	95
4.3.4. Bedeken	97
4.3.5. Chuppah	99
4.3.6. Kiddushin.....	102
4.3.7. Nissuin.....	105
4.3.8. Breaking the glass	107
4.3.9. Yichud.....	109
4.3.10. Seudat Mitzvah.....	110
4.3.11. Shevah Berachot.....	110
4.4. Post-marriage ceremonial tradition.....	111
4.4.1. The first week and year after the ceremony.....	111

4.5.	Important elements.....	112
4.5.1.	Wedding attire.....	112
4.5.1.a	Bride.....	112
4.5.1.b	Groom	113
4.5.1.c	Ring.....	114
4.5.2.	Participants and community.....	115
4.6.	Conclusion	118
5.	Chapter five: Marriage ceremonial rituals in Islam	119
5.1.	Introduction	119
5.2.	Pre-marriage ceremonial traditions	121
5.2.1.	Veiling.....	121
5.2.2.	Engagement, engagement period and betrothal ceremonies	123
5.2.3.	Purifying rituals and religious art.....	129
5.2.3.a	Grooming	129
5.2.3.b	Henna ceremony and Gai-haldi.....	130
5.3.	Marriage ceremonial rituals	133
5.3.1.	Katb el Ktab	134
5.3.2.	Collecting the bride	134
5.3.3.	Feasting.....	135
5.3.3.a	Nikah.....	139

5.3.3.b	Rusmat and Bersanding ceremony	141
5.3.4.	Consummation.....	143
5.4.	Post-marriage ceremonial traditions.....	144
5.4.1.	The week after the marriage ceremony	144
5.5.	Important elements.....	145
5.5.1.	Wedding attire.....	145
5.5.1.a	Bride.....	145
5.5.1.b	Groom	146
5.5.2.	Participants.....	147
5.5.2.a	Matchmakers.....	147
5.5.2.b	Marriage is establishing community	149
5.6.	Conclusion	150
6.	Chapter six: Comparison of marriage ceremonial rituals in Christianity, Judaism and Islam	152
6.1.	Introduction	152
6.2.	Proposing marriage and betrothal ceremonies.....	154
6.3.	Public marriage announcements.....	161
6.4.	Group activity, purifying rituals and religious art.....	162
6.5.	Date and location	167
6.6.	Entrance and procession.....	170
6.7.	Sermon.....	172

6.8.	Blessings.....	173
6.9.	Consent.....	176
6.10.	Dowry and finances	178
6.11.	Contract	180
6.12.	Food.....	182
6.13.	Fertility and good luck rituals.....	185
6.14.	Feasting	189
6.15.	Consummation and post-wedding bonding time	192
6.16.	Wedding attire.....	195
6.16.1.	Bride.....	195
6.16.1.a	Crowning and veiling	197
6.16.2.	Groom	199
6.16.3.	Rings	200
6.17.	Participants	203
6.18.	Conclusion	208
7.	Chapter seven: Conclusion	208
7.1.	The previous Chapters	208
7.2.	Why the information is important and to whom	213
7.3.	Possible future research in marriage rituals	217
7.4.	Conclusion	220

Bibliography..... 221

1. Chapter one: Research introduction

1.1. Background of the study

In this study, the researcher will be looking at three core concepts: religion, rituals and marriage. Within the study, the first point will focus on the three religions themselves, namely Christianity, Judaism and Islam. From there the focus will be narrowed down to rituals within these religions. Only then will the focus be shifted to the phenomena of marriage ceremonial rituals.

In this dissertation, the phenomenological method will be used to look at marriage ceremonial rituals in Christianity, Judaism and Islam. The researcher chose these three Abrahamic religions because they are all monotheistic religions, they are all leading world religions, and all of them have unique marriage ceremonial rituals. Although marriage rituals from other religions and even non-religious groups are also important, they fall outside the current focus/the focus of this study.

Different elements that influence this dissertation will first be described. These include the meaning of religion, phenomenology, rituals and marriage. Over the years, various researchers have interpreted these terms in different ways as will be seen in Chapter 2. By defining these core concepts, it will become more apparent to the reader what is meant in this dissertation by these terms.

The researcher will go on to explore and describe each religion's ceremony while maintaining *epoché* and looking at the ceremony in an empathetic way as the phenomena require. This will allow for the most objective description of these ceremonies, although true objectivity can never be entirely achieved. It must be

kept in mind that this is also a comparative study and that the rituals will be compared in Chapter 6. It is the intention to give each religion the necessary space while trying to maintain the authenticity of each religion's marriage ceremonial rituals. This forms the point of departure for the rest of the dissertation and creates a foundational place to return to, to ensure the research stays authentic to the religion itself.

The dissertation will continue by putting these phenomena in categories in Chapter 6. This is complicated because a description needs to be provided without reducing it to something static or impersonal. Furthermore, it is essential to make sure that it stays true to the religion and what the general believer's ideas are regarding the phenomena as far as possible in this process, while not using terms that some might find offensive. Selecting the categories will be kept in mind throughout the dissertation so that religions can be compared. After the phenomena are named, it is critical to identify relations and processes inside the phenomena to better understand it. The process will include identifying key concepts within the phenomena that will be categorised in different groups, for example, marriage proposal, vows, intention stating, wedding attire.

It is only then that the dissertation can start comparing the ceremonial marriage rituals in Christianity, Judaism and Islam with each other. Within the concept of the comparative study, it should become evident that marriage rituals can be a good starting point for interreligious conversation. The previous step of writing down what the experiences are within the religions is significant to this next step as this will assist the researcher and the reader in seeing where there are

overlapping phenomena within the religions. In this step, it is critical to remember that each religion has its own voice.

The researcher will try to work with respect towards the religious institutions while taking into consideration how marriage started and evolved in each religion. Each step in the proposed study will play a crucial role in the outcome of this last step. As we explore each religion's marriage ceremonial rituals, we will gain understanding. As we name and categorise phenomena within these rituals, our understanding will grow. Finding structures within different religions will also have a significant impact on how religions can communicate and function harmoniously in a new globalised world and will also provide understanding in a real-world context. By assessing the understanding of marriage ceremonial rituals in this, one gathers a better understanding of religion.

1.2. Problem statement

When addressing marriage ceremonial rituals, it is crucial to remember how important these ceremonies can be. The ceremony does not just symbolise what is being done at that moment but can also reflect the couples future as spouses. It may further reflect the hopes and wishes of the families in their new bond. The ceremony may have deep roots in myths within the religion, and it has meaning for the past, present and future. In the post-modern age, we are faced with globalisation, Westernisation and feminism; all these factors influence marriage rituals in the Abrahamic religions.

The problems we face are that people from different religions are forced into the same work- and living spaces, especially in urban areas. Unfortunately, most adherents in religions do not understand the religious other. It may be possible,

by taking something such as marriage ceremonial rituals that is a long-standing tradition in all three these religions, to create a better understanding of one another. Having interfaith conversations in the interest of tolerance can help elevate some modern conflict within society, as understanding the other can lead to less conflict. Furthermore, the researcher believes that one of the many problems is that we find a void in the understanding of marriage ceremonial rituals when considering a single religion in isolation. The discussion of dogmatic beliefs in religions creates tension. Rituals are, therefore, an excellent way to start an interreligious conversation as it works from a very creative point of view. Understanding the differences and similarities within the Abrahamic religions, one can have a better understanding of both one's own religion and that of the other. The concept of tolerance and conversation within the Abrahamic religions will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 2

1.3. The purpose of this study

The outcome of this study will provide a better understanding of the following aspects. Firstly, to obtain a better understanding of marriage ceremonial rituals in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Secondly, to achieve a better understanding of marriage ceremonial rituals while still respecting practices and customs in all three religions. Thirdly, understanding marriage ceremonial rituals in the context of globalisation, Westernisation and feminism. Finally, making it possible for people to understand one another better and help create a space where people can respect other religions through interfaith conversations.

1.4. The research hypothesis:

The current research was driven by the hypothesis that one would be able to receive understanding while respecting each religion in this specific ritual. It would be possible to find overlapping themes and rituals within each religion's marriage ceremonial ritual. The research illustrates clear lines that show the similarities as well as where uniqueness occurs between these rituals. The researcher hypothesises that we will be able to gain a better understanding of each religion and its marriage ceremonial ritual. This will help create a better platform for religions to relate to one another and gain admiration for their own unique aspects and that of the other.

The researcher's hypothesis is furthermore that marriage is a very social ritual, not just in terms of the couple but within the binding of communities. This entails that most people, even if they are single, will have a profoundly emotional and creative response to marriage ceremonies. The fact that marriage ceremonies are very social and creative can aid in the process of interfaith conversation. Focusing on such a community-based ritual, which is so deeply rooted in all these religions and within society itself, can be a good departure point for conversation between religions. This is also the reason why the researcher chose marriage ceremonial rituals, to begin with, as it is already something sacred and meaningful to most people within these religions. Thus, the researcher hypothesises that by using something so meaningful and sacred it is possible to open people's eyes to the hearts of others. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

1.5. Methodology

Rituals are the subject of this study, and while several methods can be used to study rituals, the phenomenological method is preferred. Phenomenology enables the best possible objective view of each religion. True objectivity can never be sufficiently obtained, but at least one can work with respect as far as possible without forcing something onto the religions themselves. Furthermore, the researcher will be doing a literature study excluding the use of interviews or questionnaires. The reason for this is to build a robust theoretical concept of these rituals to aid in field studies later.

From the background knowledge of phenomenology, the researcher will be using James L Cox, 2010, *An Introduction to the phenomenology of religion*, as well as Gerardus Van der Leeuw's *A study of phenomenology*, the JE Turner English translation of 1938. The researcher will also look at the opinions of other experts in the field of phenomenology. However, these two books will be the guide in understanding phenomenology and staying true to and give a better understanding of the method. Cox refers to Van der Leeuw from time to time; he also builds some of his research within the method on Van der Leeuw's work. Cox provided a thorough explanation of Phenomenology to ensure the method is used correctly and cites a lot of different authors' opinions on each step. Van der Leeuw, one of the first users of this method within religious studies, is thus a very reliable source to use for understanding the concept of phenomenology. The method will be explained more extensively in Chapter 2.

1.6. Proposed contribution

This study will contribute to the fields of human sciences as well as theology. By creating a better understanding of marriage ceremonial rituals, a more tolerable society may be built with the hope of humanising the other. By discussing marriage ceremonies, a possibility for better inter-religious relations can be created. Thus, this will contribute to the knowledge of these ceremonies within each respective religion and knowledge of how and where they might be overlap and where they are unique. It will assist by giving different religions the opportunity to understand one another even if it is just small parts of each religion. Another contribution is to enrich the understanding of one's own religious rituals, by understanding some of the rituals' origins and meanings.

1.7. Conclusion

An introduction has been given in this Chapter to give an idea of what this dissertation rests upon. The dissertation will now proceed to define the core concepts in Chapter 2. This is to ensure that these core concepts are understood properly in the context of this dissertation.

2. Chapter two: Defining core concepts:

2.1. Introduction

In this Chapter, it should become clear what is meant, within the context of this study, by the term's religion, ritual, comparative study, tolerance, narrative, phenomenology, and marriage. By doing this, precise definitions for the terminology will be set for this study, whereby the reader will be able to understand what the author means with certain statements.

2.2. Religion

Religion is a very difficult concept to define; most definitions prove to be inadequate. Defining something as broad as religion means that definitions will fall short in the sense that it will either include or exclude something that should or should not be part of the understanding of religion.

Academics have taken on the task of defining religion from most academic fields; some of which will be discussed here includes theology, philosophy, psychology and sociology. Academics that have defined religion or have provided their opinion on known religious definitions, including (but is not limited to): W.C. Smith (1991; 1979; 1989), E.B. Tylor (1871; 1889) Tillich (1871; 2000; 2013), D. Chidester (2012; 1992; 2018), B. Russel (2008; 2004), K Marx (1844; 1957), J Ferguson (1978; 2018) and J.L. Cox (2010; 2007).

John Ferguson was the leading academic to draw attention to the fact that there are so many different concepts of religion within the academic fields (Ferguson 1978). Ferguson recommended looking at definitions of religion within categories, mostly compiled in the fields that they originated in (Ferguson 1978). Ferguson

identified 17 definitions of religion, which are placed in categories ranging from theological, moral, philosophical, psychological and social (Ferguson 1978). Academics have even gone as far as stating that religion cannot be defined as it is too broad a topic to try and define. This can be seen in the work of W.C Smith, where he stated that one should try and avoid the term altogether (1991:194).

Like Ferguson, Cox also made a distinction between categories when it comes to defining religion. Cox prefers to study this term under substantive and functional definitions of religion (2010:8). Functional definitions usually define religion as a means to an end, where substantive definitions will usually define religion in terms of its content (Cox 2010:8). As there will be examples of some different viewpoints on the concept of religion, this dissertation will also indicate whether a definition is more functional or substantive.

Theological definitions can often end up defining religion based on the assumption that all religions have a god or gods (Hall et al. 1985:6). One of the traditional definition includes:

“Religion is belief in supernatural beings” (Tylor 1871).

This does not include all theological definitions, but this is the biggest shortcoming of theological definitions. This type of definition is seen as substantive but lacks in describing religion in full as it only names one aspect that may be found in religions. Defining religion only based on a deity will make the definition inadequate, as religions like Buddhism will be excluded. There are religions that do not believe in a god at all; there are also religions that believe in the energy of the universe or spirits; all these religions will be excluded by this definition.

Buddhism, for example, does not believe in a god, in this traditional sense. The whole concept of religious practices, practitioners and institutions are also rendered unimportant by this definition, as religion is by this definition reduced to only the belief in a god or the existence thereof.

Philosophical definitions are not very different from that of theology but rather relates religion to an ultimate concern rather than a deity (Tillich 2009). The philosophical concept of religion is a substantive type of definition but it is too broad, because anything can be considered an ultimate concern. The problem is thus that these definitions may be too broad, as the family may be an ultimate concern to some but it is not a form of religion. If one takes the broad philosophical definition as the only concept of religion, one can even dare say that devotion to Coca Cola can also be a religion (Chidester 2012).

The Psychological definition on the other hand usually involves feelings and emotions that lead to the creation of something that made people feel more secure (Russel 2008). The Psychological definitions are mostly functional definitions. This kind of definition treats religion as a coping mechanism to deal with human neurosis, which is inaccurate and very broad and does not capture the essence of religions.

Sociology usually suggests that religion was invented by those in power to keep ordinary people happy and ethically balanced (Marx 1844). This definition is functional and too broad; it can include anything that keeps the lay people happy under oppressive powers. Religion has been manipulated in this way in the past; this does not mean this it is the proper purpose thereof.

The type of definitions mentioned above will not suffice as they are either entirely too broad or too narrow. When trying to define something of high complexity and turn it into human words, it will always fall short. Not one of the type of definitions above truly captures the construct of religion. For this study the following definition of religion will be used:

“Religion refers to identifiable communities, which base their acts of believing and resulting in communal experiences of postulated non-falsifiable alternate realities on a tradition, that they legitimate by appealing to its authoritative transmission from generation to generation.” (Cox 2010:21)

This definition was chosen for the present study because it does not attempt to simplify religion by using an assumption. Instead, it tries to define religion in a functional way that will include most religions. The community should be identifiable; this does not mean that the religions will and cannot be segmented, but instead shows that religion manifests within humanity and usually within communities. These communities believe in certain non-falsifiable alternate realities, for example, god/s, life force, spirits and universal energy. Action from traditions such as rituals is formed within these communities. These communities base their beliefs and actions on authoritative transmission from one generation to another, either through texts or oral traditions. The flaw in this definition is that it can still include things that are not religion. This definition was chosen for this study, although the dissertation acknowledges that it is a broad definition it will work well in the context of this study.

In this study, the focus will be on the Abrahamic religions. This does not mean that other religions are not important in the real-world application or of future value for academic research. However, the focus will be on the Abrahamic religions for this study. Abrahamic religions are referred to as:

“...belonging to the group of religions comprising Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, which trace their origin to Abraham”
(Oxford English Dictionary 2000).

The definition given above of religion applies both to a wide range of religions and to individual religions such as Christianity, Judaism and Islam. This does not mean that these religions are more important than others. Abrahamic religions fit into the definition of religion as given above in the following way:

When this dissertation refers to Abrahamic religions, it will mostly be to show similarities between the religions. While using the terms, Christianity, Judaism and Islam, it is to single out the religion's uniqueness. The Abrahamic religions are identifiable communities: Christianity, Judaism and Islam, all of which have their own acts of believing and communal experiences. Christianity, Judaism and Islam all have their own non-falsifiable alternate realities that are held dearly by the believers, that is unique to each religion. As seen in Karen Armstrong's work, one of the most significant non-falsifiable realities in the Abrahamic religion is the monotheistic god (Armstrong 1993:xxii). This does not mean that the Abrahamic religions are in unison of what a monotheistic god may mean (Armstrong 1993:xxii). Armstrong also puts particular emphasis on Abraham as the three Abrahamic religions see him as their forefather (Armstrong 1993). The Abrahamic

religions also have their own authoritative transmission of text given from generation to generation. Although the texts are not the only authoritative concepts within these religions, they are seen as the main authority. Christianity uses the Bible, Judaism used the Torah, and Islam uses the Qur'an. Thus, these Abrahamic religions all fit into the definition given above. This also does not make them the only religions that fit into the definition given above.

In Christianity, Judaism and Islam, it is clear that different traditions, schools and ways of thinking have evolved. All of these different traditions within the Abrahamic religions, different schools or denominations, for example, all have different concepts of marriage ceremonies, and thus more than one will need to be studied. It should be mentioned that there are too many rituals and practices to name and acknowledge within this dissertation. The dissertation will, therefore, try to give a very broad perspective of some traditions within Christianity, Judaism and Islam. This does mean that some denominations, schools and ways of thinking may be excluded; this does not make them less important, they are only outside the scope of this study. The dissertation will give a broad worldview of these religions rather than focusing on the specific expression of religions within a particular country.

In this study, it should be noted that it would be impossible to focus on every Christian denomination. The denominations that were chosen are leading world denominations that have had a strong historical influence in the context of the worldview of Christianity. This does not mean that there are no other churches that are equally influential or prominent within the world. The denominations that were chosen have strong, stable liturgies that completely define what is needed

for marriage ceremonial rituals to take place. These denominations all have unique elements within their marriage rituals that make them ideal to show the diversity within global Christianity. It should be understood that the present study will not just focus on these denominations, but Christianity as a whole. The denominations that will be used in this dissertation are the Roman Catholic Church, the Greek Orthodox Church, the Church of England and the Presbyterian Church (as seen in the book of common worship). The dissertation will be mentioning some concepts brought up by Pentecostal churches, but this will not be the main focus. The Pentecostal churches have a wide variety of denominations. In the case of a field study, the Pentecostal churches would make for an excellent subject, and it can prove to be very fruitful research in the future for academics. When looking at these denominations and their marriage rituals, it should become clear and easy to identify a Christian marriage when witnessing one. It should be noted that there will always be denominations that differ from these churches and they do not represent the Christian religion in its entirety.

In Judaism, the main focus of this study will be on Reformed and Orthodox Judaism, not specific to any country. The dissertation acknowledges that there are other forms of Judaism as well (for example Kabala-, Reconstructionist- and Karai Judaism). Other forms of Judaism are not less important than the Orthodox and the Reformed Jewish community. These two Jewish communities have been chosen because they are both leading world communities within Judaism. This does not mean that other forms of Judaism are not relevant within the world context. Orthodox Judaism and Reformed Judaism both have their own unique marriage ceremonial rituals and give a good balance when attempting to

understand marriage rituals within Judaism. When looking at these two traditions and their marriage rituals, it should become clear and easy to identify a Jewish marriage ceremony when witnessing one. It should be noted that these two traditions do not represent the Jewish community in entirety; there will be other communities within Judaism that differ from these traditions.

When looking towards Islam for marriage rituals the differences experienced are very geographic; this dissertation will be mentioning worldwide phenomena within Islam to try and give the best possible picture of the most commonly encountered Islamic marriage rituals within mainstream Islam. Some of the main focus will fall on Egypt, Brunei and Bangladesh. These was not the only countries that were explored, but these were the main focus. The reason for this is that Islam is the main religion in these countries. This does not imply that Islam is not the main religion in other countries as well. These countries all have unique aspects that make it possible to display the diversity of Islamic marriage rituals in a world context. It should be noted that these traditions do not represent the entire Islamic community; there are other communities within Islam that differ from these traditions.

In this study, the dissertation gave equal attention to all three Abrahamic religions and did not favour one above the other. The main aim was to give a concept of marriage rituals within these religions as encountered throughout the world. Furthermore, there will be shown how marriage rituals within these religions can help promote interreligious conversation and overall tolerance among religious communities.

2.3. Rituals

Rituals serve an essential purpose not just within religion but within humanity.

This can be seen in the work written by Grimes as he describes rituals:

“Ritual studies encompass ritual in all its forms— religious and nonreligious, collective and individual, transformative and confirmative, textually prescribed and improvised, traditional and invented, long-lived and short-lived, emerging and declining, change-inducing and change-resisting.” (Grimes 2014:5)

Rituals help people celebrate major life events, mostly from one phase of life to the next. It also helps make spiritual realities real for the people involved in the ritual. Rituals can bind people to communities, to other people and even to more spiritual aspects of life. Within this dissertation, the focus will be on marriage rituals within the Abrahamic religions. This does not mean that marriage rituals within other religions or outside religion are not as important as marriage rituals inside the Abrahamic religions. Theological reductionism is also not being proposed through this dissertation; rituals are not the only important aspect of religion, as seen in the definition of religion given above.

Thus, it is clear that although rituals are significant to religion, it does not define religion. Rituals are just as hard to define as religion; definitions could very easily exclude some rituals and include things that are not considered rituals. Rituals are even more complicated when the following is understood:

“A liturgy tries to focus all things through a few things.”

(Grimes 2010:43)

When taking this statement by Grimes and altering it so that it does not just include liturgy, which is only a part of rituals, but to encompass the entire ritual, the statement will read as follows: a ritual will try to focus all things through a few things. When understanding that the concept of reality and truth is relative to the person or group in question, it would mean that the task at hand to give the perfect definition of rituals would be impossible. Thus, the concept of imperfection and incompleteness should have to be taken into consideration when a definition has been chosen.

Ritual will be defined in two ways within this study. The first definition is:

“Ritual, it has been maintained, is about the human world and not just about the physical world. Consequently, its function is not physical but social, psychological...” (Segal 2005:375)

This is a very good definition in the sense that it demonstrates that rituals may have more meaning than what meets the eye. People that belong to the group understand the ritual and the meaning behind it (Grimes 2014:319). Rituals are thus not just a physical act but have profound psychological and spiritual meaning. Thus, rituals have symbols although not everything within rituals can be thought of as symbolic (Grimes 2014:319). As pointed out by Gareth Jones, it is senseless to have customs without a deeper meaning (1991:17). Religious phenomena often have a symbolic meaning and point to spiritual realms that cannot be completely described through words and actions (Douglas 2005:21). The problem with this definition is that it does not give any substantial attributes

to the concept of ritual and this definition is very wide and can thus include things that are not rituals. This definition relates well to this study in the sense that marriage rituals are about the human world not just about the physical world although the physical world is also important. This will imply that the human world also has to do with a spiritual world rather than just the physical world. Marriage rituals focus on the social, physical and spiritual aspect of humanity as two people are bonded in union.

The social aspect does not just end with the couple but is also social in the concept of community. The community forms part of the ceremonies as witnesses mostly and will also support the bride and groom within their marriage. This state of being unmarried to being married is mostly not just a transition for the couple, but it is also a transition for the community (van Gennep 1960:116). Depending on the cultural aspect of the couple, one might be considered part of a different group, family or tribe once married, and thus it will affect the people in that group (van Gennep 1960:116). This is also the reason why weddings and betrothal ceremonies are such social events so that the transition can be made not only by the bride and groom but also the groups that are affected by the marriage (van Gennep 1960:116-117). Marriage does not just bind the couple, it also binds the families, clans, tribes or countries (in some aristocratic examples) together (van Gennep 1960:121). In most communities, the bride and groom are seen as adults after getting married and are fully part of the adult community. Marriage is seen as the acceptable place for children to be brought forth and will, therefore, bind the couple to the larger community and makes it acceptable for the community to grow from them as well. In Christianity, there is a belief that through procreation

one becomes part of the creative process that God started. This is an important view, although one must remember that there are religions that do not believe this. Marriage is also not just about procreation in modern times as there are couples that choose not to have children, and there are couples that cannot have children. Marriage can be seen as one of the cornerstones of the community.

The psychological concept within marriage rituals is also present as this is what is needed for the bride and groom to cross the boundary from engaged to married in the view of the couple, the community, the law and the religious institution. One must recognise that there are rituals in place, for all the above mentioned to help with the transition. Some marriage rituals have their origin in the law of the state or country, for the marriage to be seen as legally valid, such as the signing of a contract. Rituals within marriage ceremonies can also reflect the couple's culture, the bride wearing white, for example. Marriage ceremonies also encompass rituals that are religious such as blessings and sermons. Rituals can also be very personalised for example a bride and groom who decided to mix two different colours of sand as a symbol of their union. Marriage rituals are in place to help all involved to accept the new reality that the bride and groom are married.

Spiritually the bride and groom are joined; this is very evident in the Christian concept of marriage as the bride and groom are seen as becoming one. Spiritually, the bride and groom go from being unmarried to married. The marriage ceremony changes one's spiritual construct from being "me" to "we". Whether or not the religion believes the couple becomes one, some type of spiritual bond is formed between them. This bond helps keep their commitment to each other alive. For this spiritual bond to be understood and accepted, rituals

are used to demonstrate the transition. Rituals are thus a way for the participants to showcase the spiritual world in the physical world (Grimes 2014:202). This definition will also highlight a sensuousness of the religious, cultural and historical aspects that are found within rituals (Douglas 2005:21). Marriage rituals may have emphasis around the concept of fertility, as marriage is the safe and acceptable place for children to be brought into the world as seen by all three Abrahamic religions (van Gennep 1960:117). The bride and groom will experience blessings, both formal and informal, as their new life is seen as fragile. The bride and groom may also experience rituals of protection as they are seen as vulnerable by being between life cycles (van Gennep 1960:117).

Although the dissertation has accepted the definition given above, it is necessary for another definition to be used in conjunction with the above definition to more clearly define ritual for the purpose of this study. The second definition is as follows:

“Ritual is embodied, condensed, and prescribed enactment.”

(Grimes 2014:194)

This is to an extent a definition that gives a more physical description of ritual in this instant. It does not just describe the purpose of the ritual but also how it manifests. The limitation of this definition is that although it does mention the more unseen things within rituals, it does not describe it as well as the definition provided first. This definition works well with marriage rituals because marriage rituals are embodied. In other words, it is a physical act of the bride and groom, in the physical world. The meaning within the rituals and concepts of the reality

of marriage is condensed within marriage rituals. In other words, the ritual is at the same time binding the couple, as well as reminding a couple of the spiritual and religious beliefs regarding marriage. The prescribed enactment is also fitting to marriage ceremonies as certain things need to be enacted for the couple to be considered as married in a legal, cultural, symbolic, as well as, religious way.

The definition of ritual that the dissertation prefers for the purpose of this study looks as follow:

Ritual is first of all embodied, condensed, and prescribed enactment. Ritual is also about the human world and not just about the physical world. Consequently, its function is physical, social and psychological.

This combined definition provides a very well-rounded idea of what is meant with rituals within the context of this dissertation. The next question would be, what is considered to be marriage rituals in the context of this study? This is almost as hard to define as ritual itself. First, the liturgy and legal aspects of the marriage ceremony itself are very important. By this, it is meant that the prescribed enactment that is necessary for a couple to be considered married in the eyes of the religious community as well as the law of the country, is fulfilled. Within this enactment, the concept of marriage rituals as an ethical act for the bride and groom to be considered married will be considered. Secondly, anything that is commonly used to aid in the realisation of the transition from engaged to married for the couple and their community will also be considered. Marriage rituals are seen as life cycle rituals as this is the point in life when one transitions from a more single life to married life to that of married people (van Gennep 1960:116).

Thus, if wedding attire (that does not form part of the prescribed enactment) makes a bride and groom feel more like a bride and groom, it is considered important for the purpose of this study. This is something that is commonly encountered and helps the bride and groom feel like they are indeed undergoing the ritual. Fertility and good luck rituals will also be discussed as these appear in and are important to marriage rituals.

The study will also consider any pre-marriage rituals that is usually not liturgical, but necessary for the bride and groom in a cultural as well as religious aspect. Liturgy is a document or list that is prescribed enactments from the religious institution to the couple on how the marriage is legitimised. This can exclude, cultural, legal and individual aspects. Although the focus of liturgy is important for the purpose of this study, the other aspects are also regarded as crucial; otherwise, they would not have had such a profound impact on couples over the world. Liturgy can be incorporated within marriage rituals but it is not the full extent of rituals. Rituals that are non-liturgical can have different functions, such as purification. This will include the marriage proposal, betrothal ceremonies, public marriage announcements, group activity, purifying rituals and religious art. Post-wedding non-liturgical concepts are also discussed, such as bonding rituals and feasting. Marriage rituals are thus not just a liturgy that is prescribed. Marriage ceremonial rituals, which includes pre-marriage rituals as well as post-wedding rituals, are a complicated web of religious, cultural and personal aspects that are interwoven to create a path of transition for the couple from the state of being unmarried to being married.

2.4. Comparative study, tolerance and narrative

As stated before, this is a comparative study of marriage rituals within Christianity, Judaism and Islam. This comparative study has everything to do with the hope for better interreligious communication and relationships within multireligious communities. Multireligious refers to cases where more than one religion already exists, where the government has not put legal bounds on a state-endorsed religion and where freedom of religion is practised. This will include countries like South Africa, where different religions live together in one country with freedom of religious expression and affiliation. Interreligious communication can easily lead to conflict; the main aim of interreligious conversation for this study is to create more tolerant multireligious communities. When referring to the term multireligious, the dissertation does not suggest that all communities should be multireligious.

New studies in psychology and neuroscience have shown that emotion and logic both play a significant role in how one responds to situations (Stein 2012:570-571). People from different religions encounter one another within everyday life. An example of this may be at school, work and everyday business such as shopping. It is possible and not uncommon for a group of people to have collective negativity regarding the other (Bronstein & Bretherton 2012:137). When this happens, any positive quality of the other can very easily be clouded collectively (Bronstein & Bretherton 2012:137). This being the case, negative emotions can influence the way that one interacts and understands situations. One can thus argue that if there is collective negativity in groups regarding the other, it will be possible for the reaction toward the other to be more negative than

positive. This being said, it is very important to engage in a creative way that includes logic rather than to engage with just pure facts (Bronstein & Bretherton 2012:137). This is because people with a preconceived negative idea of the other can more easily relay a more positive concept through creativity than pure fact.

Religious phenomena such as marriage rituals are given to communities through historical communities, in a specific form with specific meaning (Douglas 2005:24). By partaking in these rituals, the participant becomes a part of an active, creative engagement that is necessary to keep these rituals alive (Douglas 2005:24). The meaning of these rituals is defined and redefined within the creative process of the phenomenon (Douglas 2005:24). Grimes states that rituals do not necessarily start with meaning, but they attract both meaning and value in the end (Grimes 2014:318). For a ritual to stay alive and relevant, it should be understood as contextual (both in history and in the present), but should stay open for interpretation and renewal by the people who partake in the religious phenomena and the authorities within the particular religion (Douglas 2005:24). Grimes states that rituals should relay important messages so they can continue to be meaningful (Grimes 2014:318). The theory suggested in this dissertation states that marriage rituals serve as both a creative and more universal concept to start interreligious conversations.

The term 'the other' has been and will be used throughout this dissertation. The term "the other" is also used by Paul Hedges, who emphasises the fact that this term should be used within the context of respect within disagreement between religious communities (2010:5). This concept of respect within disagreement works well within the context of this study because of how tolerance is viewed.

The definition of tolerance is as follows: “the promise of tolerance is that coexistence in disagreement is possible” (Frost 2013:1). The term ‘the other’ will thus be used in the spirit of tolerance. This is a very important part of the study, as it shows that different religions do not have to agree with key concepts of the other for them to have tolerance toward the other. Tolerance forms in conflict and transcends any human construct (Frost 2013:2).

Interestingly, conflict is also caused by using the word “tolerance” because people understand tolerance differently (Frost 2013:2-3). Some may understand tolerance as a necessity to their way of life and others may see it as a betrayal of their society (Frost 2013:2-3). Tolerance is sometimes seen as putting up with the other. This is extremely negative and is thus not a better way to a more positive relationship with the other (Frost 2013:18). Tolerance may also be seen as a promotion of the other despite what one believes. This concept of tolerance evokes much negativity with many groups, and it is to be understood (Frost 2013:18). Furthermore, one must understand that this dissertation endorses a third path, an active recognition of the other (Frost 2013:18).

This comparative study is thus anchored in the constant understanding of tolerance within conflict. This dissertation intends to show that tolerance does not need to be despite oneself or the other (Frost 2013:31). One of the main concepts is that through educating oneself through interreligious conversation and studies that one may be less prone to fall victim to anger promoting propaganda. By educating oneself, it becomes easier to interact with the other as needed in a multi-religious environment. As seen above the comparative study tries to show

how a creative concept such as marriage rituals can promote interreligious conversation to promote a more tolerant society.

Rituals are mostly linked to myth, as myth can play a crucial part within rituals. All religions have some concept of myths; these are usually narratives about the beginning of time (Eliade 1996:430). Eliade states that myth manifests itself through rituals and helps the believer through the changes of their lives (1987). Myth thus has a connection with both narrative and ritual. When the dissertation refers to narrative, it should be understood as including myth, but not limited to it. Myth is very important and shows part of the spiritual reasons for some enactments. Myth, however, is too limiting and cannot be seen as the full extent of narrative or rituals. Myths form part of the non-falsifiable realities as seen in the definition given for religion. The problem is that it is only a part of religion, and the same can be said for the relationship between myth and ritual. Narrative also refers to people who have gone through the ritual in the past; this binds the couple to the tradition in their community; this can include myth but is not limited to myth. Narrative refers to the life of the couple and the story that they are living. Narrative refers to the culture that the couple finds themselves in. Narrative refers to the mythical, spiritual, social, individual and religious story of the humans found in the context of this study.

Rituals and narrative have a lot in common; this will become clear within this section of the core concepts. It should be understood how the dissertation views rituals as well as the view on the creativity inside rituals. The best way to do this is to understand that rituals are a part of the narrative of the people. Academics such as Gottschall have viewed narrative as an addiction (Gottschall 2012:loc 62-

69). Similarly, rituals are just as intriguing to the human mind, as most people will have a positive reaction to an invitation to a familiar ritual of a loved one, as one that forms part of their narrative.

Having a communal narrative as a reference for a group can help strengthen their bond (Gottschall 2012:loc416). Similarly, rituals also act as a bonding agent between groups of people (Abo-Zena 2010:647). Even more so marriage rituals bond the couple and their community together as well as bonding them with their past. This is why the concept of the narrative of the people has been chosen to describe rituals as it is a bond to the past as well as the present. Narratives may also simulate situations so one may react better in future when encountering a similar situation (Gottschall 2012:loc.888-895). Narratives help the human subconscious to discover situations using mirror neurons (Gottschall 2012:805). Mirror neurons work on the principle that the same activity happens in the human brain when viewing or hearing of certain actions as when one would perform the act oneself (Gottschall 2012:loc805). This is why emotion can be invoked when one encounters a narrative (Gottschall 2012:loc811). If rituals are the narrative of the people, it is possible for the people observing the ritual to have an empathetic feeling towards the person going through the ritual within their community. Understanding that the concept of marriage rituals transcends religions and cultures makes it possible for the mirror neurons to create a positive emotional reaction when confronted with the other's rituals.

When one understands where the concept of narrative fits into rituals it should become clear that rituals are a very good creative candidate for starting interreligious conversations. This is because tolerance is easier achieved by

using creativity rather than just raw facts. This is a big part of the reason why marriage rituals were chosen for this comparative study.

2.5. Phenomenology

Phenomenology has been chosen as the methodology that will be used within this dissertation. The object of any study will have a direct influence on the methodology that is used. The object of this study is rituals, and one of the main ways of observing rituals is through phenomenology. Phenomenology has been chosen because the method makes it possible to compare the marriage rituals within Christianity, Judaism and Islam. It should be noted that Kant made a distinction between noumena and phenomena (Muller 1991:182). Noumena being the deeper meaning behind the phenomena, this includes the spiritual, ethical and moral value instead of plain rational knowledge (Muller 1991:182). Although the word Noumena will not be used in this study, it will be included in the study within phenomena. One cannot study phenomena without finding a glimpse into the Noumena. All that Noumena (the meaning behind the phenomena) has to offer cannot be presented in this dissertation, as one cannot fully understand what a phenomenon means to someone in a different context.

This approach is not the only method that can be used to do so, but rather that it is the preferred method in this dissertation. As stated previously, in Chapter 1, no field study has been performed, however, a literature study has been performed. The reason for this decision is to stimulate a theory that can be used for field study in future. It is better to know and to have an understanding of what rituals are, what they might mean and what their origins are. The term global field has been used in this dissertation, this statement does not mean that this research

will encompass all marriage rituals within all the different segments of Christianity, Judaism and Islam in the world; the dissertation will rather give an overview of what might be encountered.

The concept of phenomenology is attributed to a mathematician E. Husserl (1859-1938) although he did not come up with the word phenomenology as it was used earlier (Cox 2010:25). Husserl describes Phenomenology as: “a descriptive theory of knowledge” (Cox 2010:28). Phenomenology is described by G. Van der Leeuw as searching for the phenomena (1938:195). A phenomenon in G. Van der Leeuw’s view is a manifestation which he describes as: “an object related to a subject and a subject related to an object” (1938:195). Phenomenology thus has everything to do with how an object phenomenon is seen. It is important to remember that with this definition, Van der Leeuw does not mean that the subject manipulates or creates the object (Van der Leeuw 1938:195). Within religion, the believer is a part of the phenomena within the religion and it is, therefore, crucial to understand the phenomena (Chryssides & Greaves 2014:168). Phenomenology works on the basis that one must first, without judgement, describe what one sees, thereafter, the data of what has been observed can be analysed (Cox 2010:28). The steps of phenomenology, as related to this study, will now be considered:

The first step will be to perform *epoché*, not just to perform it but to maintain it (Cox 2010:49). *Epoché* is an attempt by researchers to put one’s convictions and prejudices aside in order to capture the ritual to the best of one’s ability (Kruger 1982:18). The task of the phenomenologist is thus not to approve, deny or modify what is seen but to capture the ritual (Chryssides & Greaves 2014:168; Douglas

20052:7). Bracketing works on the concept of a math equation when one would first solve the equation within the brackets before going on with the rest of the equation (Cox 2010:55). In phenomenology, bracketing is to first observe the ritual without putting the external part of the equation, such as one's predisposition, into the description of the ritual. G. Van der Leeuw also emphasises the concept of bracketing (Van der Leeuw 1938:675). Thus, bracketing is how *epoché* is performed. J.S. Kruger stated that the whole concept of phenomenology is found in the fact that researchers should "describe accurately what they see before they start to explain scientifically" (Kruger 1982:17). Kruger also states that phenomenology is not against science but would rather want to ensure that science does not isolate itself from the world (Kruger 1982:17). The dissertation does recognise the flaw within the concept of *epoché* and understand that both the context of the dissertation and that of the sources will make it impossible to maintain *epoché* entirely. *Epoché* is one of the things that make phenomenology unique, and to an extent, it is one of the biggest assets of this method. True *epoché*, and thus true objectivity, will never be attainable; this is one of the biggest shortcomings of phenomenology, but this does not mean that one cannot try to perform *epoché* to the best of one's ability. To the best of the dissertation capability, the concept of *epoché* will be practised.

In the second step of phenomenology, one should attempt to develop empathetic feelings for a religious ritual that one has no previous empathetic relationship with (Cox 2010:52; Van der Leeuw 1938:675). George D. Chryssides refers to this part of the method as "bridge building" (2014:168). Kruger states that humans are not objects and that true humanity should not be missed inside investigations

(Kruger 1982:17). Scholars can never fully achieve this step, but if the project is started with this mindset the outcome is sure to be different (Cox 2010:54). G. Van der Leeuw has also pointed out that although this is a key step, it is also one that has limitations (1938:675). Furthermore, G. Van der Leeuw suggests that researchers need to try and interpolate these phenomena as they appear in our own lives (1938:688). Phenomenology, as interpreted by Kruger, is to describe how people experience their world (Kruger 1982:17). This step is just as flawed as the first step. The reason is that one can never exactly know how someone else truly feels because one is not in their shoes. A phenomenon such as marriage is in the context of this dissertation a universally accepted practice within the Abrahamic religions (even though they differ in belief and practice). Marriage rituals are seen as being a psychological and social concept as well as a physical one. When considering these factors, it makes it easier to build bridges or develop empathetic feelings to the people involved with the rituals. To the best of the dissertation's ability, empathy will be practised.

In the third step of phenomenology, the phenomena need to be described (Cox 2010:57). Douglas Allen states that the most important aim of the phenomenological method is to describe the phenomena while suspending one's presuppositions (Douglas 2005:7). Within this concept of description, one must also understand that the phenomena, in this case, the marriage rituals, have a deeper meaning than what meets the eye (Douglas 2005:21). When describing the phenomena, one must still maintain the concept of both *epoché* and empathy. Phenomenology wants to gain knowledge of the phenomena, and this is addressed by observation and description. This step will be applied in Chapter 3

for Christianity, Chapter 4 for Judaism and Chapter 5 for Islam. The dissertation will give a clear overall concept of how marriage rituals function within the Abrahamic religions. The drawback is that true *epoché* and empathy will never truly be obtainable but striving towards this will aid in the understanding of these rituals. Describing the phenomena is one of the most important steps as this will give the foundation of how it works for the rest of the dissertation.

The fourth step in the method of phenomenology is to categorise the phenomena (Cox 2010:58). G. Van der Leeuw is of the opinion that researchers should never become too comfortable with the category that is given, as this can make the phenomena into something which it is not (Van der Leeuw 1938:674). Scholars should be careful not to mistakenly make the phenomena static (Van der Leeuw 1938:674). A static non-living ritual will eventually outgrow its worth as rituals are a part of the living narrative of the people. Another problem with this step is to take care in not using terms that the believers will find offensive. This step will be explored in Chapter 6 when categories are assigned to the phenomena. When performing this stage, it should be taken into consideration that the three Abrahamic religions should all be compared within this Chapter with regards to the marriage rituals that are discussed in Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

The fifth step of phenomenology deals with comparing the phenomena (Cox 2010:62). In this section, the rituals as described in Chapter 3, 4 and 5 will be compared with one another. In other words, the dissertation is going to point out the differences and similarities between the Abrahamic religions' marriage rituals. The problem with this step is that all the shortcomings encountered in the previous sections will also be present in this section. This section, however, is a

more critical part of the work with less focus on the concept of *epoché*. This will be described in Chapter 6.

The sixth step will be to try and understand the phenomena (Cox 2010:63). The phenomena need to be discussed in the context of social change. Some of the most important factors that are changing the concept of marriage rituals are globalisation, Westernisation and feminism. It should be noted that many factors can influence how marriage rituals change. This can be seen in Douglas's work where he states that religious phenomena are influenced by the context of the people such as their economics, politics and social standing (2005:22). By doing this, the phenomena are understood as they manifest (Van der Leeuw 1938:688). Thus, it is important to understand the context that is changing the phenomena of marriage rituals. Although the Abrahamic religions all have their context, it will be important to state that factors like feminism, globalisation and Westernisation are changing all three religions and this is something that they have in common. The influences of these movements have different degrees of change toward each religion. It is also important to understand the historical context that formed these phenomena, as this may differ extensively from the modern context (Douglas 2005:23). This will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Lastly, a comment on future research will be given. This will be discussed in Chapter 7. Throughout the dissertation, gaps will be identified in the current research; by doing so, it will shine a light on future research possibilities.

Phenomenology gives a clear understanding of how the phenomena need to be treated when they are studied and analysed. The phenomena, in other words, marriage rituals, will be studied in this manner within this dissertation.

2.6. Marriage

Marriage is a complicated subject that can have different layers of understanding. Just as some academics and institutions understand religion and ritual from different perspectives, in the same way, multiple understandings of the concept of marriage also arise. Some understandings of marriage are too wide, and others are too narrow. The concept of marriage is something that is found in most societies at this point in history. Marriage is highly valued in all three Abrahamic religions and is seen as non-optional within Judaism and Islam (Greenberg 1990:1; al Faruqi 1990:80). In Christianity marriage is encouraged, but celibacy because of one's religion, is considered honourable in the Greek Orthodox church and non-optional for Roman Catholic church's clergy (Constantelos 1990:30-31; Carmody 1990:43).

Marriage can be seen as a purely religious construct; its functionality and understanding would thus be dictated by purely religious laws and views. This can include definitions such as:

“A religious marriage is viewed more as a spiritual bond and holy vow as commanded by god (or a deity) in which a man and a woman come together to create a unified relationship according to their gods' laws and commandments. Most

religions of the world believe that a couple is not only joined physically in marriage but that they are also joined spiritually in marriage, especially during intercourse” (Jones n.d.)

Depending on the religion one emerges in, one will have certain convictions based on their faith surrounding marriage. An example of this can be that a wife must be submissive towards her husband, or that the deity of the religion has created and instituted marriage for humanity. These ideas may be valued differently in different cultural and religious communities.

Marriage can also be considered a purely civil concept. Its function and understanding would thus be dictated by the laws of the country. Depending on the country one resides in, one will have certain convictions based on their laws surrounding marriage that can be interpreted as both positive and negative. An example of the civil concept will influence property rights and divorce rights within the context of marriage. Marriage can also be considered a purely personal concept. Its function and understanding would thus be dictated by the couple depending on the couple's personal conditions that can be interpreted as both positive and negative. Every couple has their own identity which will influence the functioning and understanding of marriage.

By understanding that marriage is all of these things and not just purely one, the bigger picture can be understood of what marriage and marriage rituals are. Within each tradition that a couple finds themselves in, some of these aspects will be more important and others less important. The aspects will depend on the

context of each couple, whether they are religious, whether they are deeply influenced by culture, what laws are governing their society and if they are law-abiding. All these things will influence how strong the personal aspects will be within the understanding and functionality of marriage. The three Abrahamic religions are being studied in this dissertation. This would mean that religion will play a role in this study. Culture, law and personal aspects will also be pointed out throughout this dissertation.

Marriage is, in the Abrahamic religions, the safe and accepted place for sex and procreation (Lamm 1991:26; Greenberg 1990:2; al Faruqi 1990:81; Yates 1990:61; Constantelos 1990:63). Marriage can thus and has been seen as having the function of reproduction. This may be the only function of marriage within some definitions:

“Marriage is a union between a man and a woman such that children born into the woman are recognised legitimate offspring of both parents” (Salamone 2004:230)

This would be a misappropriation of the concept of marriage to reduce it to just the function of procreation. Some couples might not want children or might not be able to have children while still having a fulfilling marriage. Therefore, this definition is too narrow as offspring is not the only reason and function of marriage anymore. Marriage has also in the past been defined as a legal contract between two parties. This can be seen by the following definition:

“The legally or formally recognised union of two people as partners in a personal relationship” (Oxford English Dictionary 2000).

This is too broad as it can include any contract between two parties. Although the legally binding contract is very important to marriage, it is not the definition of marriage as marriage has many aspects that do not just involve a legal binding contract. This reduces marriage to a civil action, an emotionless construct that sounds more like a business transaction. These factors need to be looked at when considering a statement that will, in the end, define marriage for the purpose of this dissertation. It should be stated at this point that the Abrahamic religions regard gay marriage as very controversial in most circles. As this is such a controversial subject, this dissertation will not be examining the subject. This should not be seen as a stance from the side of the dissertation, but rather that it falls outside the focussed scope. Controversial marriages are a good topic for interreligious conversation as well as interreligious academic studies for the future.

The definition the dissertation has put together for marriage will be as follows:

Marriage, as found in the Abrahamic religions, can be a legally and religiously binding principle that will allow two individuals to be companions in a sexual, intellectual and social manner. Marriage allows the two individuals to build a future together that may or may not include offspring.

First, it must be noted that other forms of marriage outside the Abrahamic religions are not considered illegitimate, but rather that it is not going to be a part

of this study. Within the construct of this study, the marriages are considered binding by law and/or religious institutions, although it should be noted that if divorce is practised within the Abrahamic groups, it is widely frowned upon. In the Abrahamic religions both monogamy and polygamy are practised in some traditions. By mentioning that marriage is between two individuals it is meant that the bride and groom are to be wed, regardless if the groom has another wife, the union would not be seen as the two wives are married to each other. However, rather that the man has more than one wife. The concept of polygamy is not discredited by this definition but rather that the definition regards the individual marriage agreements even within polygamy. Sexuality and procreation can be a very important part of marriage, but it is not the only factor that constitutes a marriage. Marriage has social and intellectual aspects that are also considered important as the couple builds a life together.

2.7. Conclusion

The core concepts have been unfolded and laid out in detail in this Chapter to aid in the understanding of the information that will be discussed in the Chapters to follow. The dissertation will now proceed to discuss marriage rituals in Christianity, in Chapter 3. This will be followed by Chapter 4, which addresses marriage rituals in Judaism and then proceed to Chapter 5, where the focus will be on marriage rituals in Islam.

3. Chapter three: Marriage ceremonial rituals in Christianity

3.1. Introduction

Marriage ceremonial rituals within Christianity is as diverse a topic as Christianity itself. There are things that overlap but also things that differ within the Christian traditions that will be discussed in this Chapter. This should give us a picture of marriage ceremonial rituals within Christianity. It is important to remember that in Christianity a lot of the denominations tend to reform. These reformations make it hard to capture the diversity of rituals within Christianity, and there will be some church traditions that differ from this study. In this Chapter, the following denominations will be studied: The Roman Catholic church, Greek Orthodox church, the church of England and the Presbyterian Church. The reason these churches were chosen is to give an idea of the diversity given within the Christian churches. These churches that are mentioned are not more important than other denominations. They were chosen because they represent some of the leading churches in the world. This does, yet again, not mean that there are no other leading churches. The churches chosen for the purpose of this discussion have a deeply comprehensive liturgy, which forms part of the reason for their selection. Keeping in mind that the religious ceremony is significant and does not always include the signing of the civil contract, this may have the implication of two ceremonies (which will be determined by the laws of the country and the view of marriage in the church) (Pleck 2000:209-210).

In this Chapter the pre-marriage rituals in Christianity will be explored; this includes proposing marriage, the engagement period, engagement ceremonies, banns that are published, kitchen tea, bachelor and bachelorette parties. The marriage ceremonies themselves will also be discussed. The discussion elaborates on the entrance of the couple, the sermon by the marriage officiant, the intention stating and vows from the couple, the dowry and Las Arras, the crowning of the bride and groom, the Eucharist, and feasting after the ceremony. The post-marriage ceremonies will be discussed thereafter; the discussion focusses on the consummation and honeymoon, ceremonies and church support after the marriage ceremony. Some important elements will be presented thereafter, this will include wedding attire of the bride, groom and the role of the other participants.

3.2. Pre-marriage ceremonial traditions

This section elaborates on the components of pre-marriage ceremony traditions in Christianity and includes: proposing marriage, the engagement period, engagement ceremonies, banns that are published, kitchen tea, bachelor and bachelorette parties.

3.2.1. Proposing marriage

Proposing marriage in the Christian community is not necessarily done in a very ritualised way. This is not a liturgical point, and the couple can have a lot of freedom on how this happens. The marriage proposal is influenced by culture, popular trends and what would be deemed romantic for the time. The task of proposing traditionally falls to the man. Within the feminist movement, the concept that the man is always the one to propose marriage and that the woman is mostly

seen as the passive partner in the relationship, is something they aim to change (Monger 2013:277). It is not unheard of in modern times for a woman to propose to a man in Christianity, even if the task still mostly falls to the man. Who proposes to who depends on the couple and their views on the subject as well as some cultural aspects. It is worth noting that historically the woman may have proposed on the extra day found in a leap year (Monger 2013:454). If the man she asked rejected her proposal he would owe her something like a fur coat (Monger 2013:454). A less traditional culture will accept the concept of women proposing to a man any time and any year, with greater ease than a more rigid traditional society. There is a concept that the one that proposes should try and make the proposal as romantic as possible for their partner. In modern Christianity arranged marriage is not the norm; thus the person that proposes will know their partner well enough to know what they will perceive as romantic.

One of the common traditions entails that the person proposing will go down on one knee and asking for the other person's hand in marriage (Monger 2013:227). The proposal can happen at any place and any time. If the man is the one to propose, it is the norm for him to give the woman a ring if she accepts, in modern times a diamond ring is the norm. This is a very modern concept that started with De Beers diamond company, they hosted a campaign in 1947 stating that "Diamonds are forever" (De Beers n.d.). This advertising campaign made diamonds a symbol of marriage and lasting love.

It is traditional for a man to ask the woman's father for permission to marry (Monger 2013:579). This tradition has started to die out mostly because of feminism; a woman is not to be considered her father or husband's property and

must marry out of her own will. One of the ways that tradition has changed is that both the parents of the bride and groom are asked for consent consent to marry out of respect. This is a metaphorical blessing rather than changing the status of the couple's relationship.

3.2.2. The engagement period, ceremonies and banns

The Roman Catholic church has a ritual pertaining to engaged couples. This ritual can vary according to circumstances (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:93). A priest or a layperson may perform this ceremony, but it preferably goes to the person higher in rank (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:93). The couple's families may be present for this blessing. The person conducting the ceremony greets the couple with one of the Roman Missal greetings (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:93). From there some scripture is recited, a prayer is said, a blessing is said, and the ceremony is concluded (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:94-99). In this ceremony, Mass is never used (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:93). By doing this, the Roman Catholic church stresses the importance of the engagement and the decision on getting married. This ritual also puts emphasis on the fact that the decision to get married should be as much a spiritual decision, as it is a mental and emotional one.

The Greek Orthodox church also has a betrothal ceremony. In this ceremony, the priest will stand inside the royal door and the couple outside, in front of the priest, with the bride positioned to the left of the groom (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America n.d.). He will then ask the bride and groom if they wish to marry one another (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America n.d.). When they have stated

their intentions, in other words, that they would like to marry, the priest continues with a chant and prayer (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America n.d.). The priest will then proceed by picking up the rings that were on the altar. The priest makes a cross over the head of the groom with the rings in hand while repeating three times (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America n.d.):

“The servant of God (Name) is betrothed to the servant of God (Name) in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. (Thrice) Amen.”

(Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America n.d.)

The priest then continues by putting the groom’s ring on the woman’s hand and does the same with the bride’s ring. The rings are then taken from the right finger and given back and forth between the bride and groom three times (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America n.d.). This is then followed by a prayer from the priest (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America n.d.). Directly after this ceremony, the marriage ceremony continues as will be discussed under the heading *sermon* below.

In the church of England for three Sundays, the one officiating the marriage will publish banns, it may be in the form of the book of common prayer or as follow:

*“I publish the banns of marriage between NN of... and NN of...
This is the first/second/third time of asking. If any of you know
any reason in law why they may not marry each other, you are*

to declare it. We pray for these couples (or N and N) as they prepare for their wedding(s).”

(The Church of England 2017:132)

The church of England does this as required by law to make sure that it is lawful for the couple to wed. This also keeps the couple within the mind and prayers of the congregation.

3.2.3. Kitchen tea and Bachelor party

The concept of the traditional kitchen tea and Bachelor's party comes from a sense of community. The traditional bridal shower only began in the 1890's where the bridesmaids or the bride's friends would give her gifts for the kitchen and bedroom (Pleck 2000:213). Female family members may also attend, gifts are usually everyday household items (Pleck 2000:213). These types of showers have originated due to the high cost of marriage and starting a household, including the fact that some people could not afford dowries (Mills 1969:10). It is very common for a young woman to have a kitchen tea, this is not always done for second marriages. The community (family and friends) would help make a wedding possible by giving gifts (Mills 1969:10).

Men may also hold their own ritual where their male friends bring commonly needed household tools (Pleck 2000:213). These might also be replaced with a girl- or guys night out in modern times where presents may or may not be given. In ancient Sparta, something like today's bachelor's parties was held (Mills 1969:6). This is based more on a day or night out for the young man with his male friends and can include some young male relatives. This is usually not done with

a groom that has been married before, the activity will depend on what the groom and his friends regard as fun. This is also done for women, usually, only for the first wedding, some only have a kitchen tea, but some prefer a bachelorette party. The major difference is that the older women are also invited to the kitchen tea and only younger women to the bachelorette party. The bachelorette party may also include activities enjoyed by a younger crowd, and here gifts for the bedroom are regarded as more appropriate. In both, the bachelorette- and bachelor party, a variety of games can be played, and pranks can be pulled on the young couple.

3.3. Marriage ceremonial ritual

This section elaborates on the components of the marriage ceremony traditions in Christianity include: the entrance of the couple, the sermon by the marriage officiant, the intention stating and vows from the couple, the dowry and Las Arras, the crowning of the bride and groom, the Eucharist, and feasting after the ceremony.

3.3.1. Entrance

Most Christian marriages take place within a church, a chapel or a wedding venue. This will depend on the denomination and the preference of the couple. The entrance of especially the bride is met with great anticipation. The bride and groom should not see each other before the ceremony, as this is considered bad luck (Monger 2013:647). This probably stems from a time when marriages were arranged, and the couple would meet on the day of the wedding. Today the bride and groom will know each other very well by the time they get married. The tradition of not seeing each other from the night before the ceremony is mostly still observed today. Most of the guests would not have seen her in her wedding

gown up until this point. Brides put a lot of effort into looking beautiful on the day of the wedding. When she enters the guests rise as she walks down the aisle.

In a Catholic marriage ceremony, the priest may either greet the couple at the door of the church or wait for them at the place that was prepared for them (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:13). An entrance chant is played, and the priest welcomes the couple warmly (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:13). The priest goes to the altar, bows and shows his respect by kissing it. He then goes to the chair (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:13). The priest makes the sign of the cross and performs a formal greeting as described in the Roman Missal (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:13). The proceedings may change with the incorporation of local customs if it is appropriate within a Catholic Christian marriage ceremony (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:11).

In the Church of England, the bride's entrance on the day of the wedding may be accompanied by her father, a family member or the groom (The Church of England 2017:132). There is an optional part of the ceremony where the bride may be given away, this may be done by any family member, traditionally the father of the bride (The Church of England 2017:133). There is also a different option where the parents of the bride and groom may give their children to each other (The Church of England 2017:133). In the Greek Orthodox church, the marriage ceremony is held directly after the betrothal ceremony and thus there is no entrance into the marriage ceremony (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America n.d.).

In the Presbyterian church, the bride may be accompanied by the groom or the bride and groom can each be accompanied by their parents (Presbyterian Church USA 2003:211). The Presbyterian church may also use the custom referred to as “bearing of the cross” (Presbyterian Church USA 2003:221). The bearer of the Cross will enter first with the minister following, the groomsmen and bridesmaids may enter next, followed by the parents and lastly, the bride and groom may enter (Presbyterian Church USA 2003:211). The minister may also lead the groom and the bride individually with their attendants to the front (Presbyterian Church USA 2003:211). The groom and his attendants may also enter from the side and the bride and her attendants from the back (Presbyterian Church USA 2003:211). If music is used with the entrance, it must be Christian worship music that does not conflict with what the church believes (Presbyterian Church USA 2003:211). The bride and groom are positioned in front of the church between the pastor and people attending (Presbyterian Church USA 2003:221)

After exploring these different denominations, it is clear that the entrance of the bride and groom can take many forms depending on the denomination and cultural practices. Feminism is changing the entrance of the bride as she was always given away by her father, the view of a woman as something that can be given like property is being condemned and this ritual is changing (Monger 2013:277). However, the custom practice of giving away the bride is still being considered a traditional norm. It is practised more as a blessing from the father rather than him seeing the daughter as property today. It is not untold that the couple’s parents can give them to each other yet again as a symbolic blessing of the union rather than seeing their children as their property to give away.

3.3.2. The sermon

The sermon is an essential part of the marriage ceremony because it affirms the religious connection with the concept of marriage. It is not just the binding of two families, or a civil contract but also a religious connection. This is the same reason why the marriage officiant is normally a religious leader such as a minister or a priest. By having an ordained person perform the ceremony, the religious connection and seriousness of the commitment are being reaffirmed.

In the church of England, people are welcomed by the minister with a traditional greeting (The Church of England 2017:104). The minister can then start with a prayer, appropriate to marriage and praising God (The Church of England 2017:104). A hymn is then sung by the people present (The Church of England 2017:104). In the Catholic Church, the church of England and the Presbyterian church the officiant will announce the reason for being gathered, the marriage ceremony, and asks for the support of their fellow Christians in friendship, affection and prayer (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:14; The Church of England 2017:105; Presbyterian Church USA 2003:222). In a Roman Catholic church as well as the church of England the officiant may also wish God's blessings in their marriage pledge and their hopes for the future (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:14; The Church of England 2017:105).

The minister of the church of England will state that marriage is part of God's creation and is a gift that symbolises God's grace (The Church of England 2017:105). The bride and groom should unite in all ways mentally and physically, so they may be a picture of Christ and the church (The Church of England

2017:105). He states the commitment between man and woman in marriage and that it is the foundation of a healthy family life (The Church of England 2017:105). It is a very important part of society, and it is a big responsibility (The Church of England 2017:105).

In the church of England, the minister will ask their intention to marry as seen in the heading *intention stating and vows*, after this, the Minister then proceeds with a sermon and a hymn is sung (The Church of England 2017:107-108). They then move on to the vows which will also be discussed in more detail under the heading *intention stating and vows*. In the Presbyterian church, the minister may either read Genesis 2:18-25 and/or Mark 10:7-8 and explain how people came into existence and how man and woman are made to be each other's companions (Presbyterian Church USA 2003:222). The minister may emphasise sexuality in the ceremony as it is believed that marriage is the appropriate place to live out one's sexuality and for having children (Presbyterian Church USA 2003:222-223). Marriage is often used as a metaphor for the relationship between Christ and his church (Presbyterian Church USA 2003:223). In this metaphor, Christ is the groom, and the church is the bride.

This part of the ceremony in the Presbyterian church reflects the view of the church on marriage and will become more personalised to the couple as the ceremony continues (Presbyterian Church USA 2003:223). By accepting marriage, the individual's responsibilities and purpose in life are changed in a similar manner as when you are baptised (Presbyterian Church USA 2003:223). Marriage is a responsibility and should be taken seriously; it must, therefore, be upheld (Presbyterian Church USA 2003:223). The minister also talks about God's

blessing in marriage (Presbyterian Church USA 2003:223). The bride and groom's consent will then be asked, which will be discussed in the section on intention stating and vows. The minister or someone close to the couple may then read from the Bible. It can be from several texts that are prescribed by the church as appropriate to marriage ceremonies (Presbyterian Church USA 2003:225). A hymn may be sung, and a prayer said after the reading, followed by a sermon; the wedding party will sit for this part of the ceremony and stand again afterwards (Presbyterian Church USA 2003:225). The bride and groom's vows will then be said. The vows will be discussed under the heading *intention stating and vows*.

In a Catholic church there will be three bible readings, the first must be from the Old Testament (unless it is Easter, then the book of Revelations is preferred), a text about Mass may be read if Mass is used (this will be discussed under the heading *eucharist*) and one text must be specifically about marriage (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017). In between the texts Psalms may be sung as well as Alleluia verses if the third text is from the Gospels (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:15). After these readings, the priest may deliver a sermon explaining marriage with the help of the texts that have been read (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:17). The couple then gives their consent to marry and make vows toward one another. After the vows have been said in the Catholic church, the priest will give a blessing over the couple. The priest will then say a few words including that God may bless them and be with them, ending with:

"What God has joined together, let no one put asunder."

(United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:21; The Church of England 2017:110)

This is said by the minister in the church of England as well after the bride and groom have given the rings and joined their hands.

In the Catholic church, the priest will bless the rings and sprinkle them with holy water (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:21-22). The bride and groom then take turns putting the rings on each other's ring fingers while saying the following words:

"N, receive this ring

As a sign of my love and fidelity.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son,

And of the Holy Spirit."

(United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:22)

In the church of England, the minister then blesses the rings with a prayer (The Church of England 2017:109). The bride and groom exchange rings on the fourth finger of the left hand while saying:

"N, I give you this ring

As a sign of our marriage.

With my body, I honour you,

All that I am I give to you,

And all that I have I share with you,

Within the love of God,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”

(The Church of England 2017:109)

There is also a statement of the receiving of the ring in the church of England:

“N, I receive this ring...”

(The Church of England 2017:109)

Rings are exchanged as a visible sign of the couple’s marriage (Presbyterian Church USA 2003:226).

In the Roman Catholic church, a hymn may then be sung, a universal prayer is said, and a creed may be recited (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:22). After the Eucharist (this is described in more detail in under the heading Eucharist) the Our Father prayer is then said (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:23). The priest faces the bride and groom and pours God’s blessings out unto them, the blessing may be unique to every couple (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:23). This may be accompanied by texts, music and other blessings (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:25). After the blessing, everyone in the church offers each other a sign of peace, including the bride and groom (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:25). The bride and groom, family and witnesses may receive communion (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:25). At the end

of Mass, the priest blesses the bride and groom with a prayer; he also blesses the people attending the wedding (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:26).

In the church of England, the minister will bless the couple and pray for them after the giving of the rings, as they kneel (The Church of England 2017:111). A Psalm or a Hymn may be sung during the legal registration (The Church of England 2017:111). A prayer follows in which the priest gives thanks to God; he asks for spiritual advance, a good home and family blessings (The Church of England 2017:112). The Lord's Prayer is then prayed, and the minister concludes the ceremony (The Church of England 2017:114).

In a Greek Orthodox Church, the ceremony starts with the priest and the choir sings a Psalm (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America n.d.). A prayer is said by the priest after the singing of the Psalm (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America n.d.). With this prayer, the priest asks for peace, salvation, and blessings towards the world, church, all people and specifically prays for the couple who is getting married (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America n.d.). He may mention the wedding of Cana in Galilee, with the intention that they may be so blessed (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America n.d.). He will pray for them to multiply, let their prayers be heard, that they may find joy, and be free from harm (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America n.d.). He mentions the creation story and how Eve was made from Adam's rib (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America n.d.). He also mentions that man must leave his parents so that the spouses will become one (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America n.d.).

“God has joined and created marriage, and no one must separate what God has made one” (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America n.d.; Presbyterian Church USA 2003:228).

This is also said in the Presbyterian marriage ceremonies. In the Orthodox church, the priest keeps praying, mentioning blessings of biblical characters like Abraham and Sarah, Joseph, *etc.*, and wishing these blessings on the couple being married (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America n.d.). He then bestows blessings on them like longevity, peace and love in the bond of their wedding, *etc.* He also mentions the mystical nature of marriage (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America n.d.). The prayer ends, and the right hands of the couple are joined by the priest and the choir say amen (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America n.d.). Next, the crowning takes place. This will be discussed in more detail under the heading *crowning*. After this, a scriptural reading takes place, along with prayers (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America n.d.). Thereafter, drinking from the common cup will commence. This will be described under the heading *eucharist*. After this, the priest leads the bride and groom around the Analogion (table) three times while the people attending the wedding sings

“the dance of Jesiah”

(Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America n.d.)

While they walk around the table, they can be thrown with confetti by family and friends (Monger 2013:540). The crowns are removed, and the priest will then pray for the couple (Presbyterian Church USA 2003:226). The Lord’s Prayer is said or

sung, and the marriage is then announced (Presbyterian Church USA 2003:227-228). The minister then reminds them of their responsibility as a married couple by reading Colossians 3 or some similar texts (Presbyterian Church USA 2003:228). The minister then blesses the couple and they kiss (Presbyterian Church USA 2003:228). In the Catholic church, the marriage contract is signed, it may be signed in private with the appropriate witnesses or with the people attending the ceremony watching, but it may not be signed on the altar (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:26).

The Christian church affirms its views in marriage at the marriage ceremony by having scriptural readings. An emphasis will be put on what the specific denomination sees as the most important views in Christian marriages through the sermon, prayers and biblical readings. This reaffirms to the couple what they are committing to and that their faith must play a role within their marriage to come. Some denominations have a liturgy that is very strict and some a liturgy that is less strict. It can be seen in the fact that there are denominations that give a clear guide of both the sermon and the Bible verses that may be read. The sermon description given here is a summary of some of the liturgies of these churches.

3.3.3. Intention stating and vows

In most Christian traditions, both state the intention to marry, and vows are made. Some Christian traditions, especially the charismatic churches, allow the bride and groom to write their own vows (Monger 2013:712). Most denominations have a standard vow that is used; this is written in the liturgy of each denomination. By both having a verbal consent to getting married and having the bride and groom

make a vow to each other the church stresses both the importance of the consent and what the couple is committing towards.

In the Catholic church everyone stands after the sermon, including the couple, the priest will state the concept of the ceremony and ask for the couple's intentions (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:17-18). If more than one couple is present for marriage each will answer individually (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:18). After each question, one must answer "I will" to continue with the ceremony (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:18). The priest will ask them the following questions:

"N. and N. have you come here to enter into marriage without coercion, freely and wholeheartedly? Are you prepared, as you follow the path of marriage, to love and honour each other for as long as you both shall live? Are you prepared to accept children lovingly from God and to bring them up according to the law of Christ and his church?" (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:18).

This differs slightly within the church of England as it is stated as follow:

"N, will you take N to be your husband/wife? To love him/her, comfort him/her, honour him/her and protect him/her, and, forsake all others, be faithful to him/her as long as you both shall live?"

(The Church of England 2017)

To which they answer, I will, he then asks the people present:

“Will you the family and friends of N and N support and uphold them in their marriage now and in the years to come?”

(The Church of England 2017)

To which they answer that they will. In the church of England, the minister will pray over the couple and ask for God’s blessing to be with them (The Church of England 2017:107).

In the Presbyterian church, there are two different ways the minister can ask consent if both of them are baptised it might have a metaphor of baptism, if one or both of them are not baptised they both are asked in a different way (Presbyterian Church USA 2003:224). The connection between marriage and baptism is established because the picture of Christ and the church is both affirmed in baptism and marriage (Presbyterian Church USA 2003:214). When one is baptised a new way of life is taken up that Christ has called the believer to (Presbyterian Church USA 2003:214). The love of Christ for the church is seen as the picture for husband and wife (Presbyterian Church USA 2003:214). It does not matter in which order the couple is asked consent (Presbyterian Church USA 2003:224). The ceremony may have a place where the parents of both the bride and groom affirm their agreement or blessing on the couple by saying “we do” to what the minister asks (Presbyterian Church USA 2003:224). This is not a necessary step and the minister should use his judgement on this part (Presbyterian Church USA 2003:224). Similarly, we see that the people present for the ceremony are also asked for agreement or blessing over the couple

because of the nature of marriage within society (Presbyterian Church USA 2003:225).

In the Catholic church, the vows between the bride and groom are as follows:

“I, N, take you, N, to be my wife/husband,

I promise to be faithful to you,

In good times and in bad,

In sickness and in health,

To love you and to honour you,

All the days of my life.”

(United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:19)

Or

“I, N, take you, N, for my lawful wife,

To have and to hold, from this day forward,

For better, or for worse,

For richer, or for poorer,

In sickness and in health,

To live and to cherish

Until death we do part.”

(United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:19)

If needed, the Priest in a Catholic church, as well as the Presbyterian church, may also ask the vows in the form of a question and the couple can reply “I do” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:20; Presbyterian Church USA 2003:226). The vows said in the church of England are very similar to the second example of vows used in the Catholic church, with the exception that they added the following at the end:

“According to God’s holy laws.

In the presence of God, I make this vow.”

(The Church of England 2017:108)

The word “obey” may be added to the wife’s vows after the word cherish (The Church of England 2017:105). This is omitted in most churches today unless the bride asks for it to be included in the vow, this is because of the feminism movements concept of equality between men and women (Monger 2013:711). Equality between men and women is promoted in doing this, a woman is not to be secondary to her husband. In the Church of England as well as the Presbyterian church join right hands and say their vows, after the groom has finished they loosen hands and join them again so the bride can do the same, after the vow, they let go of each other’s hands (The Church of England 2017:108; Presbyterian Church USA 2003:226).

3.3.4. Dowry or Las Arras

“Las Arras (or Arrhae or Las Arras matrimoniales), otherwise known as wedding tokens or unity coins, are 13 gold coins in an ornate box or chest that the bridegroom presents to the bride during the wedding ceremony in Spain, Latin America, and other Hispanic cultures. The 13 coins are said to represent Jesus Christ and the 12 apostles. Blessed by the priest and passed from the bridegroom to the bride, the coins are symbolic of a pledge by the groom to support his wife. The coins in the box are also said to represent the dowry given to the bride and to bring good wishes for a prosperous future together.”

(Monger 2013:32)

In the Catholic tradition, if Las Arras are appropriate to the cultural practice, for example in Spain, this may follow after the couple has given each other the rings (Monger 2013:32). The Las Arras may be present and may be blessed by the priest (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:22). The priest blesses the Las Arras, the husband receives them and gives them to his wife (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:22). The Las Arras is a sign of God’s blessing and is a sign of good things to come in their marriage (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:22).

Historically, dowry payments were also a part of the Christian marriage ceremonies, but this tradition has faded and is not used in modern Christianity. There are traditions as seen above that can be seen as a dowry. In modern

Christianity, a civil contract is signed by both the bride and groom that will determine what will happen in case of divorce. This, together with the partners will, determine what happens with the couple's assets in case one of the spouses dies.

3.3.5. Crowning

In the early church (100CE-700CE), it was a lot more common to see that the bride and groom wore crowns. This was an adaptation from other non-Christian origin and was later frowned upon because it did not have a Christian origin (Monger 2013:198). It should be noted that the early churches reinstated these practices and gave it a Christian meaning after it was frowned upon (Monger 2013:198).

The crowning of the bride and groom is practised within the marriage ceremony of the Greek Orthodox church. The priest takes turns crowning the groom and the bride. After each he says the following three times:

*“The servant of God (Name) is crowned for the servant of God,
(Name), in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy
Spirit. Amen”*

(Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America n.d.)

The crown of the groom is held in the right hand, and the bride's in the left of the priest (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America n.d.). He then places the crowns on their heads and asks God to “crown them with glory and honour” (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America n.d.). In the Catholic church and Presbyterian

church, the bride may be crowned, however this is not the norm (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:11; Presbyterian Church USA 2003).

3.3.6. Eucharist

In the Catholic church, Eucharist may be prepared after the hymns have been sung and with the correct formulas for Eucharist used at a marriage ceremony (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:23). Eucharist is used within marriage ceremonies because marriage ceremonies are considered a sacrament in the Catholic church (Carmody 1990:45). Eucharist is not just a sacrament, but it is also considered to be a sacrament that is used with other sacraments (Carmody 1990:45). Marriage would be celebrated without Mass if circumstances so dictate, for instance when a Catholic marries a baptised non-Catholic (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:10,27). A marriage ceremony without communion can also be performed by a deacon in the Catholic church (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:39).

The church of England also celebrates marriage ceremonies with and without holy communion. It is fitting to use holy communion soon after being married, thus it may be incorporated into the marriage ceremony (The Church of England 2017:134). The ceremony with holy communion only differs slightly from the ceremony without communion in the church of England. The ceremony above shows the ceremony without the use of holy communion within the church of England but the ceremony with communion is similar. The main difference is that the gospel will be one of the biblical readings if communion is used, with this being said before the reading of the gospel and alleluia is sung before the reading (The Church of England 2017:122). The only time communion is used in the

Presbyterian church with a marriage ceremony is when the ceremony is held on a Sunday that would have included holy communion regardless of the marriage ceremony (Presbyterian Church USA 2003:230).

In the Greek Orthodox church, the priest will then read John 2:1-11 and the choir then sing glory to God (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America n.d.). This text is read before the use of the common cup because it stipulates how Jesus turned water into wine in Cana at a wedding (Monger 2013:540). The practice shows both Jesus's blessing of the union and his presence on this day (Monger 2013:540). The priest will extend the Gospel book towards the couple, and they will both kiss it (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America n.d.). The priest then prays for mercy and blessings on the couple. He asks for an angelic guide, and the pardoning of sins (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America n.d.). The choir then sings the Our Father (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America n.d.). The priest then blesses the common cup, and they drink from it three times, first the groom and then the bride while saying:

"I drink from the cup of salvation I will call upon the name of the Lord."

(Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America n.d.)

The bride and groom drink from the same cup showing their unity as a married couple, bread will also be shared (Monger 2013:540).

3.3.7. Feasting

Most Christian marriage celebrations have a feast after the ceremony. As the bride and groom exit the ceremony the guests throw confetti at them as they exit the church (Pleck 2000:207). Confetti can consist of many things such as flower petals, wheat, rice and bubbles (Mills 1969:7). Confetti thrown at the bride and groom is a sign of good wishes of fertility (Mills 1969:7). The concept rests upon the idea that the number of petals or grain should either be translated to the fertility of the bride and groom or the luck and happiness they should experience in their marriage. This is a very joyous moment shared between the couple and their guests.

The cutting of the cake is seen as an action done together by the bride and groom. This may be the symbol of working together in their new unified lives (Kightly 1986:230). The cake is a symbol of good fortune as well as having a very old connection with fertility (Williamson 1994:162). As a sign of fertility and having abundance the tradition dictates that the wedding cake should be very rich and packed with fruit (Williamson 1994:162). But today this tradition of the fruitcake may be replaced with different types of cakes (Williamson 1994:162).

It is custom for the bride to throw her bouquet of flowers into a crowd of single girls, and for the groom to throw the garter to the single men; the one who catches it is in superstition the lucky one to be married next (Pleck 2000:211; Monger 2013:302). A garter is a piece of cloth that is usually beautifully crafted with lace and ribbons. It is made from an elastic type of fabric and is worn by the bride just above her knee (Monger 2013:302). The garter comes from the 17th and 18th century when men would have tried their best to get their hands on the bride's

garter because the garter worn by the bride was considered good luck or even magic (Monger 2013:302). Today the garter is removed by the groom after the ceremony and then thrown to the single men. It is believed that good luck within the garter will make the recipient the next to marry (Monger 2013:302). The throwing of the bouquet is a late 19th-century creation, as this was the time that bouquets became more popular. Before introducing this practice, the bride wore flowers in her hair (Monger 2013:83). This tradition ties back in with the garter tradition and is thus also associated with magic and luck that in the end makes the winner of the piece the next in line to marry.

3.4. Post-marriage ceremonial traditions

This section elaborates on the components of the post-marriage ceremony traditions in Christianity and includes consummation and honeymoon, ceremonies and church support after the marriage ceremony

3.4.1. Consummation and honeymoon

The consummation of the marriage is a very important part of the marriage rituals. Sex for the Christian church belongs within marriage and is shunned if used outside of the context of marriage. The honeymoon is a time the bride and groom take after the wedding, usually to go on vacation together. It is traditional that the groom plans this trip and the bride should not know where they are going. Today this is not always the case anymore. Although the concept is still practised, the couple plans the trip together. On the honeymoon, the bride and groom can take the time to be in each other's company without the family hovering over them. The concept of a honeymoon started in the 18th to 19th century among the

aristocrats (Monger 2013:352). This was not necessarily seen as a time to go on vacation but was literally seen as the first moon (month) that the couple had to spend together (Monger 2013:352).

In Christianity, the belief is that sexual activity belongs within marriage and this is, therefore, the time that the couple can explore this side of their relationship. “Bride-by-capture” was a problem in the past when the groom would literally kidnap the bride and marry her, her family would have a chance to rescue her, and he thus had to hide her away for a month (Monger 2013:352). During this time the bride’s family would come to accept this action and rid themselves of anger, the bride and groom would get to know each other and drink mead, a honeyed wine (Monger 2013:352). This is not practised anymore, but the term honeymoon can also refer to the month after marriage in which it is also custom to drink honeyed wine. Today honeymoons do not last a month as a lot of newlyweds cannot afford to go away so long. It would be especially hard to get that much time off work. Honeyed wine is mostly not a modern practice when going on honeymoon.

3.4.2. Ceremonies or church support

The Church offers support and counselling to engaged couples and newlyweds (The church of England 2017:132). In the Presbyterian church, a ritual may be held for couples who are married by civil law but did not have a religious ceremony (Presbyterian Church USA 2003:320). This ceremony takes place in the same format as previously discussed (Presbyterian Church USA 2003:320).

In the Catholic church, important marriage anniversaries have a ceremony as part of its celebration (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:100). This includes the 25th, 50th and 60th anniversaries (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:100). The priest will state the reason for the ceremony, the husband and wife will thank the Lord for their betrothal, and the priest will bless them (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:100-102). The rings are blessed, and a universal prayer is said (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:101-102). Eucharist may then be celebrated, and the Our Father is prayed (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:103). A blessing of those present is given, and this concludes the ceremony (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:104).

The renewing of vows is also becoming more popular as a way of reaffirming the couple's love for each other in public (Monger 2013:712). This is especially done if the couple had gone through a particularly difficult time and came through it together, or as a romantic gesture and can look a lot like a traditional Christian marriage (Monger 2013:712).

3.5. Important elements

This section elaborates on some important aspects of Christianity's marriage traditions. This will include the wedding attire and the participants.

3.5.1. Wedding attire

This section elaborates on the wedding attire of the bride and groom.

3.5.1.a Bride

In the Christian church, the bride's wedding attire is not in the liturgy. This is mostly not an important part for the church and does not have a religious connection. Thus, this may differ from context and culture. Although it can be seen that the church does not regard this as significant, it is culturally important. If you ask most brides, they will also tell you it is important although it is not a religious part of the ceremony. The buying or trying on wedding dresses can help make the bride feel more like a bride (Gay & Green & Banim 2001:60). All around the world Christian brides wear different types of dresses or other traditional clothes. Because of the spread of Christianity around the world and its nature to incorporate culture, this is a very wide subject.

The dissertation acknowledges that the focus mostly on the traditional Western wedding. Globalisation is changing a lot of traditions, especially regarding the white wedding dress. To discuss the white wedding dress, will give some information about ancient as well as modern influences into the concept of the modern white wedding dress phenomena. The focus will, therefore, be on the Western tradition. Ancient and older forms of this tradition will also be explored.

The white wedding dress is seen in the ancient Egyptian tradition as well as some ancient Greek traditions (McBride-Mellinger 1993:13). In the middle ages, it was unlikely for a bride to wear a veil on her wedding day (McBride-Mellinger 1993:15). The concept of a veil came into fashion between the 11th and 13th century and fell out of fashion in the 16th century (McBride-Mellinger 1993:15-16). The white dress, veil and white cake may all be used as symbols of the purity of the bride (Pleck 2000:214). From the 19th century, the wedding veil became very

prominent (Yarwood 1978:440). Some ancient cultures also used veils for the bride. In ancient Greece and Anglo-Saxon traditions, it was also customary for the brides to wear a veil (McBride-Mellinger 1993:14). The reason for the veil is that the bride is considered to be between life stages and is thus very susceptible to evil (Walker 1988:161). Some old Greek cultures also made the association between the veiling of the bride and the hymen/virginity of the bride (Walker 1988:317).

One of the first modern appearances of a white dress for a bridal gown was princess Philippa in 1406 (McBride-Mellinger 1993:18). The next appearance was from Mary, Queen of the Scots, in 1558. She wore this with her marriage ceremony in France (McBride-Mellinger 1993:18). This was strange as the French traditionally associated mourning with the colour white (McBride-Mellinger 1993:18). But this is not where the modern traditions took flame.

By far one of the most influential dresses was that of Queen Victoria. She married the man that she loved, on the 10th of February 1840, something that was very rare for royalty (McBride-Mellinger 1993:24). This made her wedding a symbol of the ideal wedding of love (McBride-Mellinger 1993:24). She started the big trend of the white dress (McBride-Mellinger 1993:24). The white dress is thus not such an ancient tradition as one may think if one notes the popularity today (Woram 1993:10) The white wedding refers thus to the typical Victorian style wedding (Pleck 2000:205). White became a symbol of innocence and purity (McBride-Mellinger 1993:29). Around this time the concept of the veil also became very popular again (McBride-Mellinger 1993:29)

Wedding gowns are mostly white in Christianity today, as a sign of love and romance and are available in various styles (McBride-Mellinger 1993:42). The modern bride has unlimited options for dress styles, whereas in the past, wedding dresses were more limited to the style of the day (Woram 1993:10). The concept that the white dress stands for purity and the virgin connection is still a very well-known concept within the Western tradition (Gay & Green & Banim 2001:62). Even though the concept is still present this does not mean that all modern brides, as well as their families, have this view. The modern woman can get married in any colour, and even a visibly pregnant bride can wear white today (Gay & Green & Banim 2001:61).

3.5.1.b Groom

The groom's wedding attire does not have any symbolic meaning like that of the bride's dress that may symbolise purity (Pleck 2000:215). This is not really part of the religious part of marriage and therefore not in the liturgy. Most grooms would like to look handsome on the day for his bride. Here are some basic modern history surrounding the groom's attire. There is, of course, groups around the world where the groom's wedding attire is very important and symbolic. I am just going to look at a short modern history surrounding Western traditions. Grooms mostly wore clothes that are the same as their general wardrobe, just more luxurious (Yarwood 1978:438). This would be dictated by the fashion trends of the time (Yarwood 1978:438). Until the 19th century what the groom wore was considerably less significant than the bride's dress (Yarwood 1978:442). In 1830, trousers became the basic wedding clothing for men (Yarwood, 1978:442).

In the 1850s, a tailed coat preferably in black for evening weddings and a lighter grey morning coat for a day wedding were preferable (Yarwood 1978:442). A top hat and gloves were appropriate to round off the men's attire (Yarwood 1978:442). A place for flowers on the groom's coat was high fashion since 1860 (Yarwood 1978:442). Since 1945 this concept has been replaced with the more modern suit (Yarwood 1978:442). The bride and her mother may have a say over what the groom should wear (Pleck 2000:215). Depending on how formal the wedding is, where the wedding will be held, and the local and cultural customs, the groom and male guests' attire may vary considerably in modern times (Bridges & Curtis 2003:136-137).

3.5.2. Participants

This section elaborates on the participants. This will include the bridesmaids and groomsmen.

3.5.2.a Bridesmaids and groomsmen

Being asked to be a bridesmaid or groomsman is a great honour in many Christian traditions. In most Christian weddings, the bridesmaids and groomsmen stand next to the bride and groom and are the first lines of witnesses. Bridesmaids and groomsmen are not a necessity. This is not part of the liturgy but shows in a way the Christian values of loving thy neighbour and supporting one another.

Bridesmaids were once dressed in white, like the bride (Pleck 2000:211-212). The reason for this was so that it would be more difficult to identify the bride to capture or kidnap her (Pleck 2000:214). The other reason for this was to protect the bride against evil spirits (Mills 1969:6). In more modern times, the bridesmaids

should have an active role in planning the wedding as well as have active roles on the wedding day (Williamson 1994:122). The original reason for the groom to have a best man was to protect the bride from being kidnapped (Pleck 2000:230). He should also have protected the groom from rivals on the day of the wedding (Mills 1969:6). Today the best man usually keeps the ring safe on the wedding day (Kightly 1986:230). It is considered bad luck for the bride and groom to see each other on the day of the wedding before the ceremony (Kightly 1986:229). It will be the bridesmaids' and groomsmen's responsibility to make sure they do not see each other.

3.6. Conclusion

This Chapter has explored some of the liturgical and non-liturgical concepts within Christianity. This is not a reflection of all Christian traditions and cultural practices in marriage ceremonies, but only an overview of some of the most common liturgical and non-liturgical features. This should suffice as a guide to identify a typical Western Christian wedding. Christianity will be considered again in Chapter 6, where some of the similarities and differences between Christian, Judaism and Islamic marriage ceremonial rituals will be shown. The next Chapter continues to discuss marriage ceremonial rituals in Judaism.

4. Chapter four: Marriage ceremonial rituals in Judaism

4.1. Introduction

Marriage is widely celebrated and highly valued in Judaism. Marriage is the safe and normal space for sexual activity and procreation, thus for fulfilling the first command which is to procreate (Braybrooke 1995:32; Greenberg 1990:5). This is also the safe, ideal place to raise children (Greenberg 1990:33). Marriage is also seen as a form of companionship between husband and wife (Greenberg 1990:33). Marriage is used as an image of God's covenant with Israel (Braybrooke 1995:33). Marriage is not considered optional in Judaism, and there will be an expectation for a single person of marriage age to get married (Cohn-Sherbok 2003:105).

This Chapter will provide an overview of Jewish marriage. There are several Jewish communities around the world, and all of them have a unique way of celebrating marriage. I will be focusing on the Orthodox Jewish tradition in general as well as the Reformed Jewish tradition in general. A lot of the traditions overlap, but some are unique. Just like other religions the marriage tradition has also evolved over time. The Chapter, therefore, provides the general idea of Jewish marriage ceremonial rituals. This does not, however, reflect every Jewish tradition and it should be noted that there are traditions that will differ from this Chapter's perspectives.

Pre-marriage ceremony traditions will be explored; this will include the *Aufruf*, *purifying rituals and religious art*. The marriage ceremonies themselves will also be discussed. It is important to remember that in modern Judaism the marriage

ceremony is in combination with a betrothal ceremony (Monger 2013:427). Having the betrothal and marriage ceremonies together helps with financial implications as the families do not have to pay for two ceremonies (Lamm 1991:147). The ceremonies were once, a year apart (Lamm 1991:147). The fact that the ceremonies are held together makes it possible for the couple to cohabitate and this dissolved a lot of problems (Lamm 1991:147). Such an arrangement also makes it easier in challenging times, like war, to marry and go along with the spouse if they have to relocate. It also takes away the pressure for the couple not to be intimate within the betrothal year as the ceremonies are now held together (Lamm 1991:147). Because it is held together in modern times, it will be discussed under *marriage ceremonial rituals* rather than addressing it under *pre-marriage rituals*. The main topics for *the marriage ceremonial ritual* section are *fasting* on the day of the ceremony, the *date and location* of the ceremony, the *Ketubah, Bedeken, Chuppah, Kiddushin, Nissuin*, breaking of the glass, *Yichud, Seudat Mitzvah* and *Shevah Berachot*. Post-marriage rituals will also be discussed under this heading the *first week and year after the marriage ceremony*. Other *important elements* will then be presented, under the following headings, the *wedding attire* for the *bride*, the *groom*, the *wedding ring* as well as important *participants and community*.

4.2. Pre-marriage ceremonial traditions:

This section elaborates on the components of pre-marriage ceremony traditions in Judaism and includes: *Aufruf, purifying rituals and religious art*.

4.2.1. Aufruf

Traditionally the groom recites a blessing over the Torah, on the Sabbath before the wedding, or another day of the week when there is a Torah reading before the marriage ceremony (Lamm 1991:189). The Torah is read by Jewish men close to the groom, they will recite a part of the normal weekly scripture. The men will also recite blessings over the Torah before and after each reading. This is considered a big honour to the people who are asked to perform the readings (Posner n.d.). The groom gives the blessing, and the congregation shouts “*Mazel Tov*” (good luck) (Lamm 1991:189). This has its origin in the medieval times, European countries had kept the officiant responsible for making sure that the marriage was legal (Lamm 1991:189). Thus, with the public announcement in the synagogue anyone that knows of legal reasons why they may not be wed must speak up (Lamm 1991:189). This ceremony is called the *Aufruf* (Lamm 1991:189). The legal reasons behind this ceremony point back to the civil side of marriage.

The bride is not present for this ceremony in Orthodox Judaism (Lamm 1991:189). A week before the marriage ceremony the bride and groom are separated, they may not meet unless they are with supervision (Lamm 1991:188). It is preferred that they do not meet at all in this time as the bride and groom’s longing should grow for one another’s company on the day (Chabad n.d.). The origin of this tradition is unknown (Lamm 1991:188). There is also a seven-day cleansing period before the marriage ceremony (Monger 2013:429). In this time the bride and groom will go through purifying rituals that will be discussed later in this Chapter under the heading purifying rituals and religious art. This is part of

the reason why the bride would not attend this ceremony. In Reformed Judaism, the bride and her family will however attend the ceremony (Silverman 1970:206). In Reformed Judaism, the Rabbi will ask God to bless the bride and groom's relationship on this day (Silverman 1970:206). In the Eastern Jewish community, the groom does this ceremony on the Sabbath after the marriage ceremony (Cohn-Sherbok 2003:540). Thus, the ceremony varies according to the different Jewish traditions.

Some confetti made up of nuts and raisins may be thrown at the groom after this blessing, as a fertility symbol (Lamm 1991:190 Posner n.d.). This is also an age-old tradition that extends to the marriage ceremony as well (Lamm 1991:190). Nuts, usually almonds, are considered bitter and sweet just as the marriage may be (Lamm 1991:190). The groom may also be thrown with candy (Cohn-Sherbok 2003:540). The guests may throw barley in front of the bride and groom, on the day of the marriage ceremony, as a wish that their offspring may be plentiful (Monger 2013:430). The couple can be thrown with rice as well for the same reason (Cohn-Sherbok 2003:540). This is all done as a sign of fertility, but it is also a sign of joy.

4.2.2. Purifying rituals and religious art

Purifying rituals are important in the Jewish tradition. The day before the ceremony takes place the bride must immerse herself in a ritual bath (Monger 2013:52). The groom may also undergo this ritual, if it is not possible for him to undergo this ritual he should purify himself in another way, intense study of the sacred scripture will have the same effect for men (Lamm 1991:194). The week before the wedding, intense study of scripture is good for both the bride and

groom to ensure that they are pure on the day of the ceremony. This bath is known as a Mikvah (Lamm 1991:191). Both men and women use the Mikvah as a way of purification (Lamm 1991:191). It may be used after menstruation as a woman may not have physical contact with men during menstruation, the Mikvah is considered purifying (Lamm 1991:191). The person undergoing the ritual bath must be completely immersed in the water (Cohn-Sherbok, D & Cohn-Sherbok, L 1999:109).

Before Sabbath, Mikvah may also be used as well as before holy days (Lamm 1991:191). The Mikvah may be used to initiate new members into the Jewish faith (Lamm 1991:191). A thankful blessing of sanctification may be recited when being immersed into the bath (Lamm 1991:191). Marriage is not a bad or un-pure relationship it is rather a very pure and precious concept (Lamm 1991:191). This is a symbol of how sacred marriage is and a symbol of the bride's and groom's understanding of this relationship (Lamm 1991:191). The person undergoing Mikvah must be clean before being immersed, this includes grooming of nails and hair (Cohn-Sherbok, D & Cohn-Sherbok, L 1999:109). Nails must be clipped, and some married woman shave their hair off while others just groom their hair thoroughly (Cohn-Sherbok, D & Cohn-Sherbok, L 1999:109). Being cleaned by the Mikvah on the outside is symbolic of being cleaned on the inside (Braybrooke 1995:33). It has a deep meaning and is not just a hollow ritual. It would also seem that if this ritual is done, it is treated with much respect. The Mikvah is thus used on different occasions and does not only play a role in purification in marriage celebration as seen above, on all the occasions it is also used for the reason of purification.

Henna is used on the bride and groom in the Kurdish communities within Judaism (Monger 2013:448). This is not a widely practised ritual. Henna is used on two occasions, first on the Thursday before the ceremony takes place. This is not the true Henna night (Monger 2013:448). The second night, true Henna is used on the night before the wedding (Monger 2013:448). Henna is performed on the bride, groom and a small child to avoid evil (Monger 2013:448). It is mostly just applied to their hands especially on the palm (Monger 2013:448). The morning of the wedding the bride and groom may separately take a bath in the nearest river (Monger 2013:52). Henna is done to protect the couple from the evil eye (Cohn-Sherbok 2003:540). The evil eye is a concept of forces that can bring bad luck and sometimes these forces are unseen, but it can also be a person (Monger 2013:268). There are times when people are more vulnerable to the evil eye, this is usually when one is moving from one phase of life to another (Monger 2013:268). Thus, when two people enter into marriage and are between phases of a single life to a binding couple's life one is more vulnerable to the evil eye (Monger 2013:268).

4.3. Marriage ceremonial rituals:

This section elaborates on the components of marriage ceremony traditions in Judaism. It includes *fasting* on the day of the ceremony, the *date and location* of the ceremony, the *Ketubah*, *Bedeken*, *Chuppah*, *Kiddushin*, *Nissuin*, *breaking of the glass*, *Yichud*, *Seudat Mitzvah* and *Shevah Berachot*.

4.3.1. Fasting

The bride and groom traditionally fast on the wedding day (Lamm 1991:194; Braybrooke 1995:34). Fasting has more than one purpose in mind. On the day of

the wedding, the bride's and groom's sins are forgiven, therefore fasting is appropriate (Lamm 1991:195). The forgiveness of sins is the main reason for fasting on the wedding day, but it has some other benefits as well. This helps the bride and groom not to give themselves over to alcohol on the day of the wedding or the previous night (Lamm 1991:195). The Westernised bachelor's or bachelorette's celebrations the night before the wedding will, therefore, be inappropriate (Lamm 1991:195). The bride and groom are allowed to eat if it becomes too difficult; they should rather eat than become faint, but they should stay away from alcohol (Lamm 1991:195). The fast is broken after the ceremony when the bride and groom enjoy their alone time, also known as *Yichud* (Lamm 1991:195). This will be discussed in more detail under the heading *Yichud*, later in this Chapter.

Certain prayers are customary on and around the day of the ceremony (Lamm 1991:196). The following prayers are used and found in the prayer books: Anenu, Vidui, al Chey and Shelah (Lamm 1991:196). These prayers are used, on days when fasting is required, for confession of sins and for happiness through sanctification (Lamm 1991:196). Thus, on the day where the bride's and groom's sins are forgiven, and a holy alliance has formed these prayers are appropriate.

4.3.2. Date and location

A marriage ceremony is not to be held on a Sabbath (Lamm 1991:180). This is because the Sabbath is a holy day. No contract agreement may be done on the Sabbath (Lamm 1991:180). A day of the ceremony may also not be permitted if it requires preparation for the ceremony on the Sabbath (Lamm 1991:180). Other holy days may not be used, mainly because the bride and groom may not be

intimate on these days (Lamm 1991:180-181). The other reason is that extreme circumstances of joy may not be mixed (Lamm 1991:180-181). Days of mourning, which include personal mourning or days of great sadness may also not be mixed with extreme joy (Lamm 1991:181). This is to ensure that the emotions of the wedding day are appropriately worked through and is not made more difficult by other emotions. The ceremony may not be in the bride's menstruation period or the week after her menstruation (Cohn-Sherbok 2003:540). The rules around the menstrual period are not always used in the Reformed Jewish tradition anymore (Cohn-Sherbok 2003:541). This is probably because of the feminist movement, that advocates menstruation as a natural process and should not be seen as impure.

The date of the wedding is therefore very carefully planned out and not just random, this also makes it difficult if the wedding date is to be moved for any reason. The fact that it may not be in the time of the bride's menstruation period as well as the week after menstruation already takes away two weeks in a month. Taking into consideration that the ceremony may also not take place on a Sabbath or a holy day, may also take some few day out of the month, this will depend on the month in question. The date is carefully picked out and if it is moved great consideration should be taken into a new date.

Tradition dictates that the groom's house or the courtyard of the synagogue should be used for the ceremony (Monger 2013:121). Traditionally, the *Chuppah* should be placed outside, and this is a sign of fertility as their offspring should be multiple as the stars are in heaven (Monger 2013:121). The *Chuppah* being outside is also a representation of Eden, and the bride and groom are Adam and

Eve (Neusner 2006:62). The canopy may typically be the Israeli flag, it may also be decorated with flowers and tapestries or normal cloth may also be used (Monger 2013:121). The *Chuppah* will be discussed in more detail later in this Chapter under the heading *Chuppah*.

In Reformed Judaism the marriage ceremony may be held inside the Synagogue, this is seen as very inappropriate in the Orthodox Jewish tradition and will not be done (Monger 2013:396). One of the main reasons why the Orthodox Jewish tradition is against this practice is because Christians usually have their ceremonies inside the church. This practice is avoided because the temple is a holy and sacred space; this will also violate the Torah (Pleck 2000:210). It is not just practised but also encouraged in Reformed Judaism to have the ceremony in the synagogue (Silverman 1970:205). This is thus a very controversial topic among different Jewish communities. It may be held at the bride's house as well, but this is not considered traditional (Lamm 1991:183). The wedding may even be held in a venue setting in modern times (Lamm 1991:184). It is important to consider the symbolic part of the choice in venue to set the proper mood for the ceremony (Lamm 1991:184). The venue itself is not handled in such a strict traditional way, although a ceremony within the synagogue is widely debated. The Reformed Jewish tradition encouraging marriage inside the synagogue may be a sign of distinguishing themselves from the Orthodox tradition. It may also be said that there can be a Westernisation influence as the Christian church tends to have weddings inside the church. As long as there has been a consideration of the significant meaning of the venue, it should be met with approval.

4.3.3. Ketubah

This is the first step in the marriage ceremonial ritual. The groom in this step puts his signature on the *Ketubah* (Cohn-Sherbok 2003:540). This was always one of the most important parts of a Jewish marriage ceremony (Monger 2013:433). This tradition dates further back than the traditional Jewish wedding ring (Monger 2013:433). This tradition is of utmost importance because Jewish law forbids a man to live with his wife without the *Ketubah* (Monger 2013:433). If a woman lives with a man without a *Ketubah*, she is not a wife, but she is considered a concubine (Lamm 1991:198). If the *Ketubah* is lost, it must be replaced (Lamm 1991:198). The *Ketubah* is read out of respect and tradition during the ceremony. Some Reformed Jewish traditions do not use the *Ketubah* anymore (Silverman 1970:205). Maurice Lamm describes the *Ketubah* as:

"It is a statement of law that provides the framework of love"

(Lamm 1991:198)

The *Ketubah* is a part of the ceremony specific to the groom (Greenberg 1990:8). The *Ketubah's* origin dates between 5BCE and 6BCE as there is evidence of the *Ketubah* in this time but it did change a lot over time to today's modern version (Monger 2013:433). The true purpose of the *Ketubah* is to make it more difficult for a man to divorce his wife and if he does divorce her, it ensures that she is taken care of financially (Monger 2013:434). It also includes inheritance rights for the bride and their offspring if he dies (Lamm 1991:198). The *Ketubah* does not always have the important role it previously had in protecting the bride as seen above (Monger 2013:182).

The documents were once plain but ever since the 12th- and into the 13th-century Rabbis recommended that the space around the text be filled (Monger 2013:434). This was done so the text could not later be altered (Monger 2013:434). The empty space was filled with artwork, and so the document became art (Monger 2013:434). The bride and groom could be honoured in this art if they have biblical names by depicting biblical stories around the text (Monger 2013:434). It became a very big symbol of status in time with families trying to make more elaborate and expensive *Ketubahs* as a sign of their wealth (Monger 2013:435). The *Ketubah* may be hung in the new home of the bride and groom (Cohn-Sherbok, D & Cohn-Sherbok, L 1999:107). The *Ketubah* thus has more than one purpose and is not just a legal document but a piece of art.

The Rabbi who will officiate at the wedding will be present for this (Greenberg 1990:8). The groom will read and agree to the marriage contract for the ceremony to continue (Monger 2013:428). The Rabbi hands the groom a piece of cloth like a handkerchief (Greenberg 1990:8). Two males should bear witness to this event, and they will also sign the *Ketubah* (Greenberg 1990:8). The *Ketubah* document will specify conditions for all that are involved in this process (Greenberg 1990:8).

Traditionally the *Ketubah* involves an agreement of the obligations of the husband; providing food, clothing and conjugal acts (Monger 2013:428). He does not buy her in this way and she is not his property (Lamm 1991:198). The fact that this is the part of the ceremony specific to the groom also enhances the fact that the *Ketubah* states his obligations and not that of the bride. The *Ketubah* will be read to the bride later in the ceremony (Monger 2013:428). This will be done first in the original Aramaic and then a translation can be read in English or

another preferred language (Monger 2013:435). The wife agrees to the terms stated, as proposed by her husband, for them to be married (Lamm 1991:198). The *Ketubah* was created for the protection of the bride in a patriarchal society (Lamm 1991:198). This was a very progressive document protecting a woman's basic rights in antiquity. This is used today in a way to honour the age-old tradition as times have changed. The relationship between men and women have changed, women are more empowered and less vulnerable. When this originated, women were particularly vulnerable as the outside world was the man's domain, she could not earn money to support herself and her children. Today women have more rights and more control over the outside world.

The bride's dowry is a gift by her father to start her new home and will also be given recognition in the *Ketubah* (Lamm 1991:202). The amount may be equal to a woman's wardrobe for a year (Lamm 1991:202). If the bride has her own property this is also named separately and does not become the groom's property after they are married (Lamm 1991:202). Thus, she is still her own being in the legal and financial right. This points back to a civil part of marriage, marriage as a contract or legal agreement.

4.3.4. Bedeken

The *Bedeken* or veiling ceremony is a very old tradition. It is a Hebrew word that means to check or make sure (Monger 2013:428). This goes back to the tradition of Jacob that was tricked into marrying the wrong bride (Monger 2013:428). This tradition is thus a symbol that the groom acknowledges that the bride is the woman he agrees to marry (Monger 2013:428). The groom is then taken to the

bride, traditionally accompanied by male family and friends, they may be singing as they arrive (Greenberg 1990:8).

This part of the ceremony is only done if this is the bride's first marriage (Lamm 1991:207). The bride usually awaits the groom in a seated position, accompanied by female family and friends (Greenberg 1990:8). The groom then approaches the bride and puts the veil over her face (Greenberg 1990:8). This is witnessed by female and male, family and friends (Greenberg 1990:8). The veil is a symbol of the bride's dignity and modesty, but the veil is only symbolic in this way if it is put over the bride's face by the groom or he must at least be present (Lamm 1991:208-209).

The bride's and groom's fathers may now both bless the bride, usually while placing their hands on her head (Greenberg 1990:8). The Rabbi may also bless the bride instead of the fathers at this point depending on the couple's preference (Monger 2013). The groom may also give a blessing when he veils the bride (Lamm 1991:207). The words of blessing may look as follows:

“Our sister, sister, may you become the mother of thousands of ten thousand... The Lord make you as Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and Leah.”

(Monger 2013:429)

Some Reformed Jewish traditions do not practice this *Bedeken* ceremony (Cohn-Sherbok 2003:541). It is seen as a sexist tradition by those who do not practice this anymore and has thus been abolished.

4.3.5. Chuppah

From here the marriage ceremony moves to the *Chuppah*; the physical place (structure) where the marriage ceremony takes place. The *Chuppah* plays a very important role in the marriage ceremony. Traditionally the bride and groom are accompanied by their parents (Greenberg 1990:8). Not all Reformed Jewish traditions use the *Chuppah* anymore (Silverman 1970:205). The role of the parents walking with the bride and groom is considered a Mitzvah, or an honour (Monger 2013:429). The family and society play a key role and the marriage ceremony is not just about the bride and groom (Greenberg 1990:8-9). The bride may be escorted by her mother and her father as her father then does a giving away of the bride but traditionally she is escorted by her mother and mother in law (Monger 2013:314). The groom is traditionally escorted by both his father and his father in law, today it is not uncommon that he be escorted by both his parents as well (Lamm 1991:213). The escorts may carry candles (as a sign of celebration) that are lit while walking with the bride and groom (Cohn-Sherbok 2003:541; Lamm 1991:213).

The *Chuppah* has a lot of different symbolic meanings. It symbolises the new household they now share (Monger 2013:428; Greenberg 1990). The *Chuppah* is a rectangular shape and should be open on all four sides to symbolise the new household's hospitality toward the community (Monger 2013:428). It is seen as protection to the bride and groom (Lamm 1991:210). There are not a lot of objects inside the *Chuppah* this symbolises that physical objects are not what makes a marriage, but rather the spiritual part of life and deeds like affection and sacrifice

(Monger 2013:428). The same goes for the fact that there is no floor just the pillars and the top (Monger 2013:361).

The roof of the *Chuppah* is very fragile this symbolises how fragile the bride and grooms' new life is (Lamm 1991:212). The *Chuppah* as we know it today is used from the 16th century (Monger 2013:396). The *Chuppah* is a symbol of God's creative process continuing within the couple's marriage (Monger 2013:429). The *Chuppah* is also seen as the groom's house and by going underneath the *Chuppah* the bride goes under the groom's protection out of her parents' house (Monger 2013:121). The groom should be the first one to reach the *Chuppah* this is also symbolic of his home (Lamm 1991:212). The *Chuppah* is supported by four poles (Braybrooke 1995:34).

When the bride and groom have both reached the *Chuppah* she walks around him seven times (Greenberg 1990:9). This might also be three times depending on the Jewish tradition (Lamm 1991:213). The mothers of the bride and groom may follow her (Greenberg 1990:9). There is more than one explanation for why the bride does this. By walking around the groom, the bride creates an unseen barrier, she then steps inside the barrier and in this way, they are separated from the rest of the world (Greenberg 1990:9). This tradition is said to go back to Jeremiah 31:22, this verse states that a woman shall walk around a man (Greenberg 1990:9). It can also be considered a sign of the seven days of creation (Monger 2013:429). This tradition also points to the seven marriage blessings that are to follow (Monger 2013:429). Seven is a very important symbolic number in Judaism (Monger 2013:429). The number seven can also be seen in the seven-day celebration after the ceremony (Monger 2013:429). There

is also a seven-day cleansing period before the marriage ceremony (Monger 2013:429). The bride creates a barrier between the evil influences of the world and forces her husband may come to face like foolishness when walking around him (Lamm 1991:213). This is a symbol that the groom is now considered a full person and he is not single anymore after she has walked around him seven times (Lamm 1991:214). This is also a sign that the circle is meant for the bride and groom and that others may not step inside (Lamm 1991:214). The bride and groom leave their parents as Genesis 2:24 states (Lamm 1991:214). She makes a circle with him at the centre, this is a symbol of how married life may be (Lamm 1991:214). This may also be a sign that as a pebble lands in water and creates ripples so also their love must ripple out towards the community (Lamm 1991:214).

When the woman comes to a stop she traditionally stands on the groom's right, as Psalm 45:10 states:

“At the Right hand doth the queen stand Psalm 45:9”

(Monger 2013:429)

It is important to note considering this Psalm above that both the bride and groom are viewed as royalty on the day of their wedding (Monger 2013:429). It is a tradition that everyone at the wedding stands with respect to the bride and groom unless they are elderly or if they are ill (Lamm 1991:215). A balance of power takes place within the marriage under the Chuppah (Monger 2013:122). If the groom puts his right foot on her left foot during the blessing he will have control,

if she puts her left foot on his right it would be the other way around (Monger 2013:122).

4.3.6. Kiddushin

Kiddushin is the betrothal part of the ceremony, as seen above this was always done separately but today they are held together. In the Jewish tradition, the presence of two blessings is to be noted in the ceremony (Greenberg 1990:9). In both ceremonies, wine is used. The first one is said over the wine by the Rabbi (Greenberg 1990:9). After the Rabbi does this, he will present the wine to the groom and then the bride, they will individually sip the wine from one cup (Greenberg 1990:9). The bride and groom share a cup with each blessing, but each blessing has its own cup, this helps to remember that both traditions are important in their own right (Lamm 1991:215). They share the cup of wine as they will also now share their lives together (Monger 2013:429). When the bride drinks from the wine the two mothers of the couple may lift her veil and lowers it again (Lamm 1991:219). This shows the importance of family and community again.

Wine can be used for evil to intoxicate, or it can be used to purify, thus it has symbolic meaning and uses. This is also how a marriage can be sacred and pure or toxic and evil it all depends on how it is used (Lamm 1991:190). The second blessing is the act of marriage that will proceed with the *Nissuin* part of the ceremony (Greenberg 1990:9). The wine should be sipped, it is not necessary for the bride and groom to finish the glass (Lamm 1991:216). The purpose of the wine is to sanctify the couple in their bond and married life (Lamm 1991:216). The wine also separated the couple from things that are unhealthy within marriage (Lamm 1991:216). Wine is a sign of joy and used in Jewish feasts, as marriage

is a joyous day, wine is appropriate (Lamm 1991:216). The Sabbath and wedding are similar in some ways such as the use of wine (Lamm 1991:17). The Sabbath is like a bride, so also a man should react to the Sabbath as to his bride, by rejoicing, dressing his best and showing respect (Lamm 1991:217). Thus, as the Sabbath is seen as a bride and celebrated as a wedding and the two share characteristics such as the wine (Lamm 1991:217).

Kiddushin translated, means to sanctify or a holy relationship (Frank 2010:205; Kalir 1980:53). The word thus reflects the holiness and sacredness of Jewish marriage (Frank 2010:205). In Deuteronomy 24:1 it is stated that a man must acquire a wife (Lamm 1991:148). It is important to note that a woman is never seen as her husband's property in modern Judaism (Lamm 1991:152). This is not an exchange of property but rather a change in status from unmarried to married (Lamm 1991:152). The proposing of marriage is thus an act in the betrothal ceremony and not something that is done beforehand. There is an engagement period, but this accrues before the proposal. The act of proposal is therefore where the groom places the ring on the bride's index finger and says the following words:

*"Behold, though art consecrated to me, according to the laws of
Moses and Israel"*

(Greenberg 1990:9).

This is said in Hebrew as well especially in the Orthodox Jewish traditions:

"Harei at me'kudeshet li be'tabaat zo ke'dat mosheh ve'yisrael."

(Lamm 1991:219)

The words in the ceremony “to me”, make the bride exclusive to the groom (Lamm 1991:220). If the bride accepts the ring it is considered in traditional Orthodox Judaism as her consent (Greenberg 1990:9). Marriage should never be by force and thus the consent of both parties is very important (Lamm 1991:153). According to the laws of Moses, all marriages are according to the laws and that conveys a certain understanding not just of the ceremony but the marriage that will come from it (Lamm 1991:220). Although a lot of different interpretations have been given over the years it is an important phrase even today to the couple and the community (Lamm 1991:220). One of the interpretations is that the sentence:

*“Behold, though art consecrated to me, according to the laws of
Moses and Israel”*

(Greenberg 1990:9).

has 32 characters, 32 is represented by *lev* in Hebrew and it means heart (Lamm 1991:220)

In some Jewish Reformed traditions, the Rabbi asks for consent from the bride and groom (Cohn-Sherbok 2003:542). The bride may also give the groom a ring in Reformed Judaism and say the same words to him as he said to her (Braybrooke 1995:34). If the bride gives the groom a ring it is put on the third finger, and it is as per tradition on the left hand (Braybrooke 1995:34).

The marriage contract or *Ketubah* is read by the Rabbi in the original Aramaic (Greenberg 1990:9). The person who reads the *Ketubah* must hand the

document to the groom and the bride will then receive it from him after the reading (Greenberg 1990:9). The *Ketubah* is hers to keep in a safe place at home, in the ceremony she may pass it to someone to keep it safe for the time being (Greenberg 1990:9). The Rabbi may now say a few words to the couple (Greenberg 1990:9). In traditional Judaism, if the *Ketubah* has not been read and given, it would not be possible for the Nissuin blessing to be given (Lamm 1991:223). In some modern countries like England and South Africa a civil contract or marriage register will also need to be signed for it to be recognised as a legal marriage (Monger 2013:429; Family Law n.d.). When the *Ketubah* is given to the bride and groom the contract may be signed (Greenberg 1990:429).

4.3.7. Nissuin

The last part of the ceremony are the seven blessings (Greenberg 1990:9). This blessing assures the couple that they may live together as spouses (Monger 2013:429). Each blessing may be read by a different person and is mainly people close to the bride and groom, this may include the Rabbi (Greenberg 1990:9). The blessing is as follows:

“Blessed are though, Lord our G-d, creator of the universe. Who had created joy and gladness, bridegroom and bride, laughter and exultation, pleasure and delight, love, brotherhood, peace, and fellowship. May it be soon, O Lord our G-d, that there be heard in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem the voice of joy and gladness, the voice of bridegroom and bride, the jubilant voice of bridegrooms from their canopies and the youths

from their feasts of song. Blessed are though, O Lord, who enables bridegroom to rejoice with the bride.”

(Greenberg 1990:9-10)

Or

“Blessed art you, Lord our G-d, king of the universe who hast created the fruit of the vine. Blessed art thou Lord our G-d, King of the universe who has created all things for his glory. Blessed art though, Lord our G-d, King of the universe creator of man. Blessed art though, Lord our G-d, King of the universe who hast made man in his image, after his likeness, and hast prepared from him, out of his very self, a perpetual fabric. Blessed art thou, Lord our G-d, who created man. May she who was barren be exceedingly glad and rejoice when her children are united in her midst in joy. Blessed thou, o Lord, who makes Zion joyful through her children. O make these beloved companions greatly rejoice even as thou didst rejoice thy creation in the garden of Eden as of old. Blessed art though, O Lord, king of the universe, who has created joy and gladness, bridegroom and bride, mirth and exultation pleasure and delight, love brotherhood, peace and fellowship. Soon may there be heard in the cities of Judah and in streets of Jerusalem, the voice of joy and gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the jubilant voice of the bridegroom from their canopies and of youths from their

feasts of songs. Blessed art thou, o Lord, who makes the bridegroom rejoice with the bride.”

(Lamm 1991:223-227)

The blessing differs from translation to translation, but the basic message stays the same. The bride and groom are compared to Adam and Eve throughout the day and in the blessings (Monger 2013:429). The bride and groom are part of the creation story (Braybrooke 1995:34). They are also part of the story of Israel (Braybrooke 1995:34). The couple also reflects a part of the future hopes of Judaism (Braybrooke 1995:34). This is meant for joy and for sadness, a reminder to be happy on the day, to mourn for a sad past and to have hope for the future (Neusner 1979:37). After this blessing has been said the bride and groom will both drink from a glass of wine, a different glass from the first one (Greenberg 1990:10). The two mothers lift the veil of the bride again so she may drink and it is not put over her face again (Lamm 1991:219).

4.3.8. Breaking the glass

The ceremony is then set to end when the groom shatters a glass wrapped in cloth by stomping on it (Greenberg 1990:10). Depending on the tradition of Judaism this is either a different prepared cup or the second blessing (nuptial) glass that may be used (more traditional) (Lamm 1991:228). There are different interpretations of the breaking of the glass as will now be discussed (Greenberg 1990:10). It is a reminder of the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70 BCE (Greenberg 1990:10). Jewish people believe that Jerusalem is a priority and the sorrow that remains is bigger than their most joyous moments (Monger

2013:429). The temple is destroyed, but the bride and groom should now make their own temple through their married lives (Lamm 1991:230). It is also a reminder that the world is not always a joyous or redeemed place (Greenberg 1990:10). This is something to remember within the joys of the day (Greenberg 1990:10). They may rejoice now, but the sadness of Jerusalem must also be remembered (Lamm 1991:229). This act is also interpreted as warding off evil (Monger 2013:429). The breaking of the cup can also symbolise the breaking with the past as they are now married (Lamm 1991:231).

As we can see the most interpretations have to do with the destruction of the temple, the past and evil that may harm them. All this makes sense in the context of the marriage ceremony. It is important to note that a ritual can have more than one meaning. As Ronald Grimes states that:

“A liturgy tries to focus all things through a few things.”

(Grimes 2010:43)

In other words, the reality is being portrayed in rituals, since reality consists of more than one aspect, it would make sense that rituals have more than one interpretation. After this has happened the audience shouts “*Mazel Tov*” (good luck) which is a way of wishing luck on the bride’s and groom’s future together (Greenberg 1990:10). The bride and groom may then walk away from the *Chuppah* (Greenberg 1990:10). Some Reformed Jewish traditions do not practice the breaking of the glass anymore (Silverman 1970:205).

4.3.9. Yichud

After the ceremony has ended and they have left the Chuppah, the bride and groom go to a private room for alone time, this time is called *Yichud* (Greenberg 1990:10). This is needed for Jewish law and is not just a custom (Lamm 1991:231). Some guests will guard the door to ensure that the bride and groom are not disturbed (Greenberg 1990:10). These guests are thus also witnessing to the event (Lamm 1991:231). In ancient times, *Yichud* would have been used to consummate the marriage (Greenberg 1990:10). A token of the bride's virginity, blood, would have been used as a symbol of honour to her and her family (Greenberg 1990:10). Neither consummation or the token is used today, rather *Yichud* is alone time for the couple and is a symbol of the age-old tradition (Greenberg 1990:10). Thus, today this part of the ceremony is symbolic of the consummation of the marriage (Lamm 1991:231).

Traditionally the couple is expected to fast all day, at this point they may share a meal and break this fast (Monger 2013:429). Eating together can be a basic human bonding experience and is thus appropriate for the newlyweds. The breaking of the fast can also be seen as a metaphor for the consummation of the marriage. The couple must be together in private, this is an important part of the ceremony (Lamm 1991:231). This privacy lasts for about 10 minutes (Lamm 1991:231). This is the time that the bride and groom have together before the crowds and photographers keep them busy for the rest of the night (Lamm 1991:231). As a wedding day is a very busy day this is a very good bonding practice. The private time is not practised in all the Reformed Jewish traditions

(Cohn-Sherbok 2003:541). This is probably because this time represents the consummation of the marriage.

4.3.10. Seudat Mitzvah

The feast is a very important part of how Jewish people celebrate marriage (Greenberg 1990:10). The family and friends must join in the feast and enjoy themselves (Monger 2013:429). The community should rejoice in the newlyweds (Lamm 1991:232). The bride and groom will rejoice with their family and friends (Monger 2013:429). This is important to help distract from the stress of the future and truly celebrate the day (Lamm 1991:232). The poor were always invited to the wedding in earlier times, today a donation is given to a charity (Lamm 1991:232). It is important to share one's fortune and happiness on this day with others (Lamm 1991:232).

In Jewish marriage celebration music and dance is a very important element (Monger 2013:441). The music is mostly played by a band (Monger 2013:517). In Orthodox Judaism, the men and women would be separated for the dance, but they would dance together in more Reformed Jewish traditions (Monger 2013:209). The food at the feast must be kosher, a traditional egg bread is commonly used in the feast (Monger 2013:290). Kosher wine must be used during the ceremony and feasts (Lamm 1991:216).

4.3.11. Shevah Berachot

Seven blessings are said as part of the ending of the feast (Greenberg 1990:11). The blessing is the same as the one used in Nissuin (Lamm 1991:233). This blessing is read every day for the first week of the marriage (Lamm 1991:233).

This may be used to remind the bride and groom of their ceremony in the first week of marriage (Lamm 1991:233). This blessing comes after a prayer (Lamm 1991:233). The prayer asks God for relief from suffering, help in being righteous, and blessings onto God (Lamm 1991:233). Two glasses of wine are used here too, first with the prayer and then with the blessings (Lamm 1991:234). For this, at least three *Minyans* should be present for the seven blessings to be read (Lamm 1991:235). The *Minyans* will be explained later in this Chapter under the heading *important participants and community*.

4.4. Post-marriage ceremonial tradition

This section elaborates on the components of post-marriage ceremony traditions in Judaism. It includes *The first week and year after the ceremony*.

4.4.1. The first week and year after the ceremony

Unless it is urgent, the newlyweds must spend as much as possible time together within the first week, preferably not leaving each other's side (Lamm 1991:235). This Jewish seven days of celebrating are just as important as the seven days of mourning when someone has died (Lamm 1991:235). It is an important part of the emotional experience of being a newlywed (Lamm 1991:235). This allows the two individuals enough time to properly process what happened (Lamm 1991:235). In this week, the seven blessings will be said in the evening and morning (Lamm, 1991:235). One *Minyan* must attend this practice (Lamm 1991:235). They may not go on a honeymoon or to work in this week but stay in their own home as to adjust to the new way of their married life (Lamm 1991:235). The bride and groom may in Reformed Judaism do this after the honeymoon (Braybrooke 1995:34-35).

In the first year, the man is also not to take on any new business or go off to war as he needs to be a good husband to his wife and they need to adjust to their new lives as emphasised through the text of Deuteronomy 24:5 (Lamm 1991:235; Goldman n.d.). They must learn to live in love, this is also to help the Jewish community, as divorce does not help the Jewish community's growth (Lamm 1991:235). The couple must:

“learn to live together before you learn to live with others”

(Lamm 1991:236)

This is for the civil, religious and personal part of marriage. This is a good example of how these elements intertwine.

4.5. Important elements

This section elaborates on the important elements that can be encountered in Jewish marriage rituals. These include the *wedding attire, important participants and community*.

4.5.1. Wedding attire

This section elaborates on the wedding attire of the bride and groom as well as the rings used in the ceremony.

4.5.1.a Bride

It is a tradition that a bride should not wear jewellery, and if she does it must be very understated (Monger 2013:429). Wearing too much jewellery is considered offensive (Lamm 1991:186). But wearing colourful jewellery in moderation is acceptable (Lamm 1991:186). Wearing too much jewellery is disrespectful to the

memory of the temple and to the guests that might not be able to afford a lot of jewels (Lamm 1991:186). This is also a sign of equality between the bride and groom (Monger 2013:429). Ancient Rabbis decreed that every bride is beautiful on their wedding day and the guests should show respect to tell the groom that she is beautiful (Monger 2013:429). This was to make sure that guests do not speak falsely on the wedding day and to assure that she is the most beautiful person to the groom (Monger 2013:429). This is especially important in the context of the ancient world where the bride and groom would only meet on the day of the wedding.

The wearing of white is a symbol of purity, not just sexual purity, but purity from sin (Lamm 1991:186). The bride and groom are forgiven of their sins on the day of the wedding (Lamm 1991:186). Most brides wear white on the day of the ceremony, she only does this if she was not married before (Lamm 1991:186). This is a sign of sexual purity, but it also signifies that she went through the purity rights before the wedding as previously seen under the heading *purifying rituals and religious art* (Lamm 1991:186). A veil is also part of the traditional Jewish attire for the bride (Lamm 1991:187).

4.5.1.b Groom

Traditionally the groom will put on a robe called a kittel over his wedding clothes (Lamm 1991:186-187). The kittel is also known as a prayer shawl. (Frank 2010:204) The kittel is white and like the bride's dress is a sign of purity and forgiveness of sins on the day of the ceremony (Lamm 1991:187). A traditional head covering is also worn by the groom (Lamm 1991:187). This head covering

is known as a kippah (Frank 2010:204). The male guests will also wear a kippah on the day of the wedding (Lamm 1991:187).

4.5.1.c Ring

The ring comes in two traditional styles, the first one is ornamental and is basically unwearable as it is in the shape of the temple (Monger 2013:426). This ring is sometimes inscribed with the Jewish words for good luck, “*Mazel Tov*” (Scarsibrick 1993:19). The ring being in the shape of a roof can also be the roof of the couple’s new home (Scarsibrick 1993:19). This ring was used mostly in medieval times (Scarsibrick 1993:19).

The second type of ring is stated by the law that it must be a plain metal ring, with no stones, this will make sure that no one gets misled with the value of the ring (Lamm 1991:221). If the value is misleading it might lead to the marriage being dissolved (Lamm 1991:221). The groom may borrow the ring from someone, but the bride must be aware of this and it must be returned (Lamm 1991:221). Thus, he may also use the bride’s engagement ring (Lamm 1991:221). The ring must touch her skin and may not be put over cloth (Lamm 1991:221). The ring will be worn on the bride’s ring finger but will be placed on her index finger for the ceremony, so it can be properly witnessed (Lamm 1991:221).

This is a crucial part of the ceremony and should be properly witnessed (Lamm 1991:221). There are witnesses set aside specifically to witness this moment, because of the bride’s silent consent (Lamm 1991:221). The groom may also not put the ring on her finger unless he has already spoken the words (Lamm 1991:221):

*“Behold, though art consecrated to me, according to the laws of
Moses and Israel”*

(Greenberg 1990:9).

The value of the ring must also be clear (Lamm 1991:221). The ring is in the form of a circle, this is a perfect form, this symbolises marriage (Lamm 1991:222). The perfect circle is never possible, an imperfection in the ring is good as it shows the flawed human condition in the marriage (Lamm 1991:222). Reformed Jewish tradition is a bit different here, any ring can be used that the bride would like to wear (Silverman 1970:205). In the Reformed Jewish tradition, the bride also gives the groom a ring (Silverman 1970:205; Cohn-Sherbok 2003:541). The emphasis in Reformed Judaism is on equality of bride and groom (Braybrooke 1995:34).

4.5.2. Participants and community

The Rabbi is not seen as the one that performs the marriage, he is rather called the mesader *Kiddushin*, the one that facilitates marriage (Greenberg 1990:9). In civil law, an officiant must pronounce that the bride and groom are now husband and wife (Greenberg 1990:9). When it comes to Judaism it is a bit different as they believe it is an act of two people that act as partners (Greenberg 1990:9). The core of the marriage ceremony in Judaism is a man betrothing a woman (Greenberg 1990:9). Within all the Jewish traditions, Jewish Laws and civil laws it is best for a Rabbi who has been knowledgeable about the field than to use a layman (Lamm 1991:179). The Rabbi helps make the betrothal and marriage an authorised act (Lamm 1991:179). He does not have an influence on their marriage because of this (Lamm 1991:179). He is there to make sure the

ceremony follows the right course and makes sure the bride and groom may legally marry (Lamm 1991:179). It is customary for an Orthodox Rabbi to wear a *Yamelke* (traditional Jewish head covering) (Silverman 1970:260).

If a Reformed Jewish person and an Orthodox Jewish person end up getting married a Rabbi from both traditions may be used (Silverman 1970:206). The same is said for a Reformed Jewish couple that has a close Orthodox family (Silverman 1970:206). Some of the traditional Orthodox elements may also be incorporated in the Reformed Jewish ceremony to keep the peace in the family (Silverman 1970:206). The Rabbi needs to be asked permission for this to happen (Silverman 1970:206).

There must be at least ten adult Jewish men present at the ceremony to be witness to the event (Lamm 1991:185). These men are called *Minyan* and include those who witnessed and signed the *Ketubah* (Lamm 1991:185). Without these witnesses, the *Nissuin* blessing is not possible (Lamm 1991:185). The traditional seven blessings that are recited in the week after the ceremony also needs the presence of at least three of these witnesses (Lamm 1991:185).

Marriage is also not to be celebrated in private but is an event that involves the community (Monger 2013). Although it should be understood that the marriage ceremony is seen as intimate (Neusner 1979:36). Marriage ceremonies celebrate the oneness of two individuals and are done with a public joining (Monger 2013:427). This plays back to the civil community side of marriage, wherein marriage is not just about the couple, it is to the benefit of the community. In Judaism, it is seen as a norm and an ideal state to be married, this is the ideal

place for families to be built. Through this, the community is also built and the communities view marriage as the ideal also continues. The bride's family pays most of the wedding. If they are unable to afford a proper wedding the Jewish community has been known to give money to help finance the wedding (Monger 2013:427). A poor couple can collect as much as half a year's work payment (Monger 2013:552).

Furthermore, the groom's relatives and friends, also known as *shoshbins*, may give money for the celebration, this may help contribute to refreshments in the week of the marriage ceremony (Monger 2013:427-428). These people are usually close friends who also assist on the day of the wedding and with the organising (Monger 2013:60). The *shoshbins* also have a financial obligation to help finance the wedding and they must also give gifts (Monger 2013:60). The groom is to help his *shoshbins* when they marry by returning the favour (Monger 2013:60). The bride also has her own *shoshbins* that will fulfil the same roles as the groom's *shoshbins* (Monger 2013:60). Today, the more Western concept of groomsmen and bridesmaids are also used (Cohn-Sherbok, D & Cohn-Sherbok, L 1999:108).

The bride and groom will have chaperons the week before the wedding (Lamm 1991:188). This enhances the safety and honour of the bride and groom (Lamm 1991:188). The physical attraction gets stronger the closer one gets to the wedding and this will preserve their honour (Lamm 1991:188). They should also be kept apart on the day before the wedding (Lamm 1991:188). This is said to enhance the joys of the day (Lamm 1991:188).

In ancient times fathers would facilitate their children's marriages (Cohn-Sherbok 2003:538). In the Jewish past, professional matchmakers were also used to facilitate a marriage between two people who would probably not meet until the day of their wedding (Monger 2013:427). If they were to meet they would not get to know each other (Monger 2013:427). The matchmaker is called a *Shadachan* (Monger 2013:427). All the parents of the bride and groom may also facilitate the marriages (Monger 2013:76).

4.6. Conclusion

After looking at some of the Jewish marriage traditions, including pre- and post-ceremonial traditions, it is clear that Judaism embraces both age-old traditions as well as new traditions. With this information, one could easily identify a Jewish marriage ceremony as well as understand some of the important concepts behind the rituals. This dissertation will look at Judaism again in Chapter 6 where some of the similarities and differences between Christian, Judaism and Islamic marriage ceremonial rituals will be shown. The dissertation will proceed to address marriage ceremonial rituals in Islam.

5. Chapter five: Marriage ceremonial rituals in Islam

5.1. Introduction

In this Chapter marriage ceremonies in Islam will be discussed. Pre-marriage ceremony traditions will be explored, this will include the *veiling, engagement, engagement period and betrothal ceremonies*, as well as *purifying rituals as religious art*. The marriage ceremonies themselves will also be discussed. This will include *Ketb el Ktab, collecting of the bride, feasting, Nikah, Rusmat and Bersanding ceremony*, as well as *consummation*. *Post-marriage ceremony traditions* will also be explored under the heading of *the week after the marriage ceremony*. Other *important topics* that will also be explored include the *attire of the bride and groom, important participants* namely the *matchmakers*, as well as how marriage *establishes communities*.

It is important to remember that the forms of Islam can differ vastly depending on the context, especially because of geographic location. Marriage is important to the Islamic religion. No matter where it is practised, it is seen as non-optional and a duty (al Faruqi 1990:80; Monger 2013:70; Mir-hosseini 2011:31; Shepard 2009:98; Paas 2006:81). It is uncommon for someone that is of the appropriate marriage age not to be married (Monger 2013:39). Marriage is seen as the binding of two families not just the binding of the couple (Monger 2013:40,152,217). Marriage is seen as a civil concept in Islam and is not considered sacramental (Chaudhry 2002:31,88; al Faruqi 1990:88).

It is important to remember that even if Islamic marriage may focus on the civil side of marriage, there are still a lot of rituals associated with the concept of

marriage (Mir-hossein 2011:32). Marriage ceremonies in Islam can last up to days. This includes pre-marriage rituals and post-marriage rituals (Fluehr-Lobban 1994:70). In the Islamic religion, it is not necessary for a ceremony to be held and it is not necessarily prescribed, but in many Islamic countries, ceremonial signing of contracts, feasting, pre- and post-marriage ceremony rituals are found and are treasured by these communities (Mir-hossein 2011:32). It is important to remember that Islam in different regions will have different traditions. Although there are some basic traditions that are the same in most cases, a lot of the time there might be exceptions. The dissertation now proceeds to provide an overview of how Islamic marriage ceremonial rituals, in a variety of different countries. It is important to remember that this is not a reflection of marriage ceremonies and rituals regarding marriage in all of Islam but rather just an overview and some examples. The general phenomena of marriage rituals in Islam will be discussed.

In South Africa a recent court ruling, on 31 August 2018 by the High Court of South Africa, Western Cape Division, has stated that government must legalise Islamic marriages that have been done according to the Sharia law (High Court of South Africa, 2018:76). The Sharia law can be defined as follow:

“The Islamic religious law, including the teachings of the Qur'an and the traditional sayings of Muhammad.”

(Oxford English Dictionary 2018)

The dissertation will be referring to the Sharia law throughout this Chapter to give an idea of what the law requires and to show an aspect of South African Islamic marriage.

5.2. Pre-marriage ceremonial traditions

This section elaborates on the components of pre-marriage ceremony traditions in Islam. It includes veiling, engagement, engagement period and betrothal ceremonies, as well as purifying rituals as religious art.

5.2.1. Veiling

In most Islamic traditions as soon as a young girl reaches puberty she is veiled, this is a sign that she is not a girl anymore but a woman (Monger 2013:26,248). Depending on the age that puberty starts and local law of legal marriage age, this usually signifies that a girl is ready and available for marriage (Monger 2013:26). The Sharia law states that a person is of marriage age if they are in adolescence, this is usually indicated by puberty (Islamic Sharia Law 2006:34). However, marriage age cannot just adhere to the Sharai law it also needs to adhere to the countries' laws. For example, in Brunei, no minimum age has been legally set for marriage (Monger 2013:101). In South Africa, the minimum consenting age for marriage is 18 without the consent of parents (Mokgoro 2003:2).

In most Islamic traditions if a young girl is veiled, she will be supervised by an older woman to make sure her chastity stays intact until her wedding day (Monger 2013:26,140). It is ideal for veiled girls to be married as soon as possible (Monger 2013:26). A newly veiled woman's future marriage lies in the hands of her father, or if she does not have a father anymore, another male family member. They are called an al-*Wali* or just *Wali* loosely translated as marriage guardian (Fluehr-Lobban 1994:67; Vogel 2008:14; Glasse 2002:296). A groom that has not come of age yet may also use a *Wali* (Vogel 2008:14). A *Wali* must be an adult Muslim that is of legal age and is preferably male; females may be allowed to act as a

Wali if the circumstances deemed necessary (Vogel 2008:14). Even with the situation that a *Wali* is used for virgins, the bride may not be married off without her consent (Glasse 2002:296). According to the Sharia law, it is not necessary for a woman to have a *Wali*, but she may appoint a legal attorney to help negotiate on her behalf (Islamic Sharia Law 2006:34).

Westernisation has influenced the relaxation of the veiling ceremony as well as the legal age of marriage (Monger 2013:26). The bride's consent to the marriage at hand is important, although opinions especially Western opinions vary on what exactly it means to give consent (Fluehr-Lobban 1994:67). Brides were married off very early in the past. Westernisation and feminism have both influenced these traditions to increase the legal age in which a girl may be married. A girl would technically not be able to be married off without consent but what was considered as consent has also been largely contested and influenced by both feminism and Westernisation. Being able to consent also involves being of legal age to make such a decision. This alters traditions such as the veiling ceremony, this can mean that a girl that has been veiled at puberty is not necessarily at legal age to be married and is thus not eligible to be married. Alternatively, if a girl is only veiled at marriage age, the tradition will thus be altered that she is not veiled when reaching puberty. This may also have the implication that a girl that reached puberty would be supervised for a longer period until she is of marriage age. It is also becoming increasingly difficult for a *Wali* or marriage guardian to facilitate a marriage for a girl without her full consent. Thus, girls can have a better legal standing on whether they would like to get married to a specific person.

5.2.2. Engagement, engagement period and betrothal ceremonies

In most Islamic traditions a young man must tell his parents that he is ready for marriage (Monger 2013:26). This does not necessarily mean that there is a girl he would like to marry, but rather that he is ready for his parents to find a proper spouse for him (Monger 2013:26). If he does have an eye on a specific girl, he can inform them of this (Monger 2013:26). They will then get information on the specific girl or another veiled girl (depending on the situation) to ensure that she and her family is a suitable match for their son (Monger 2013:26). Picking the correct match is very important as the aim of Islamic marriage is both to build the community, but also for the couple to lead a life that is fulfilled in a loving way (Islamic Sharia Law 2006:39). If the boy's family found a suitable match or deem the girl he would like to marry as suitable, they will make a marriage proposal towards the girl's family (Monger 2013:26). This suitability will be determined by financial standing, social standing, religious convictions and the history of the girl and her family (Fluehr-Lobban 1994:66). The suitable history will involve minimal to no family scandals with similar historical financial standing and status to the groom's family. The bride's appearance does not play a significant role when choosing a spouse, this is part of the reason for the veiling ceremony. Falling in love or just love is not a requirement for getting married, this will come after marriage.

Cousin marriage is particularly popular in Islam, even though there is a belief that this can bring sickly or weak offspring (Monger 2013:26; Fluehr-Lobban 1994:65; Shepard 2009:98). Sexes do not usually mix, but by marrying a cousin, they would have grown up at least knowing about the other person (Monger 2013:26).

This also secures the financial property of the families when it comes to inheritance (Fluehr-Lobban 1994:66). This is part of the reason that marriage outside the family or even marriage to an outsider (outside the community) is considered risky (Fluehr-Lobban 1994:66). If the families know each other well and do not have family ties, it is considered to be less risky than marriage to an outsider (Fluehr-Lobban 1994:66). Outsider marriages do occur more often, as women start to become more prominent in the workplace and universities, it is possible for them to meet strangers, the family will, however, have to make the necessary enquiries after learning about the specific person (Fluehr-Lobban 1994:67). The idea is that the families should be similar and should be on equal footing regarding the things named earlier, this is called *al-kafa'a fil zawaj* (Fluehr-Lobban 1994:68). The Western idea of falling in love before marriage is not considered reasonable in most Islamic societies (Fluehr-Lobban 1994:68).

In most Islamic tradition after the parents of the boy have proposed marriage the girl must accept the marriage proposal for the process to continue (Monger 2013:26). When a marriage proposal has been made the answer from the bride's family must be given immediately thereafter (Chaudhry 2002:34). In other words, the bride and her family do not have a waiting period wherein they can think it over, they must answer immediately. If the bride does agree the parents of both the bride and groom will, as soon as possible after the agreement, have to go to the Mosque where they will put on record that the engagement period has started (Monger 2013:26). At the Mosque the ethical code of marriage inside Islam will be explained to them:

“The husband and wife are equal partners in the marriage, so the husband is expected to provide for and protect the family but does not have the right to rule the family. The woman is required to care for the children and run the household; all decisions should be by mutual agreement between the couple” (Monger 2013:26)

In Egypt, the whole extended family has a say on whether a young couple is suitable to become engaged or not (Monger 2013:249). In Brunei, a code is used to propose marriage to a young woman (Monger 2013:102). The young man's family will recite the code in front of the woman's house, depending on the response also given in code, they know that the marriage proposal has been denied or accepted (Monger 2013:102). If the groom's offer is accepted, negotiations may begin, and he then gives his bride to be two rings, one is a sign that he wants to propose and the second is an official engagement ring (Nikahnama.com 2017c). The marriage ceremonial date can be set after this (Monger 2013:102). An engagement ceremony will be held called a *“Berjarum-jarum”* (Nikahnama.com 2017b). After this, the dowry is paid to the woman in a big procession that is highly visible (Monger 2013:102). The groom's parents will also negotiate some aspects of the wedding day with the bride's parents (Nikahnama.com 2017b). In Bangladesh the young couple would meet each other before the wedding, this is so they can consent to the union (Nikahnama.com 2017a). Thus, it can be stated that marriage is usually facilitated, by either a matchmaker, the parents or both. It is unusual to find the

Western concept of falling in love and then getting married. Depending on the context of the people, the engagement rituals can differ significantly.

The purpose of the Islamic engagement period is that the couple has time to get the things that are necessary to set up their home (Monger 2013:27). The girl would collect various things that she takes into the marriage usually domestic supplies, clothing and even gold (Monger 2013:27). In some regions where Islam is practised, especially in Algeria, the things that are taken into marriage by the girl will be part of her dowry (Monger 2013:27).

The second reason for the engagement period is the negotiation of the dowry by the families, this will be paid by the groom (Nikahnama.com 2017a). The dowry is also referred to as the *Mahr* (Chaudhry 2002:43; Glasse 2002:296; Salamone 2010:197). A lot of negotiations are done before the couple signs a contract. In most Islamic traditions the dowry forms part of these negotiations (Fluehr-Lobban 1994:65). In Pakistan, limits are set on how much a dowry may be (Chaudhry 2002:35). The dowry is not fixed as a minimum or maximum amount in the Qur'an, but some schools have set a minimum (Chaudhry 2002:43; al Faruqi 1990). In case a woman is widowed or divorced by her husband the dowry functions as an assurance of her financial security (Monger 2013:27,131; Fluehr-Lobban 1994:69). Therefore, a part of the dowry is paid out when the couple signs the contract and a part if he dies or divorces her.

This tradition will vary from region to region (Shepard 2009:89). A dowry is seen as something that a woman has a right to, and a man has an obligation to, when getting married although the amount may differ vastly from place to place and

social status (Chaudhry 2002:30,43). The Qur'an does not set a limit on how much the dowry may be (Islamic Sharia Law 2006:38). It is however essential that the price of the dowry is accepted by the bride (Chaudhry 2002:43). She can in the Algerian case collect things for the home through the dowry money that is paid to her by her future husband (Monger 2013:27). The dowry is in some cases so large that a young man must wait years before he has enough money to pay the dowry (Fluehr-Lobban 1994:69). In Egypt the soon to be groom pays an agreed upon amount of the dowry the couple can get married. This amount goes toward things that the bride has to buy to set up the home, such as furniture (Monger 2013:249). The dowry is seen as a gift from the groom to the bride. This does not in any way entail that he purchases her (Islamic Sharia Law 2006:38).

The third reason for the engagement period in Algeria, is that the groom can buy his soon to be wife and mother-in-law gifts. (Monger 2013:27). In Egypt it is also customary for a young man to give the girl he would like to marry a gift called *shabka* (Nikahnama.com 2017c). This is usually some form of jewellery, diamond rings are commonly used today, whereas gold is an older tradition (Nikahnama.com 2017c). In most Muslim traditions another reason for the engagement period is for couples to be able to plan their marriage ceremony (Monger 2013:40). The amount to be spent on the marriage ceremony will also be negotiated at the time of engagement (Monger 2013:149). In Pakistan, there is a legal limit to how much may be spent on a marriage celebration (Chaudhry 2002:35-36).

In the official engagement period, a lot of Islamic traditions permit the couple to get to know each other under the watchful eye of older family members (Fluehr-

Lobban 1994:70). It is especially customary in Egypt for the couple to get to know each other in the engagement period (Nikahnama.com 2017c). In Bangladesh, an engagement ceremony may be held separately for the bride and groom, while they do not attend one another's ceremony, their respective male and female family members do (Monger 2013:40). In these events, the bride's future mother-in-law may put the engagement ring on the bride's right hand's fourth finger (Monger 2013:40). In the case of both the bride and groom's engagement party, a feast is held for the bride and groom with the family and friends that are present (Monger 2013:40). The engagement ceremony marks the engagement as official, after this, the bride and groom may meet but with supervision (Monger 2013:40).

Similarly, in Egypt, there is also an Islamic tradition of an engagement ceremony that marks the engagement period, at this ceremony the bride receives jewellery as a gift (Monger 2013:61). In Egypt, the engagement ceremony is held after everyone has agreed to the union and the financial negotiations have been agreed upon (Monger 2013:149). In this celebration of the bride and groom both give each other a ring (Monger 2013:149). It is almost a small-scale wedding that the parents of the bride traditionally pay for (Monger 2013:149). The rings that the couples receive are worn on the right hand (Monger 2013:149). It is a tradition for the engaged woman to wear bright colours on this day (Monger 2013:149). It is after this ceremony that the bride and groom may get better acquainted either at the house of the bride's family or they can go somewhere else, this will depend on the family's preference (Monger 2013:149).

There is more than one reason for the engagement period. In short, it is there for negotiations of the dowry, setting up the home where the newlyweds may live,

planning the wedding as well as the couple getting to know each other. The engagement period is an essential part of marriage rituals in Islam. The dowry is a crucial part of marriage especially in places where women are very vulnerable. In other words, where they cannot work or earn money, thus if she is divorced or if her husband should die, she will be taken care of financially through the dowry. The negotiation for this sum of money is essential. The objects she takes to her new home will still belong to her if the marriage is dissolved through divorce or death of her husband. It is thus vital for the same reason as the dowry to have these objects in place before the marriage ceremony. Marriage in the Islamic faith is mostly facilitated, the engagement period is a good time for the couple to get to know each other. The engagement ceremonies are mostly in place to make the engagement period official and bind the couple in some form of agreement to be married.

5.2.3. Purifying rituals and religious art

This section elaborates on the components of purifying rituals and religious art in Islam. It includes *Grooming, Henna ceremony and Gai-haldi*.

5.2.3.a Grooming

In Iran all body hair of the bride is removed three days before the marriage ceremony, this is an indication that she is now a woman (Monger 2013:52). The day before the marriage ceremony both the man and woman go to a bathhouse separately to cleanse themselves, oils and perfumes are also used by the bride (Monger 2013:52). In Brunei the bride and groom will be cleansed and powdered, as well as the bride being beautified, this is done separately and mostly by family members (Monger 2013:102-103). This happens on the morning of the marriage

ceremony or the evening beforehand (Monger 2013:103). On the day of the ceremony, a bath is held for both the man and woman to cleanse themselves at midday (Monger 2013:103). This may be accompanied by music (Monger 2013:103). In Egypt, the ceremonial bath and removal of hair for both men and woman are also practised (Monger 2013:149-150).

The ceremonial bath is called a *Ghusl* and is seen as the washing of the entire body for purification (Islamic Sharia Law 2006:123). The purification that the bath ritual provides is necessary for someone who was in contact with sexual fluid or menstruation blood (Islamic Sharia Law 2006:124). The baths mentioned above is thus not just an ordinary bath but is in place to purify the believer so they may conduct certain religious acts such as reciting the Qur'an, holding the Qur'an, before certain prayers, entering the Mosque (Islamic Sharia Law 2006:125-127). The ritual bath is thus not just for cleaning oneself but rather purifying oneself. The ritual bath makes it possible for people in the Islamic faith to properly practice their faith. Thus, it is appropriate to make sure the bride and groom are pure before undergoing something like a marriage ceremony.

5.2.3.b Henna ceremony and Gai-haldi

Henna is a food-based dye that creates semi-permanent markings on the skin, it is made from a paste that is created with water and leaves (Spurles 2004:iv,57). Henna is mainly used on men and women's hand and feet within Islam with life-cycle rituals (Spurles 2004:iv). Henna is an old ritual and has been used by different cultures as far back as ancient times and has been used in Islam since the 7th century (Spurles 2004:iv,62). The Henna ceremony is very important and seen as sensuous (Monger 2013:27). In Brunei, the bride and groom only have

their fingers and toes Hennaed (Monger 2013:103). In Egypt, the Henna ceremony is held in rural areas after a ceremonial bath, the day before the marriage ceremony (Monger 2013:149,151). It is also customary in Egypt that the bride's female friends and family all help to Henna her hands and feet and Henna their own hands and feet as well (Nikahnama.com 2017b). They bind her hands and feet with linen till the next day, her hands should then be a shade of red (Monger 2013:149-150). Red is preferred in Morocco for women getting married as it symbolises joy (Spurles 2004:58).

Henna is for the protection of the person from all evil influence in her vulnerable state of transitioning from an unmarried- to a married woman (Spurles 2004:79,168). One is seen as particularly vulnerable when undergoing life-cycle rituals as one will be between life stages. It is therefore appropriate to use something like Henna to protect against these influences. It is also used as a symbol of a young girl becoming a woman (Spurles 2004:87). As with the veiling ceremony, the Henna ceremony is also a physical sign that a girl is now turning into a woman, thus the need for protection exists as she is between life cycles. Henna is also seen as a way to strengthen the bride's body and acts as a shell over her skin (Spurles 2004:87,155). This, in turn, will protect her (Spurles 2004:87,155). Henna is seen as a physical sign of divine blessing on the bride (Spurles 2004:155). Henna is mostly used as a divine blessing and as divine protection against all evil, whether that evil is carinated or spiritual. A life cycle ritual leaves one particularly vulnerable to evil influence and the Henna helps prevent evil from influencing the individual. This is an important practice and is not just a form of art. A Henna ceremony is also a form of group bonding as it is

done by the female family and friends. This also shows the importance of community and that the marriage is not just about the binding of the bride and groom but also about the family in general.

The *Gai-haldi* ceremony is practised in Bangladesh. The marriage ceremony takes place over four days (Monger 2013:40). The first two days will now be discussed; later on, the dissertation will address the second set of days. The bride's *Gai-haldi* is held on the first day at the bride's parents' home (Monger 2013:40-41). The groom's *Gai-haldi* is held on the second day and is said to be similar to that of the bride's *Gai-haldi*, with some exceptions that will be mentioned here (Monger 2013:41).

The bride and her female family members, as well as her friends, start this process with an oil- and turmeric massage into the bride's skin (Nikahnama.com 2017a). Because of the colour of the turmeric the woman will mostly wear yellow saris which may also be decorated with turmeric paste, the bride may have red incorporated in her yellow sari (Monger 2013:41). Turmeric will also be applied to the groom's skin on his *Gai-haldi* celebration (Nikahnama.com 2017a). The brides soon to be in-laws will arrive bearing gifts for her and her family, this can include a range of things from sweets to clothing and even jewellery (Monger 2013:41; Nikahnama.com 2017a).

This event is held so that the two families can socialise with each other because the marriage ceremony is the binding of two families (Monger 2013:41; Nikahnama.com 2017a). This is important to remember as it shows that in this ceremony the bride's mother-in-law, sometimes accompanied by the groom's

grandmother, will bind a red and yellow arm bangle to the bride as a symbol of the everlasting bond between the families (Monger 2013:41). *Ladbo* (a sweet dish) is then offered to the bride in small portions starting with the groom's grandmother followed by the groom's female family members, and only then followed by her female family members (Monger 2013:41). This shows her acceptance of them and their acceptance of her as part of the groom's family now (Monger 2013:41). This celebration can continue until that night.

This ceremony is similar to the Henna ceremony, except for the use of turmeric instead of Henna. This is a very good example of how the marriage ceremony is not just about the couple and their marriage but also about the bond between the two families. The two families will be bonded by this union, having the turmeric ceremony as well as the food which will promote bonding. This is also a good way to show that the groom's family has accepted her into their family and that she is now one of them. The female to female- and male to male relationship is very prominent in this ritual as well as the Henna ceremonies celebrated in other countries. Male and female separation is prominent in such ceremonies. In most Islamic countries, men will socialise with men and women with women. This stands out most prominent in Islamic societies, as interaction, especially physical interaction between men and women is to be done in private.

5.3. Marriage ceremonial rituals

This section elaborates on the components of marriage ceremony traditions in Islam. This includes *Ketb el ktab*, *collecting of the bride*, *feasting*, *Nikah*, *Rusmat* and *Bersanding ceremony* as well as *consummation*.

5.3.1. Ketb el Ktab

This ceremony is practised in Egypt. It translates to 'writing in the book' (Monger 2013:249). In Egypt, the contract is signed at the bride's house or at the local Mosque with the wedding feast only happening that evening (Nikahnama.com 2017). *Ketb el ktab* involves at the first wedding the fathers of the bride and groom making an agreement with each other (Monger 2013:249). If the bride had been married before she and the groom will make the agreement (Monger 2013:249). The two people, depending on the situation, shake hands and their hands are then covered with a cloth (Monger 2013:249). The agreed upon amount of money is then paid to the bride by the groom (Monger 2013:249). The agreement is drawn up and signed, with the fathers bearing witness, the bride and groom lay down their fingerprints on the document and copies are notarised (Monger 2013:249).

This ceremony is done before the wedding celebration. It points back to the civil part of marriage where it is a legally binding document. The document can easily and properly identify both the bride and groom as well as the witnesses. This is to make sure that the proper documentation is in place for the legal part of the marriage between the two individuals. The bride's father is her Wali, as seen in the description above. He helped to find her a suitable husband and is the one that makes the agreement for her marriage. She would still have to consent to the marriage before this step is taken.

5.3.2. Collecting the bride

The bride is taken to, or collected by the groom to be taken to his house. This tradition is widely followed in most Islamic countries (Monger 2013:27). This can

involve big sound displays like musical display and gun firing (Monger 2013:27,55). In Palestine problems arose with this tradition as roadblocks caused by the military sometimes act as a barrier and the groom cannot collect his bride (Monger 2013:27). In Iraq the bride is taken by her family to the family home of the groom, he may then wash her feet and they can pray together (Salamone 2010:147). Women are to be respected in Iraq but function in a completely different social construct than men (Salamone 2010:147-148).

The collection of the bride is a very good example of marriage processions in Islam. The collection of the bride is symbolic of her home moving from her parents to her husband. This procession usually includes a large group of people. This points back to the community aspect of marriage. The marriage celebration is a joining of two families and building of the Islamic community.

5.3.3. Feasting

The marriage ceremony rituals regarding the marriage feast vary widely depending on the region (Glasse 2002:296). In most Islamic regions, marriage festivities can last for days with musical accompaniment, dancing and food (Monger 2013:27; Fluehr-Lobban 1994:70). In a lot of Islamic traditions, it is taboo for men and women to interact with each other, even with marriage ceremonies and it may be done in separate venues (Monger 2013:167). It does depend on the region, however as some Islamic nations do permit the mixing of men and women at marriage celebrations, this is sometimes one of the only opportunities for young people to meet (Fluehr-Lobban 1994:70). This can lead to new marriages being formed as young men and women can meet for the first time.

In Yemen, these festivities will be done separately for men and women (Monger 2013:27). In Islamic traditions where women and men are kept separate, it is normal for a woman to dance with another woman and the same goes for men (Monger 2013:210). In Egypt, the marriage ceremonial rituals and feasting is done very publicly, even though the arrangements and negotiations are done in private (Monger 2013:248). Marriage ceremonies may have the women and men separated in Egypt, but this happens more in the rural communities (Monger 2013:251). Thus, marriage rituals in more urban areas are more likely to have men and women interact in Egypt. Elaborate music, sweets and decorations are used in marriage ceremonies in Egypt (Nikahnama.com 2017c). In Turkey, it is best that a marriage celebration falls on a Friday or Monday as these are days of luck for weddings (Monger 2013:217).

In Bangladesh, the ceremony lasts up to four days and the ceremony advances in different stages over these four days (Monger 2013:40). In Bangladesh, the different stages are as follow: on day one the bride has a *Gai-haldi*, on the second day the groom has his *Gai-haldi*, on the third day the marriage ceremony itself commences and lastly on the fourth day the *Walima* commences (Monger 2013:40-41). The *Gai-haldi* ceremonies were discussed above in the pre-marriage ceremonies and this will not be discussed in detail again here. The third day that is seen as the marriage ceremony itself is hosted by the bride's family this will be held in a town hall or other large venue (Nikahnama.com 2017a). Within the marriage celebrations in Bangladesh, there is a tradition where the bride's younger family members steal the shoes of the groom. Likewise the members of the groom try and prevent that the shoes are stolen (Monger

2013:40). If they succeed in stealing the shoes, he must pay ransom to get them back (Monger 2013:40).

In Bangladesh, the groom with his procession of family and friends arrive at the wedding venue. It is custom for the bride's family to ask an entrance fee, that has been decided on in the negotiations (Monger 2013:42). This money is divided among the people who contributed financially to the ceremonies (Monger 2013:42). When the procession is welcomed in, they will be showered with flower petals (Monger 2013:42). The bride is not yet present but for the time being, she is inside the house with female companions (Monger 2013:42). This will be followed by *Nikah* which will be discussed later in this Chapter under the heading *Nikah*. After the *Nikah*, some nuts are given out and music and singing commence, the bride will then arrive, sitting next to her new husband as they greet their guests and receive well wishes from them (Monger 2013:42). The feasting then commences, the bride and groom will sit alone (although the bride may be accompanied by female guests), and not with their traditionally large number of guests (Monger 2013:42). The *Rusmat* follows after the feasting. This will be discussed further under the heading *Rusmat* and *Bersanding* ceremony. After this, the bride goes to live with her new husband and in-laws (Nikahnama.com 2017a).

In Brunei, elaborate and extravagant wedding ceremonies are not uncommon among the upper class (Nikahnama.com 2017b) The bride meets the groom's friends and family for the first time at an event called the *persandingan* (Monger 2013:103). The bride and groom do not go to the same room on the marriage night, instead they stay awake with family and friends, with an energetic display

of music to keep them awake (Monger 2013:103). Falling asleep on the night of the wedding is very bad as the one who does will be the first one to die in the relationship (Monger 2013:103). *Nikah* and *Rusmat* are also a part of the wedding ceremony and this will be discussed later in this Chapter under *Nikah* as well as *Rusmat* and *Bersanding* ceremony, respectively. The bride will go home with the groom and his family after the wedding has concluded (Nikahnama.com 2017b).

In Egypt, the contract is signed on the morning of the marriage festivities (Monger 2013:150). The marriage celebration may then commence after dark (Monger 2013:150). In Egypt, it is the bride and her procession that goes to the house of the groom in more rural areas, in cities venues are more commonly used today (Monger 2013:150). In rural areas of Egypt, the marriage celebration may continue weeks after the ceremony (Monger 2013:151). Thrones may be used for the bride and groom to sit on (Monger 2013:150). Music plays a big part in both the rural and urban marriage ceremonies, procession to the venue, to the throne and throughout the wedding feast (Monger 2013:150). Rings are given from the groom to the bride and from the bride to the groom (Monger 2013:150). A cake is usually part of the festivities (Monger 2013:150). Guests celebrate by congratulating the bride and groom as well as dancing and feasting with them (Monger 2013:150).

Whether men and women are separate does not change the fact that the celebration of the marriage involves the community. The community is there to celebrate the marriage by feasting and dancing with the bride and groom together with wishing them well. The phenomena of thrones for the bride and groom are common across Islam. Celebrating through food, music and dance is usual for an

Islamic marriage. The use of rings and prayer is also seen within the Islamic celebrations. Some form of confetti can be used as seen above, this is mostly a sign of fertility and plenteousness.

5.3.3.a Nikah

In most Islamic traditions the signing of the contract is of utmost importance (al Faruqi 1990:85; Glasse 2002:296). Marriage contracts are usually signed at private homes or in the presence of a judge this will vary according to the country's laws (Glasse 2002:296). This contract is seen as a covenant between a man and woman that both take up a mutual agreement to enter into Islamic marriage with all its obligations and rights towards one's partner (Islamic Sharia Law 2006:33). The marriage contract would have been negotiated beforehand (Fluehr-Lobban 1994:70). There can be many things that are negotiated in the setting up of the contract (Fluehr-Lobban 1994:70). In some cases, the concept of whether the man may take another wife or not can be written into the contract (Fluehr-Lobban 1994:70; Shepard 2009:99). The dowry agreement with regards to death and divorce will be written into the contract (Fluehr-Lobban 1994:70). Whether the wife may work or not (Mir-hossein 2011:35). Child custody in case of divorce or death of either party may also be written into the contract (Fluehr-Lobban 1994:70). As well as the rights and obligations of both parties (Mir-hossein 2011:34).

The marriage contract functions just like any other contract, it has two parties that have to sign the contract, this must be witnessed, and the contract can be dissolved if the parties in the contract did not adhere to the contract stipulations (Chaudhry 2002:32; Mir-hossein 2011:31). For the marriage contract to be legal

in most Islamic countries it must be witnessed for the signing of both parties, as well as witnessed by either two Islamic males or one Islamic male accompanied by two Islamic females (Chaudhry 2002:34,39; Mir-hosseini 2011:168; Salamone 2010:197). The witnesses can traditionally be the bride and groom's fathers, but this can be someone else as well (al Faruqi 1990:87).

The *Nikah* is the official part of the proceeding in Bangladesh (Monger 2013:42). Two witnesses are necessary for this part of the marriage ceremony (Nikahnama.com 2017a). They accompany the *Mullah* or cleric (Monger 2013:42). They ask the bride's consent to marriage and after she gives it she signs the contract (Monger 2013:42). According to the Shari'a law, it is of utmost importance that both the bride and groom consent to the marriage (Islamic Sharia Law 2006:34). They then return to the groom's house and the process is repeated, after which they also sign the contract (Monger 2013:42). This contract is the marriage agreement and also states what will happen if the husband divorces his wife (Monger 2013:42). Now the marriage is official, both in legal terms in Bangladesh and also in the eyes of the family (Monger 2013:42). The *Mullah* will then give a sermon regarding marriage and its importance (Nikahnama.com 2017a). He will also make sure the marriage is legalised in the presence of a government authorised official (Nikahnama.com 2017a). A prayer will also be said over the newly married couple (Nikahnama.com 2017a).

In Brunei, this is referred to as the *adak Nikah* ceremony (Monger 2013:103). In Brunei the groom vows to take the woman as his bride, she is represented by her father or another (male) family member (Nikahnama.com 2017b). In this ceremony, there is an imam present as well as witnesses to the event and an

elaborate number of guests (Monger 2013:103; Nikahnama.com 2017b). In Iraq the father of the bride, represents her in the marriage ceremony, he gives the bride to the groom and if he accepts, the Qur'an is read (Salamone 2010:147). The Shari'a law does not stipulate how the signing of the *Nikah* should happen but rather focuses on the fact that the *Nikah* is a civil contract that should take the marriage laws of the region into account (Islamic Sharia Law 2006:34).

The *Nikah* contract signing is one of the most important parts of Islamic marriage. In most countries around the world, *Nikah* makes the marriage legal. It does not matter in the Shari'a law how the contract is signed. This makes it possible for marriage ceremonies to vary substantially from region to region. It is tradition, especially for first marriages as seen above, that the father of the bride stands in as her Wali. The bride must give consent if one takes the Shari'a law into account. The *Nikah* contract is in place to state the obligation and rights of both parties. The *Nikah* contract is especially important for women in a patriarchal society. The contract was specially designed in a time when women did not work outside the house and were very vulnerable in a financial way compared to men. The man, therefore, has an obligation to care for her, and measures like a dowry were put in place to protect women and their offspring in a financial way if her husband would die or divorces his wife.

5.3.3.b *Rusmat and Bersanding ceremony*

The *Rusmat* is practised in Bangladesh after the marriage feasting. The bride and groom now see the face of the other for the first time with the use of a mirror (Monger 2013:42). They also share food and something to drink from the same plate and cup. This symbolises them being married (Monger 2013:42). The

mothers-in-law of both the bride and groom place the rings on their new children in-laws left hand, on the fourth finger (Monger 2013:42). Next, the father of the bride and of the groom give gifts to the couple and also bless them (Monger 2013:42). This ceremony called *Rusmat* shows that the parents are pleased with the union and wishes the bride and groom well within their union (Monger 2013:42).

The *Bersanding* ceremony is practised in Brunei. The groom is pulled by a handkerchief after the akad *Nikah* to his brides' home. When he arrives, he asks permission for her to become his wife (Monger 2013:103). When the groom arrives at the bride's house, he is thrown with saffron rice and he is turned in a circle three times (Monger 2013:103). The groom is now allowed inside the house, he goes to the room where his bride is waiting (Monger 2013:103). In this room the bride is hidden behind multiple drapes, he needs to pay to have each drape removed so he could see the bride's face. When this is complete, he may sit next to her and tradition states that he must touch her forehead (Monger 2013:103).

The bride and groom being allowed to see each other for the first time is a very important and intimate moment. The groom would especially not have seen the bride's face before. Being able to share food with someone is a big part of human bonding. This is an excellent way to symbolise that they are bonded together. The parents of the bride and groom bestowing blessings on them in the *Rusmat* moment is also a sign of how important family is. They do not bestow blessings on the couple when the rest of the community does. They wait until there is an intimate moment because the immediate family is a big support system for the

bride and groom. Rings may be given as a physical sign of marriage. These two ceremonies are very similar, and one of the aspects that stands out the most is the intimacy in marriage between a husband and wife.

5.3.4. Consummation

Marriage makes sexual activity between the man and woman in the agreement legal. Sex is to be considered illegal outside the boundaries of marriage and subject to heavy punishment in most Islamic countries (Mir-hosseini 2011:31). Virginity of a woman and the evidence thereof of a newly veiled woman is very important in most Islamic countries (Fluehr-Lobban 1994:70). Thus, they try and preserve it by having an older woman accompany the veiled girl until the wedding (Monger 2013:26-27). The groom does not have to be a virgin on his wedding night, if he has travelled abroad a lot it may be unlikely (Fluehr-Lobban 1994:70). Thus, the consummation of the marriage is of the utmost importance (Monger 2013:27).

In the past consummation of the wedding was not enough for some groups until the woman has proven that she is pregnant the marriage is not considered properly sealed (Monger 2013:27). This was more common among the Bedouin groups (Monger 2013:27). In Egypt the groom will go praying after the feast, he is then allowed to see his bride when he returns from the Mosque and after another payment is made (Monger 2013:150). They may consummate the wedding, the bride should try and resist the groom's advances as much as possible and evidence of her virginity will be shown on a handkerchief, this practice still occurs among rural societies (Monger 2013:151). Consummation is

not just a representation of the couple being joined but also the families (Fluehr-Lobban 1994:71).

The bride's virginity is very important, she is veiled and escorted to ensure that she stays innocent. Virginity of the bride will be celebrated and will enhance the pride and standing of her family. Virginity is thus not just about the bride's image but also that of her family. Consummation of the wedding seals the marriage. After this there is no other way out of the marriage except divorce or death. This is a crucial part of the marriage that binds the bride and groom in marriage. Sex is regarded as a normal and healthy part of married life in Islam and so is procreation.

5.4. Post-marriage ceremonial traditions

This section elaborates on the components of post-marriage ceremony traditions in Islam. This includes *the week after the marriage ceremony*.

5.4.1. The week after the marriage ceremony

Walima is practised in Bangladesh, where the bride's family is invited for a meal at the groom's house hosted by their family a few days after the ceremony (Monger 2013:42). The bride and groom may also spend a couple of days with the bride's family after this (Monger 2013:42). In Brunei, the newlyweds do not leave their new home for seven days (Monger 2013:103). They may have another bath ritual as seen above that happened on the day of the marriage ceremony. Presents are given to the bride by her in-laws on the fifth day (Monger 2013:103) There are some couples in Islam that do go away together after the marriage

ceremony, but this is not the norm and is considered a Western concept (Monger, 2013:40; Fluehr-Lobban 1994:71).

The newlyweds in Brunei do not leave their house for seven days after the marriage ceremony so that the new couple can bond with one another. They can now settle into their new home and new roles as husband and wife. This is a perfect time for them to get to know each other, especially if the marriage is facilitated through the couple's parents or a matchmaker. The incorporation of the bride's family is a good way of showing the community between the two families. Although the bride is now a part of the groom's family the bride and grooms' families are bound by them. Her family is thus a part of his family.

5.5. Important elements

This section elaborates on some important aspects of Islamic marriage traditions. This includes, *attire of the bride and groom, important participants* namely the *matchmakers* as well as how marriage *establishes communities*.

5.5.1. Wedding attire

This section elaborates on the wedding attire in Islam for the bride and groom.

5.5.1.a Bride

In Bangladesh, the bride, on the first day of the ceremony wears a yellow sari to coincide with the use of turmeric paste, this sari may have red in as well, her head is covered for this ceremony (Monger 2013:42). In Bangladesh as well as in most of India the bride wears a red *Banarasee* sari on the official marriage ceremony, this sari is traditionally embroidered with gold and should be colourful (Monger 2013:42; al Faruqi 1990:86; Nikahnama.com 2017a). In Brunei, the bride will

wear a dress that is either white or light in colour (Nikahnama.com 2017c). Lace and bright floral patterns are commonly used within the Brunei wedding attire for the bride, as well as a headscarf (Nikahnama.com 2017b). In Egypt the bride's attire will be loose and flowy, her arms and shoulders will be covered by this garment (Nikahnama.com 2017c). This garment will be an imprinted pattern to the bride's preference, a scarf will also be worn (Nikahnama.com 2017c). Bride's will also wear a *Dupatta*, traditionally translated to scarf, as a veil as part of her wedding attire (Monger 2013:42). Some brides in Islamic tradition do wear and insist on wearing the white wedding dresses, which is a Western influence (Fluehr-Lobban 1994:71; al Faruqi 1990:86).

The wedding attire of the bride will thus depend on the location. Westernisation has influenced Islamic wedding attire as brides want the traditional Western white wedding dress. Most wedding attire in Islamic traditions have bright colours, floral patterns and lace are a lot more elaborate than the Western white dress. This is a big leap from the traditional colourful saris to a white Western dress. Although Westernisation is changing this wedding tradition, the old practice of colourful clothes that are a sign of joy is still widely practised.

5.5.1.b Groom

In Bangladesh, the groom wears a knee-high white coat called a *Sherwani* with pants underneath (Monge, 2013:42; Nikahnama.com 2017a). It is not uncommon for a groom in Bangladesh to wear a Western style suit (Nikahnama.com 2017a). In most of India, the groom wears a jacket with buttons in front called a *Nehru Jacket* (al Faruqi 1990:86). This jacket may also have a collar (al Faruqi 1990:86). This is accompanied by a turban known as a *pagri* (Monger 2013:42). In Brunei

the groom will wear knee-high pants that are made of a brightly coloured material (Nikahnama.com 2017b). This is usually worn with a traditional turban (Nikahnama.com 2017b). In Egypt, the groom will wear a traditional cap with a robe that may be covered in floral patterns (Nikahnama.com 2017b). The groom may also wear a suit, which is also a Western influence (al Faruqi 1990:86; Nikahnama.com 2017b). In Malaysia, a wealthy bride and groom may wear a lot of jewellery on their wedding day (al Faruqi 1990:87).

Westernisation is influencing the wedding attire of Islamic grooms as seen by the wearing of a Western suit. As seen above it is not all grooms that choose to wear a Western style suit, more traditional clothes are also still used. The wearing of brightly coloured clothes is a sign of joy.

5.5.2. Participants

This section elaborates on important participants in Islamic marriage. This includes the matchmakers, and how marriage builds community.

5.5.2.a Matchmakers

Marriage is seen as such an important decision in Islam that the couple should not make the decision alone (Fluehr-Lobban 1994:65). Marriages are usually facilitated by the parents of the young man as soon as he is ready for a wife (Monger 2013:26,101,152; Shepard 2009:98). Marriage can also be facilitated by close friends (Monger 2013:40). In Islamic countries, especially in rural areas, professional matchmakers may be used to help match up the correct families (Monger 2013:40,70,248). In Bangladesh, these professional matchmakers are called *ghatak*, but marriages can also be facilitated by parents (Monger 2013:40;

Nikahnama.com 2017a). In modern times matchmaking is modernised with internet sites that are used to find Islamic people who are single and would like to get married (Monger 2013:loc 373). Although marriages are facilitated in Islam and the couple does not have much say over who is courted, they do have the right to object to the union (Monger 2013:9,189; al Faruqi 1990:84; Chaudhry 2002:28,30; Paas 2006:81). If either the man or woman did not consent to the marriage, or the consent was given by force the marriage could be declared illegal (Chaudhry 2002:33).

One of the exceptions to the rule of matchmaking is the Touareg people in Africa. Although they practice the Islamic faith, they do not practice matchmaking (Monger 2013:10). In the Touareg society, there are occasions that are made especially for young women and men to meet, these occasions are usually dances (Monger 2013:10). Some of the traditions are changing in places like Bangladesh, where facilitated marriages are still the norm, it is possible for people to get married without the practice of matchmaking (Monger 2013:40). In modern Brunei, the couple, especially the man has a say over whom he would like to marry (Monger 2013:102).

In most parts of the world where Islam is practised, marriages are facilitated, by either a matchmaker or by the parents of the couple. Westernisation and feminism are changing this concept. Young women have more freedom in many countries to go study and work, which gives them the opportunity to meet a potential life partner. This shows a definite shift from the more traditional role where women were confined to the home and had the responsibility of caring for the children and the home, moving into what is traditionally seen as a man's

world. As seen above the concept of what it means to consent to the marriage is changing, as well as the age of marriage. Girls can thus have more of a say over whom they want to marry.

5.5.2.b Marriage is establishing community

“What is it that we call Society The doors of different homes open daily and the individual dwellers get dispersed in different directions; that is what makes a society. In the evening the same people, return to their respective homes. These very homes keep developing the future community. The upbringing of children depends upon their internal atmosphere. The fate of the future of a nation is thus directly connected with the way children are brought up.”

(Islamic Sharia Law 2006:32)

Marriage is the ideal place for procreation and raising children. By Islamic couples rearing children within marriage and, instilling Islamic beliefs in their children, they grow the Islamic community. This is part of the reason that marriage is not optional and that children are to be expected from a married couple. By raising children in an Islamic home, with Islamic ideals, Islamic adults are raised. By creating Islamic adults that can also marry and have children the process continues, and the community grows. The Islamic family is seen as the core of the community.

As seen above the community plays a huge role in marriage celebrations. The parents of the couple have a major say in marriage ceremonies, especially on whom their children may marry. Their blessing and support of the couple are important. Marriage is the binding of two families and not just two people. Depending on the country it is not unusual for a large community to share in the joy with the bride and groom.

5.6. Conclusion

Marriage ceremonies in Islamic traditions are very diverse. This is caused by the fact that the most important aspect of Islamic marriage ceremonies is the signing of the contract. The dowry also plays a big part in Islamic marriage ceremonies. As the Islamic faith spread it was thus very easy for traditions that already existed to become part of the adopted Islamic religious requirements. This gave rise to vast systems of pre-marriage, post-marriage and marriage rituals. Although it was not possible to address all the different contexts in Islam it is important to note that all the traditions are important.

In this Chapter, some of the rituals surrounding marriage that have been practised in Islam were discussed. A great deal of diversity inside the Islamic marriage celebrations has been shown in this dissertation. This does not, however, reflect all marriage celebrations within Islam and this should be considered in the understanding of this Chapter. All of the Islamic celebrations of marriage are important. Some of the marriage celebrations as well as the pre- and post-marriage ceremonies have been discussed. It is clear that the *Nikah* or signing of the contract is the most important part of Islamic marriage rituals to conclude a legal marriage in most Islamic countries. This does not mean that there are not

rituals that are as important to the Islamic people surrounding marriage ceremonies. At the heart of these celebrations, two families that are joined together and the celebration thereof is seen. Islam will be discussed again in *Chapter 6*, where some of the similarities and differences between Christian, Judaism and Islamic marriage ceremonial rituals will be discussed

6. Chapter six: Comparison of marriage ceremonial rituals in Christianity, Judaism and Islam

6.1. Introduction

In this section, the dissertation is going to discuss the marriage ceremonial rituals in Christianity, Judaism and Islam. The main focus will be on the similarities and differences between these religions' rituals. The dissertation is not necessarily going to discuss everything in detail but will refer to previous Chapters and focus on specific aspects. The main focus will be on tying together the information given in Chapters 3, 4 and 5. This Chapter further includes information on groups in Christianity, Judaism and Islam that will differ from previously discussed aspects. When the uniqueness of the aspect of these marriage ceremonies is stated, it should be remembered that there may be other religions outside of this study that has similar qualities. The researcher will also focus on how marriage rituals can be a point of departure for interreligious conversation.

The comparative study focuses on aspects that overlap in the Abrahamic religions. Overlapping concepts do not necessarily mean that the meaning and physical execution are the same. Instead, it refers to the idea that similar traits can be found within particular religious traditions. These overlapping concepts can help aid religions in bonding with each other. The reason why this is so important is that when one gives these rituals a first glance, they seem very different. Rituals that seem entirely foreign to the mind can cause panic and will not necessarily promote tolerance. Rather if one can see that there are similarities, the other can become more familiar and much easier to tolerate. By

understanding that there are overlapping elements, it is possible for religions to inspire one's creative process to help the institutions keep up with the needs of the people. The dissertation will be stating that bonds can be established or strengthened between religions through their overlapping elements within the rituals. Universalism is not being proposed by this dissertation. Rather through understanding one can create empathetic feelings that can help create a more tolerant foundation for an interreligious country.

The comparative study also values unique aspects of all the religions as this keeps the individuality of each religion intact. The unique concepts within these religions make it possible to enhance the meaning of what makes these religions so unique. Unique practices provide valuable insight into the religion and the meaning of their rituals. This can be of use within the interfaith conversation as one can better understand the other when one is in contact with them. The unique practices can lead to new ideas surrounding other religious rituals. This by no means implies that one religion should simply copy another, but rather that one should see functionality and purpose within these rituals. By understanding what makes the others' rituals unique the creative process can be aided so that possible needs in one's own community can be identified. Once these needs are identified the ritual elements of the other can also serve as a creative inspiration to help create one's own unique ritual or ritual element that can be used to fill the needs of the people. Communities need rituals with deep spiritual meaning, especially to help them transition or accept new cycles in life. By being part of the creative process within rituals, it is possible for religious leaders to make sure that the needs of the people are met.

6.2. Proposing marriage and betrothal ceremonies

Proposing marriage can be ritualised in different forms depending on different factors. First, it would depend on whether the religion that the couple belongs to prescribes a particular ritual or have a ritualised method for proposing. Secondly, it would depend on the culture that the couple is immersed in as most cultures expect proposals to happen in a certain way. Thirdly, it would depend on the couple's preferences. In short, it would depend on the full context of each couple.

There are, as seen in this study, religions that have a very specific ritualisation of the marriage proposal. Contrary to this there are also religions that do not indicate at all how a marriage proposal should take place and do not practice an official betrothal ceremony. There are traces of religious betrothal rituals in all three Abrahamic religions. In Christianity, betrothal rituals are present in the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Church. In Judaism, we find betrothal ceremonies both in the Orthodox Jewish and the Reformed Jewish traditions. In Islam, we find that most traditions do have to mark the beginning of the engagement and have the Imam read the ethical code of marriage to the couple. In Egypt, an official betrothal ceremony is held in Islam. Factors that correlate in the Abrahamic religions on how the engagement should commence can be a bonding agent between the religions.

In the Jewish tradition, the proposal of marriage is in the betrothal ceremony; this is something unique about Judaism (Lamm 1991:147). The marriage proposal thus occurs after the engagement period. In Christianity and Islam, the engagement period only happens after the engagement or betrothal ceremony. In Judaism, the *Kiddushin* ceremony was historically used separately from the

Nissuin, but these two ceremonies are now used together (Monger 2013:427). The Christian Greek Orthodox Church correlates with the Jewish *Kiddushin* by also having the betrothal ceremony just before the marriage ceremony; this does not, however, entail that the couple was not engaged before the ceremony, or had a personal ritual beforehand (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America n.d.). In the Roman Catholic Church, the betrothal ceremony is seen more as the blessing of the engaged couple and is not seen as the actual engagement. The timing, as seen in the Roman Catholic Church, is similar to that of the Islamic Egyptian betrothal ceremony.

When looking at betrothal ceremonies, we can see the overlapping of certain aspects of the ceremony. Prayer is not generally prescribed in Judaism and Islam betrothal ceremonies. This does not, however, mean that prayer cannot be used within these ceremonies. This is something that can help strengthen or establish a bond between these two religions. The Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Church both use prayer within their betrothal ceremonies. The practice can be seen to be unique within these two Christian traditions. However, it is possible then to have an interdenominational conversation that can strengthen the bond between these two churches. In Judaism, a blessing is said over the wine by the priest and the prayer that is seen in the Roman Catholic Church as a blessing of the couple. Thus, Judaism and The Roman Catholic church has this in common. Yet again, this does not mean that it is exact in its similarities, but rather that commonalities can be found between these two religious' communities. In the Greek Orthodox Church, Jewish traditions and Egyptian Islamic traditions, rings will be given in the betrothal ceremonies (United States

Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:101-102; Greenberg, 1990:9; Nikahnama.com, 2017c). The giving of rings at the betrothal ceremony can thus be a point of interest that can strengthen tolerance through interreligious conversation. In the Christian Greek Orthodox tradition, the priest will repeat the following words when giving the couple their rings:

“The servant of God (Name) is betrothed to the servant of God (Name) in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. (Thrice) Amen.”

(Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America n.d.)

In the Orthodox Jewish tradition, the man says the following words when putting the ring on the finger of the bride:

“Behold, though art consecrated to me, according to the laws of Moses and Israel.”

(Greenberg 1990:9).

The bride also does this in the Reformed Jewish tradition (Braybrooke 1995:34), which is a feministic influence to promote equality between men and women.

In both the Greek Orthodox Church and Jewish tradition consent is considered necessary in the betrothal ceremony by both the bride and groom (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America n.d.; Lamm 1991:153). Consent is prominent in these two traditions most probably because the betrothal ceremony happens adjacent to the marriage ceremony itself. This is also something unique to these two traditions in the context of this study. It should be noted that all three

Abrahamic religions the mainstream traditions do not believe in marriage by force, but the concept of consent is seen more clearly in the marriage ceremonies of the other traditions. It would seem that the Christian Greek Orthodox church and the Jewish traditions have a lot in common when it comes to the betrothal ceremonies.

The use of wine in the betrothal ceremony is very prominent within the Jewish betrothal tradition as this is the only betrothal tradition in this study that contains the use of wine (Greenberg 1990:9). This is something every unique to Judaism and can be stated in an interreligious conversation as it celebrates this unique quality of Judaism. In all the traditions that have a religious betrothal ceremony, it is better if a layperson does not administrate the ceremony, although it is acceptable in the Roman Catholic Church (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:93). Mostly, these ceremonies must be administrated by an authoritative person. This is something that the above-mentioned traditions have in common and can be something they can converse over.

When considering the cultural aspects of marriage proposals, Christianity and Islam both have a strong cultural influence on how a marriage is proposed. In Islam, cultural differences can differ vastly when it comes to location. Marriages are most often facilitated in Islam; the marriage proposal usually stems from the man's family to the woman's family (Monger 2013:26). Most Islamic countries have a patriarchal society, which is why it is appropriate for the man's family to propose marriage. The involvement of family within the marriage proposal points to a strong sense of community and stresses the concept that the marriage is not just about the binding of bride and groom but about the binding of two families.

There is usually a ring that is given to the bride at the point of engagement, and mostly in Islam, more than one ring is typically given (Nikahnama.com 2017c). In Islamic traditions, the marriage proposal can differ vastly; some are done in code; some are done more outright. It may be done in private or in a public display.

Negotiations about the dowry and marriage ceremony itself will be held between the parents of the bride and groom in Islam (Nikahnama.com 2017a). Culture plays a significant role in why asking for the woman's hand can differ vastly as seen in Chapter 5. The concept of community and culture is something that runs deep within the Islamic way of proposing marriage. It is also unique in that the family and cultural practices are so important here. There is a lot of emphasis in Islam that the families are bound together and not just the couple. Understanding this unique aspect can help the other to understand the concept of integral family relations in Islam. If the other is looking for a way to enrich their own cultural and family bond within engagement rituals one can benefit from understanding some of the Islamic aspects within their marriage proposal. This does not mean other religions outside Islam should copy their rituals, but inspiration can be drawn from these rituals, thus unique rituals can be created through the creative process.

In most Reformed Christian communities, it is unlikely that there will be a betrothal ceremony although not impossible. Proposing marriage for Christians in Western culture is very open to the couple's preference. There are certain expectations culturally, for example, the man that proposes to the woman on one knee with a diamond ring. In a leap year in Western traditions, women may ask a man to marry her on the 29th of February (the extra day in a leap year) (Monger 2013:454). This does not mean that they are limited to only this. Feminism has

started to advance the idea of women proposing to men anytime. The ring can be to the bride's preference, and it is not necessary to get down on one knee, although it might be expected. This shows that although there are cultural influences, the Christian tradition is not at all strict on what the proposal should look like. It is open to the couple to decide how, when and where it will happen. Marriages are for the most part in Western Christian culture not facilitated in modern times; the couple would know each other well. It is expected that the proposal should be romantic, the couple would have known each other for some time, and they would probably know what their future spouse would prefer. Engagements have been broken in the Christian traditions, on the one hand, it is great that the couple has the freedom to have their ritual and on the other hand, a more rigid ritual can help aid the couple in understanding how serious the commitment is.

Christianity, Judaism and Islam all have different approaches to proposing marriage. As seen above, there are differences even in the same religion. Although the religions have different orientations when it comes to proposals, whether it is a cultural, religious or personal preference, there are still elements that overlap. For example, the giving of a ring from the man to the woman is present in all three the Abrahamic religions. The man asking for the woman's hand in marriage is also a norm in all three religions, although feminism has started to change this tradition in Christianity (Monger 2013:277). The feminist movement has an altering effect on these religious rituals. If this is understood, it is possible for their religions to engage in conversation regarding the changes that feminism is making as a movement. It is a platform, both for religions to find

ideas on how to empower women, and to discuss their doubts about the alterations and the influences it may have on the meaning of the rituals that feminism is altering.

It is very good that the Abrahamic religions all have their traditions regarding engagement and betrothal ceremonies. In modern times, Western traditions do not always take engagements seriously, this can be seen by the alarming statistics of engagements that are called off (Paul 2003). There are couples that become engaged not with the idea that they are going to plan a marriage but because it is considered to be the next step in their relationship. There are also couples that do not take the proposing of marriage seriously enough, and the relationship falls apart not long after the engagement. If a religious ritual is held in Reformed Christian traditions (this statement is only applicable to Churches that do not have a betrothal ceremony) it might help couples to see engagement in a more serious light (if such a need is identified by the religious leaders of the community). If this is to be done the ritual should be unique to the denomination. This does not at all mean that all couples do not take marriage proposals seriously. This also does not mean that the ritual will help all couples to see that it is a serious situation. However, it may help in some cases to make couples realise that marriage proposals are something to take seriously, also with regard to their religion, not limiting the fact that the proposal itself may have its personal touch as seen above.

Within the differences pointed out above it can become apparent that marriage proposals and betrothal ceremonies are rich in religious, cultural and personal aspects. When seeing how these rituals differ, one can understand what makes

these religions unique. This is something that should be celebrated. By understanding what makes the other unique within their rituals, one can also gain insight into what makes them unique within their understanding of marriage. This can also give valuable insight into the religion as a whole. As needs arise in the communities, such as couples needing to take engagements more seriously, one can fill the need uniquely, with unique meaning to the couple and denomination, while still learning from the other. Yet again, this does not entail the concept of blatantly copying something because it is “fun” or “cute”. This is not being suggested in this dissertation. Lastly, there are a considerable number of things that overlap in the Abrahamic religions regarding betrothal ceremonies and engagement periods. This information can be used in interreligious dialogue as a bonding agent between the Abrahamic religions.

6.3. Public marriage announcements

Public declarations of the pending marriage before the ceremony is usually done for legal reasons and is not necessarily part of the religious conviction of the couple. These traditions began because of medieval European law that stated that the officiant of the marriage ceremony has the responsibility to make sure the marriage is lawful (Lamm 1991:189). In the Church of England, the public marriage announcement is called Banns (The Church of England 2017:132). In both the Orthodox Jewish tradition and the Reformed Jewish tradition, the public marriage announcement is called the *Aufruf* ceremony (Lamm 1991:189). In Islam, the engagement period will be put on record as soon as possible after the marriage proposal has been accepted. Traces of the public engagement announcement are found in all three Abrahamic religions.

In the Church of England, the Banns will be read from the book of common prayer by the priest as seen in Chapter 3. If the Banns are in place, the congregation can come forward if there is a legitimate reason why the couple may not be married. In both the Orthodox Jewish tradition and the Reformed Jewish tradition, the *Aufruf* ceremony is in place to make sure the marriage can be performed lawfully. The Church of England's Banns also has a religious connection as the Church asks that the congregation keep the couple in their prayers. Thus, the Banns have a civil and religious motivation behind them. In both the Orthodox Jewish tradition and the Reformed Jewish tradition, the *Aufruf* has a religious meaning. The groom and some of his close male relatives and friends will read from the Torah and recite a blessing over it. This points to a religious tradition in both Christianity and Judaism with religious meaning, with its beginning in civil legal reasons. The concept of a public engagement announcement is thus something that can be a point of interest when it comes to interfaith conversation. The fact that these traditions have the engagement announcement in common, as well as the religious and civil purpose of this custom, is something that they can converse on. One can also have a conversation on how these rituals have changed or can change in the future.

6.4. Group activity, purifying rituals and religious art

Group activity is found within the pre-marriage rituals in Christianity, Judaism and Islam. In Christianity, it comes in the form of a kitchen tea and bachelor parties (Pleck 2000:213). The kitchen tea points back to the importance of community within Christianity. This tradition comes out of the need the bride and groom had when first married and had only a few possessions to set up a household. The

community, in other words, friends and family, will help them set up a home by giving them commonly used household items they do not have (Mills 1969:10). In the case of the bachelor or bachelorette party, it is a celebration of the life of an unmarried man or woman being as they now enter into a marriage bond with their spouse. Both of these traditions usually involve only the female at the bride's events and only males at the groom's events. This tradition is changing as it is not uncommon to find close family or friends of the other gender at the couples' bachelor- or bachelorette parties. Of the Christian traditions that have been discussed, there are no purifying rituals or religious arts that take place before the wedding. It is interesting to see the separation of the sexes in the bachelor party and kitchen tea traditions as this is prominent in the pre-marriage rites within Judaism and Islam.

Christianity has this in common with Judaism and Islam as well as the fact that there are pre-marriage rituals that are enacted in a community environment. This, in turn, creates a better, stronger, bonded community. The emphasis of community is seen widely within Judaism and Islam when looking at marriage ceremonial rituals. The emphasis is not on the community as much in Christianity, although it is not less important. These traditions can be a point of interest in interfaith conversation within the sector of commonalities. The aspect of community bond is one of the important matters of this dissertation. Through the concept of community, one may be able to gain empathetic feelings towards the other within their marriage rituals.

Ritual baths are found in both Jewish traditions as well as Islamic traditions. In Judaism, the ritual bath is called a *Mikvah* (Monger 2013:52). In Islam, the ritual

bath is called a *Ghusl* (Islamic Sharia Law 2006:123). In both Judaism and Islam, the *Mikvah* and the *Ghusl* are not seen as an ordinary bath but is purifying the one that takes part in it on the inside (Islamic Sharia Law 2006; Braybrooke 1995:33). The *Mikvah* is used to purify the bride and groom before the wedding (Lamm 1991:191). The groom may also have an intense study of the Torah if he cannot perform the *Mikvah*, it will have the same effect. The *Ghusl* is a bath that both the bride and groom in Islam undergo to purify themselves before the marriage ceremony (Monger 2013:103). This may happen on the day of, or in the week of the marriage ceremony.

As seen here, there are some similarities between the Islamic *Ghusl* and the Jewish *Mikvah*. However, there are also, considerable differences. The Qur'an cannot be held or recited when one is not pure, this purity is obtained through the *Ghusl* (Islamic Sharia Law 2006:125-127). The Torah, on the other hand, may be read without having a *Mikvah* and the reading of the Torah has a purifying effect (Lamm 1991:194). Although Christianity does not have a ritual bath as a general purifying ritual, it is worth mentioning that Christianity uses water to baptise new believers into Christianity. The *Mikvah* and the *Ghusl* are also used in Judaism and Islam to initiate new members into the Jewish and Islamic faith (Lamm 1991:191; Islamic Sharia Law 2006:125-127). This custom and use of water for purifying and initiation into a religious community can be an interesting point of conversation between the three religions. Hair removal is also practised in Islam before the wedding in Iran and Egypt (Monger 2013:149-150). This is unique in this study to Islam. The *Ghusl* and *Mikvah* can be seen as very important purification rituals before the marriage ceremonies. These ritual baths are thus a

very good point for a conversation between the Jewish and Islamic communities. They might relate to one another over the fact that they both use ritual baths. The Islamic and Jewish community may also try to understand the differences concerning these ritual baths. This can strengthen the bond between these two communities and help these two communities celebrate how their religious rituals are unique.

Henna ceremonies are held in both Islamic traditions and Jewish traditions, although it is just the Kurdish communities within Judaism that use Henna as a pre-marriage ritual (Monger 2013:448; Spurles 2004:iv,57). In Islam, a Gai-haldi ceremony is practised in Bangladesh and is very similar to the Henna ceremony with the main difference being the use of turmeric paste instead of Henna paste (Monger 2013:40). There is also a ritual where the bride accepts food from her new in-laws, and a bangle is tied onto her arm to show the bond between the families (Monger 2013:40-41). Henna is used in both the Kurdish Jewish community and in Islam as a protective layer that keeps the person that is hennaed safe from evil (Spurles 2004:87). Being in-between life cycles, from single to married, makes one more open to evil (Spurles 2004:87). This is also a very good bonding experience as this is a group exercise. The paste, be it Henna or turmeric is applied to the bride and depending on the situation as seen in Chapter 4 and 5, the paste may also be applied to the groom. Gifts may also be given to the bride in Islamic traditions by the groom's female relatives at the time of the Henna ceremony (Monger 2013:41; Nikahnama.com 2017a). There are thus many similarities and differences between the Islamic and Kurdish Jewish Henna ceremonies.

It should be noted that for the most part the other Jewish traditions and the Christian traditions do not practice the Henna ritual and in this study, this is unique to the Kurdish Jewish community as well as the Islamic communities. These communities may thus converse on the Henna ceremonies. The bonding of the community is an important point to remember regarding the Henna rituals. Christian women may have a spa day before the wedding with some of their close female relatives or friends; this does not, however, compare to the Henna ceremonies. The Henna rituals can be an interesting point of conversation to understand the bonding of communities, as well as the concept of vulnerability within the life cycle period. If there is a need for better bonding within the other communities, some of the information regarding Henna nights might be useful. This, by no means, suggests that the Henna night should blatantly be copied. The communities that do practice Henna nights may also be so inclined to celebrate their uniqueness in this regard.

In the Christian bachelor parties and kitchen teas along with the Henna parties in Judaism and Islam, the one emphasis within these practices is the concept of community. The support of the community toward the bride and groom in the time before the wedding is important. Bonding within their now expanding communities is very important as they are becoming a part of the families they are marrying into. Therefore, these celebrations can be viewed as a community ritual. The grooming ceremonies that are practised in Islam and Judaism are there to purify the bride and groom before their wedding day. In Judaism, this is mainly because the bride's and groom's sins are forgiven on the wedding day (Lamm 1991:195). Thus, it is appropriate to have a *Mikvah*. In Islam, certain

religious deeds may not be fulfilled when one is not pure, as well as the bride and groom have to be pure for the consummation. It would, therefore, be important to be pure before the wedding day. Purification rituals can be a good topic that Judaism and Islam can bond over. Christianity having limited to no purification rituals before the wedding can also be a very important topic of conversation as it is a unique quality within the context of this dissertation. This can help the Abrahamic religions understand some unique and shared aspects, which can lead to better tolerance.

6.5. Date and location

The date and location of a marriage ceremony will depend on religious, cultural and personal aspects. Many people in Christianity feel that the marriage ceremony should be held within a Church. It is not uncommon for a marriage to be held in a wedding venue, especially if they have a chapel. The Church is important because the bride and groom are undergoing not just a civil act but a religious one as well. In many Islamic countries, men and woman should not mix socially (Monger 2013:26). Thus, a separate venue will be used for men and women. It is becoming more common in some urban areas for men and woman to be able to mix at a marriage celebration (Monger 2013:251). Venues are usually used within Islamic traditions especially in countries where an elaborate number of guests are usually invited (Nikahnama.com 2017a).

In traditional Judaism, the groom's house is used for the marriage celebration, or in the courtyard of the Synagogue. Orthodox Judaism does not believe in holding marriage ceremonies within the Synagogue (Pleck 2000:210). Reformed Judaism, on the other hand, encourages couples to have their ceremony in the

Synagogue (Silverman 1970:205). This might be a Western influence, or even more specific, a Christian influence, as this is part of the reason why the Orthodox Jewish tradition discourages marriage inside the Synagogue (Monger 2013:396). The Jewish Orthodox also feels that having the ceremony in the Synagogue will violate the Torah (Pleck 2000:210). It may also be to show a divide between them as the Reformed Jewish tradition and the Orthodox Jewish tradition. In Judaism, the marriage ceremony takes place under the Chuppah (Monger 2013:121). The Chuppah is, especially in Orthodox Judaism, placed outside as a sign that the couple's offspring will be as many as the stars in the sky (Monger 2013:121). The Chuppah is a symbol of the couple's new household (Greenberg, 1990:8). The Chuppah can thus count not just as an object used within the ceremony but can be seen as the location of the ceremony.

The unique views of marriage venues within the Abrahamic religions can be used as a discussion topic within interreligious conversations. The marriage venue can aid in the understanding of the other and help each religion celebrate their individuality. This is an important point of interest, especially if interreligious couples want to get married. It will be hard enough for the couple being in an interreligious relationship; it is best to know where not to step on toes within the community of their spouse.

In Christianity, the date when the marriage ceremony takes place is not of great concern. There are those who feel it is best not to have a Christian wedding on a Sunday (Christian Sabbath) as the Sabbath is a day for rest, it is also frowned upon to dance on a Sunday. In Judaism, marriage may also not be held on a Sabbath as this is a holy day and contracts may not be signed on a holy day

(Lamm 1991:180). Preparations may also not be made for the wedding on a Sabbath (Lamm 1991:180). Other holy days may thus also not be used as well as days of personal mourning. The bride and groom may not be intimate on a holy day (Lamm 1991:180-181). In Judaism, the marriage ceremony may not happen in the week during the menstruation period of the bride or the week after menstruation (Cohn-Sherbok 2003:540). This only leaves two weeks in a month. Although not all Reformed Jewish traditions follow the menstruation practice, this is probably because of the feminist movement (Cohn-Sherbok 2003:541). The date is thus chosen with much care within Judaism. In Islam, the bride and groom need to be pure as discussed under the heading *Group activity, Purifying rituals and religious art* (Islamic Sharia Law 2006:124). For this to be possible the bride cannot menstruate at the time of the marriage ceremony. This needs to be considered when choosing a date for the marriage ceremony. In Egyptian Islamic communities, the Katb el Ktab is done only in a Mosque (Nikahnama.com 2017). The fact that the bride should not menstruate in the week of the wedding is thus something that Judaism and Islam have in common. The fact that marriage is encouraged to be held inside a Church in Christianity, inside a Synagogue in Reformed Jewish traditions and inside a Mosque in Egyptian Islamic communities is also something that these religions have in common. The Chuppah is unique to the Jewish community. The concept of not holding marriage ceremonies on Sabbath occurs in Christianity and Judaism. These are all intriguing facts that can be brought up in interfaith conversations. The topics mentioned above can give valuable insight into how and when marriage should take place. The concept of menstruation and purity can also be an interesting topic for interfaith conversation

that can spike debate. Although menstruation was seen as impure in the past in Christianity, this view has, for the most part, died out (Jensen 2015).

6.6. Entrance and procession

In Islam, there is a big procession from the groom's house to the bride's house, so he can collect her and take her back to his house (Monger 2013:27). This is symbolic of the bride's home changing from that of her parents to that of her husband (Monger 2013:121). Similarly, the bride entering the Chuppah in Judaism is also symbolic of how the bride enters the house of the groom (Lamm 1991:212). This is why the groom is usually first to arrive in the Chuppah, to symbolise his home (Lamm 1991:212). There is a tradition in Christianity that the father walks the bride down the aisle and gives his daughter to the groom (The Church of England 2017:133). This in a way coincides with the concept of the bride is moving from the father's house/protection/financial support to that of the groom. This is not always practised anymore depending on the denomination and culture of the bride and groom as it is seen as a sexist tradition and feminism points this out (Monger 2013:277). The problem is that women can be viewed as objects instead of entities when the bride is given away. This tradition has been reformed in the Presbyterian Church where the bride and groom are given to each other by both the parents (Presbyterian Church USA 2003:211). In the Presbyterian Church, the bride and groom may also enter together (Presbyterian Church USA 2003:211). In Judaism, the bride is accompanied by her mother and mother-in-law, and the groom will be accompanied by his father and father-in-law (Lamm 1991:213). Candles are typically held by the parents as they walk the bride and groom to the Chuppah (Cohn-Sherbok 2003:541; Lamm 1991:213).

In Islam, the procession for collecting the bride usually involves big sound displays, music and gunshots (Monger 2013:27,55). In Christianity, music will usually be played with the entrance of the bride. The bridesmaids may walk in before the bride; this will depend on the denomination. In Judaism, the bride walks around the groom seven times before coming to a stop next to him (Greenberg 1990:9). She creates an invisible barrier between him and herself and the rest of the world (Greenberg 1990:9).

There are similarities shared between Christianity, Judaism and Islam in the sense that the entrance and procession is a transition from a stage of being single to a married stage. This is also in a way a metaphor for how the bride and groom are now seen as adults. The community aspect of the entrance into marriage is also striking in Christianity, Judaism and Islam. As we see in the procession to collecting the bride that the groom is accompanied by family and friends. In Judaism, the bride and groom are accompanied by a parent (Monger 2013:429). Being accompanied by parents is also a norm in Christianity especially the father accompanying the bride (The Church of England 2017:132). The procession of bridesmaids and groomsmen in Christianity before the bride enters also shows a sense of community (Presbyterian Church USA 2003:211). In Christianity, the entrance into the Church or venue is met with great anticipation as the bride and groom mostly do not see each other before the ceremony on that day (Kightly 1986:229). The guests would also not have seen the bride until the entrance, a lot of preparation and thought is put into her appearance on the wedding day. The entrance or procession to the wedding is thus an important topic for interfaith conversation. There are unique and overlapping traditions, that can give a better

understanding or even act as a bonding agent within these religions. One can also see the importance of community within these religions when considering this part of the marriage rituals in all the Abrahamic religions.

6.7. Sermon

The sermon in itself is the most prominent in the Christian traditions. In Bangladesh, within the Islamic faith, the *Mullah* will have a short sermon after the *Nikah* contract is signed (Nikahnama.com 2017a). In this sermon he will discuss marriage and why it is essential (Nikahnama.com 2017a). He will also say a prayer over the newly wedded couple (Nikahnama.com 2017a). Within the Christian sermon in a marriage ceremony there is a reminder about the meaning of marriage and its importance. This will also include a indication of how marriage is seen as as a religious act in a Christian context. In a way, this coincides with the purpose of a sermon within Islamic tradition. A Christian ceremony reaffirms what is believed about marriage within Christianity and reminds the bride and groom that this is what they should uphold. The sermon is always conducted by an ordained person in the Christian tradition.

In the Christian tradition, a complicated balance of prayers, biblical readings, sermons and something personal for the couple will all be part of the sermon as seen in Chapter 3, above. This part of the marriage ceremony is not a civil or legal requirement but rather a religious requirement. This is a reminder that marriage is not just a civil union for Christians but also a spiritual one that has deep religious roots. The concept of the marriage ceremony having a spiritual side is also present in Judaism and Islam but is seen more prominently in blessings. The sermon also reaffirms what marriage means to those attending

the marriage ritual. If the guests are married, they will be reminded through the sermon of what a Christian marriage should reflect. If there are unmarried guests, this will affirm what they would one day have if they were to get married. Thus, the sermon might be a consideration for interfaith conversation as it can reflect the core values of marriage verbally as well as the high regard a community has for marriage.

6.8. Blessings

A range of different blessings is present within marriage ceremonies in Christianity, Judaism and Islam. The first blessing within Islam is found within the Henna and Henna ceremony. In this ceremony, the Henna paste that is put on the bride's skin and leaves red markings are seen as a divine blessing that will keep her from spiritual and physical harm (Spurles 2004). In this time when she is between life cycles, she is particularly open to evil; thus, the divine blessing is necessary (Spurles 2004:155). In Judaism, the bride will be blessed by the two fathers after being veiled using the following words:

“Our sister, sister, may you become the mother of thousands of ten thousand... The Lord make you as Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and Leah.”

(Monger 2013:429)

In the Christian sermon, it is typical for the officiant to ask for God's blessing on the couple's marriage in prayer throughout the ceremony. In a Roman Catholic Church, the rings will be blessed by the priest with holy water (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:21-22). In the Church of England, the

minister will also bless the rings with a prayer (The Church of England 2017:109). In the Greek Orthodox Church, during the marriage ceremony, there may be an asking for God to bless the couple with the blessing that biblical characters have received in their marriages (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America n.d.). In Islamic traditions, it is normal for the guests to bless the bride and groom and wish them well with their new marriage (Monger 2013:42). Within the betrothal ceremony in Judaism, the Rabbi recites a blessing over the wine from which the bride and groom then drink (Greenberg 1990:9). In the *Nussuin* part of the Jewish ceremony, seven blessings are recited over the second cup of wine from which the bride and groom drink (Greenberg 1990:9). These blessings can be viewed in Chapter 4 of this dissertation. They may differ depending on the Jewish tradition, but the message stays the same. The bride and groom are a part of creation and the future hope of Judaism.

In Bangladesh, in the Islamic tradition, there is also a *Rusmat* ceremony where the fathers of the bride and groom bless the newlyweds in private after the festivities (Monger 2013:42). The seven blessings are said in the Jewish tradition at the end of the feast as well as every day for a week after the marriage ceremony (Lamm 1991:233). A *Minyan* will be present for this (Lamm 1991:235). It is clear that blessings on the newlyweds are important to the Abrahamic religions. This is one of the highly religious parts of the marriage ceremonies rather than it being part of the civil part of marriage. Although culture might play a role when the blessing is given the core of the blessings are religious and deeply spiritual.

The blessing has some concepts in common as well. On the one hand, it is to ask for God's blessing on the couple in the Abrahamic religions. On the other hand, when scriptural characters are used within the blessing, as a reminder to the bride and groom that they should strive in their marriage to a religious lifestyle and take guidance from the Bible, Torah or Qur'an. Blessings are an integral part of marriage ceremonies within the Abrahamic religions and can play a crucial role in the interreligious conversation.

Blessings on a new marriage are very important and should be practised as a way of reminding and strengthen the newlywed's spiritual bond. The care and through what is spoken within the blessing reflects the relationship between the couple and the person that is blessing them. It also shows that newlyweds are vulnerable in their new bond; this is thus an excellent topic for interreligious conversation. The blessings that are given on the wedding day as a topic for interreligious conversation can promote bonding between religions and education on how the other contemplate these matters. The concept of reciting blessings on the married couple after the ceremony, a while after the ceremony, a month or even longer may help the newlyweds in their bond and spiritual journeys together. This might be something to consider in Christianity to continue to work with and bless the newlyweds, as this is not always done after the marriage ceremony. It is important to note that there are also personal blessings or wishes given by guests. This is not formal blessings but very informal vocalisation of emotional and spiritual support from the guests.

6.9. Consent

Consent to the marriage is a very powerful and important part of all the mainstream Abrahamic religions. It should be noted that marriage by force is a historical phenomenon in all three Abrahamic religions. It is frowned upon today and not condoned, although it is still a reality. The official laws in most countries and views of the Abrahamic religions are that both the bride and groom must consent to the wedding and that marriage should never be by force. In Christian traditions, the bride and groom will be asked to state their intention to marry. This can be done by asking a set of questions to which the couple must answer “yes”. These questions were stated in Chapter 3. The questions can differ depending on the denomination. The basis of these questions is to ensure that the bride and groom have come with full consent to enter into marriage. The questions also reflect something of a civil oath to confirm the legality of the marriage contract. Consent is also later echoed within the vows that the couple makes to one another. The vows may also differ depending on the denomination and can also be found in Chapter 3. It is worth mentioning that in the past and depending on the denomination, the bride had to vow to obey her husband (The Church of England 2017:105). With the feminist movement, this has changed as women deserve equal rights and should not be seen as the passive partner in the relationship (Monger 2013:277). Thus, the vow of obeying the husband is either optional or omitted.

In the Orthodox Jewish tradition, the groom puts the ring on the bride's finger and says the following words:

*“Behold, though art consecrated to me, according to the laws of
Moses and Israel.”*

(Greenberg 1990:9).

The words are seen as the groom’s consent, if the bride accepts the ring, then this is seen as her consent (Lamm 1991:221). In the Reformed Jewish tradition, the Rabbi may ask both the bride’s and groom’s consent (Cohn-Sherbok 2003:542). In the Reformed Jewish tradition, the bride may also give the groom a ring and repeat the same words as seen above (Braybrooke 1995:34). This was started though feminism as the bride and groom should have equal rights (Monger 2013:711). The idea behind this change was that the bride's verbal consent is considered necessary so that she should not be treated as a passive partner in the relationship.

In Islam, a *Wali* or marriage guardian may not forcibly facilitate a marriage to a man that the bride did not consent to (Glasse 2002:296). Thus, the bride and groom will meet if the marriage is facilitated so that they can be able to consent to the marriage (Nikahnama.com 2017a). Two adult male Muslim witnesses or one male and two females are necessary to witness on the wedding day that the bride has consented to the marriage ceremony (Chaudhry 2002:34,39; Mir-hosseini 2011:168; Salamone 2010:197). As the bride may be represented by her *Wali*, especially at her first wedding, it is essential that there is a confirmation that she consented to the marriage. The bride may give consent according to the custom or law of the country and sign the contract (Monger 2013:42). Silence has been seen in the past as consent on the bride’s part, and this has largely been

contested by feminism (Fluehr-Lobban 1994:67). In Brunei, the man will make a vow to take the woman as his bride (Nikahnama.com 2017b).

In the concept of vows and consent, it is clear that feminism is reforming these traditions, so the bride has an equal footing to the groom. The bride is not just the passive person in the relationship, but a marriage contract is between equal partners. The vow of obeying one's husband is also being omitted in Christianity, and this also shows a shift toward more equal rights for women in marriage relationships. The concept of consent is one of the most significant points on equality as neither men nor women should be forced into marriage. Christianity, Judaism and Islam thus have mutual consent of the bride and groom at the marriage ceremonies in common. The consent to marriage is a very important topic that can be discussed in interreligious conversation as it may be a point of interest between the religions. Interreligious conversations may also then include the concept of feminism and how it had changed consent and how it is viewed within these marriage ceremonies.

6.10. Dowry and finances

Dowries have historically played a big role in all three Abrahamic religions. In Judaism, the bride's father usually gives her dowry, it is equal to a woman's wardrobe for a year and should be enough for her to buy some items for her new home (Lamm 1991:202). This will be written up in the marriage contract or *Ketubah* and does not become the groom's but will stay her property (Lamm 1991:202). The bride also receives a ring on the day of the wedding from the groom and her acceptance of the ring shows her consent to the wedding ceremony (Lamm 1991:221). This in a way can also be seen as part of her dowry,

because the value of the ring may not be misleading and if it is found to be misleading the marriage may be dissolved (Lamm 1991:221).

In Christianity, dowries were used historically but are not practised in modern times. In the Christian Catholic Spanish tradition, the *Las Arras* may be used (Monger 2013:32). These are 13 coins representing Jesus and his disciples (Monger 2013:32). The priest blesses the coins, gives it to the groom and he, in turn, gives it to the bride (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:22). The coins are a sign of good things to come in the marriage and is seen as God's blessing in their lives (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:22). This may be seen in the same concept as a dowry.

In Islamic traditions when the payment of the dowry will take place depends on negotiations, cultural traditions and local law. In Islam, the dowry is mostly referred to as a *Mahr* (Chaudhry 2002:43; Glasse 2002:296; Salamone 2010:197). The *Mahr* may be paid according to the cultural traditions that the couple is immersed in. The household items that the bride gathers before the wedding will form part of her dowry and will not belong to the groom (Monger 2013:27). Depending on the local law a maximum or minimum amount will be stated for the *Mahr* as the Qur'an does not give a guideline for this (Chaudhry 2002:43; al Faruqi 1990). The *Mahr* is put in place, so the woman has financial security when she is widowed or divorced (Monger 2013:27,131; Fluehr-Lobban 1994:69). The dowry must be accepted by the bride for the marriage to be valid (Chaudhry 2002:43). The *Mahr* is seen as a gift from the groom to the bride and is not a transaction (Islamic Sharia Law 2006:38).

Thus, historically all Abrahamic religions have had the concept of the dowry at one point or another. The concept of the dowry is mostly for financial security for the bride if she is widowed or divorced. The concept of the dowry was at the time very necessary and served as financial protection for a married woman. Dowries can be a fascinating topic of conversation regarding women's rights in ownership and inheritance. This topic can also be used as a starting point to understand that the protection of women's rights was there from early on in the Abrahamic religions. This does not mean that changes cannot be implemented in order to keep ensuring the rights of women and men. The concept of a dowry works well in a society where women are not allowed to work and earn their own income. This is very helpful in a more traditional society where it is perceived that the man is the provider, and the woman's place is in the house. This makes it harder for a husband just to divorce his wife. The concept of why dowries are needed does not fit into most Western Christian societies today, and this is part of the reason why it is not used. The law regarding marriage and divorce depending on the country will also make fair rulings regarding finance if, for example, a woman stayed home with the children and the man worked. This will be further discussed under the next heading, *Contracts*.

6.11. Contract

The marriage contract is an important and non-optional part of a legal marriage. In Judaism, the contract is called a *Ketubah* (Cohn-Sherbok 2003:540). In Islam, the contract is called a *Nikah* or *Katb el Katb* (Monger 2013:249; al Faruqi 1990:85). In Christianity, a civil contract is signed, the contract is not unique to

Christianity but is instead used by other entities as well and will conform to the laws of the country or state.

In Judaism, the first step in the marriage ritual is for the groom to sign the *Ketubah* that will later be given to the bride in the *Kiddushin* ceremony (Cohn-Sherbok 2003:540). The *Ketubah* is also signed by two male witnesses (Greenberg 1990:8). The concept of just the groom signing the *Ketubah* (and not the bride) is significant because the *Ketubah* states his obligations toward the bride (Monger 2013:428). This again actually makes the bride the passive partner in the relationship and is something that, if so, wished, can be a conversation that can later be given a voice through feminism. If the household does not have a *Ketubah*, the woman is a concubine and is not seen as a wife (Lamm 1991:198). A civil contract, as seen in Christianity, may also be signed if the couple so wishes and this will also depend on the laws of the country.

The *Katb el Katb* is used within Egypt and is very similar to the *Nikah* contract (Monger 2013:249). The contract may be signed before the wedding celebration or depending on the culture of the bride and groom. A *Wali* (usually the bride's father) will be used if it is the bride's first wedding; otherwise, she may make the agreement with the groom (Monger 2013:249). These documents consist of legal obligations of both spouses, what restrictions can be held will also be stated in the document, as well as financial matters (Fluehr-Lobban 1994:70).

In Christianity, the contract is often signed right after the religious ceremony, but depending on the laws of the country a civil ceremony may also be necessary. In Christianity, the civil contract usually indicates how assets and finances will be

seen in the marriage if the bride's and grooms' finances are kept apart or are considered to be both the bride's and the grooms. Certain aspects may be put in place if the couple gets divorced. Thus, the contracts that are signed in the marriage ceremonies in all three Abrahamic religions will determine if the marriage is valid. The contract determines the couple's path in the financial future of their marriage.

The document is furthermore in place to state what can happen in a divorce situation. The contract is an essential part of the marriage ceremony and is thus also an important topic for interreligious conversation. These contracts were used for a long time to protect women in a patriarchal society that did not have any additional financial stability if they were to divorce. By understanding that the contract can determine the legal consequences for the couple when married or getting divorced, one must concede that it is an important topic for interfaith conversation. This matter relates to the status of married women in society and can form a discussion point at interreligious conversations. One might understand the other better in their every day- or family life and can perhaps create a feeling of empathy through the fact that they use contracts to distinguish between married and unmarried people.

6.12. Food

Under this heading, the religious meaning of food will be discussed. This does not include the concept of the wedding feast but rather food used in a ritualised way. In the Islamic *Rusmat* performed in Bangladesh, when the couple sees each other's faces for the first time in private after the marriage celebration, they share something to drink and eat out of the same plate and cup (Monger 2013:42). This

is a very intimate moment for the bride and groom as they have not seen each other's faces before and have not shared food, this is a sign of their bond to each other in marriage (Monger 2013:42). In Orthodox Judaism, the bride and groom have time alone directly after the ceremony called the *Yichud* (Monger 2013:429). Historically, the bride and groom would have consummated the wedding at this time (Greenberg 1990:10). Today, the bride and groom will fast on the day of the wedding as it is a day on which their sins are forgiven (Monger 2013:429). The concept that sins are forgiven on the wedding day is something found to be unique in the context of Judaism (Lamm 1991:195). In both Judaism and Islam, the act of eating together in private, and in a ritualised way, is prominent in the traditions mentioned above. Eating together is an essential human bonding experience. In these traditions, the bride and groom will be bonded together within their basic trust to be able to eat together.

The Roman Catholic Church, the Church of England and the Greek Orthodox Church all use Eucharist otherwise known as Holy Communion within their marriage ceremonies (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2017:23; The Church of England 2017:134; Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America n.d.). For this study, the researcher is going to use the term Eucharist, and it should be stated that these Churches are singled out for this study. Eucharist is one of Christianity's sacraments. In the Roman Catholic Church, the Eucharist is seen as a sacrament that is used besides other sacraments (Carmody 1990:45). Marriage is seen as a sacrament in the Roman Catholic Church, and thus Eucharist is appropriate at wedding ceremonies (Carmody 1990:45). Eucharist involves bread and wine as a sign of the body and blood of Christ. This researcher

is not going to go into detail surrounding the dogma of Eucharist in the different denominations. Eucharist may be omitted when either the bride or groom is a Christian from a different denomination. Not all Reformed Christian traditions practice Holy Communion at marriage ceremonies. Marriage is seen in a lot of Reformed traditions as non-sacramental although the institution of marriage is seen as sacred, marriage is seen as a civil act. The break with the Catholic Church also meant for a lot of Reformed Churches that the concept of Eucharist within the marriage ceremonies also faded to show the divide. By using Holy Communion, the bride and groom do not just eat, and drink together but rather share another sacrament. This is a very strong bonding experience for the bride and groom.

In both the Reformed Jewish tradition and the Orthodox Jewish tradition blessings are said over wine in both the *Kiddushin* and *Nissuin* ceremonies (Greenberg 1990:9). The bride and groom then drink from one cup; each ceremony has its own cup (Greenberg 1990:9). This is a sign of their unity within marriage (Monger 2013:429). The mothers of the bride and groom will help the bride drink from the cups by lifting her veil (Lamm 1991:219). This also shows community support inside the concept of marriage as it is the binding of two people and two families. Wine is here used as a sanctification of the marriage between the bride and groom (Lamm 1991:190). As mentioned above the concept of drinking and eating together is a human trust- and bonding mechanism.

It is interesting to note that the Abrahamic religions, although it might not be in all the traditions, do have a sense of using food in a ritualised way within or after the marriage ceremony. This will promote bonding for the couple. This is not just in

place of the basic human bonding but as the Eucharist is considered a sacrament and the wine within Judaism is seen as sanctifying the marriage. Using food as a symbol of the bond between the bride and groom is a very good and primal symbol to use, to show the new bond between them. It is also striking to see that in a lot of these traditions the bride and groom share a cup and or a plate. If for example dinner guests are expected, the host would set a place with plates, cutlery and glasses for every person attending the dinner. It is thus very striking of the couple's intimate bond and oneness in a sense that they drink from the same cup and eat from the same plate as a sign of their unity. The use of ritualised food can be a fascinating topic for interreligious conversation, as it might promote empathy and understanding. It is also interesting to note that even though Eucharist and the use of wine within Judaism have different deeper meanings, there is a bond between the wine and the concept of sanctifications. The use of some form of ritualised food within or after the marriage ceremony is a good and powerful symbol that can have profound meaning within the religions.

6.13. Fertility and good luck rituals

There are traces of the use of confetti in all three Abrahamic religions. By this, the researcher means something plentiful that is thrown at the bride and groom by the guests. It is present in all the Abrahamic marriage ceremonies. In Judaism, the groom is thrown with nuts or candy at the *Aufruf* ceremony before the marriage ceremony (Cohn-Sherbok 2003:540). It is also custom at a Jewish wedding ceremony that the guests throw barley or rice in front of the bride and groom on the day of the wedding (Cohn-Sherbok 2003:540). In the Islamic Brunei tradition, the groom is thrown with saffron rice when he reaches the bride's house

(Monger 2013:103). In Bangladesh, the groom and his procession are thrown with flower petals as they enter the wedding venue (Monger 2013:42). In Christianity, the bride and groom are traditionally showered with confetti after the ceremony when they exit the Church (Pleck 2000:207). The Greek Orthodox Church also throw confetti, but only when the couple walks around the table together (Monger 2013:540). The walking around the table is also their first act as a married couple, and this is done together (Monger 2013:540).

As seen above, confetti is widely used within the Abrahamic religions. Confetti may consist of flower petals, grains, paper and even bubbles. The concept of confetti suggests a wish of fertility on the bride and groom, wishing them many offspring. However, the confetti can also be viewed as good wishes, luck or even blessings to come. Confetti consists of small items that are plentiful; for each item, the concept of either fertility or blessings are wished upon the bride and groom by their guests. This is as we can see a commonly used item within marriage celebrations that the guests can also express their joy that they share with the couple. The practice that confetti is thrown at the bride and groom can be a bonding agent within an interreligious conversation. The different meanings that the diverse groups have of confetti can be a good educational journey to promote tolerance between interreligious groups.

The Christian wedding cake has always been a symbol of fertility; this is why it was important for the cake to be packed with a lot of fruit as a sign of fertility (Williamson 1994:162). The cake is mostly not seen as a fertility symbol today, and any cake can be used at a marriage celebration. The bride and groom are also thought of as having extraordinary luck on the day of their wedding (Pleck

2000:211; Monger 2013:302). Thus, the clothes that they wear, and the bride's flowers are seen as a symbol of good luck (Monger 2013:302). The bride will throw the bouquet at the group of single women at the marriage ceremony (Monger 2013:302). Moreover, the groom throws the garter at the single men (Monger 2013:302). The two who catch the flowers and the garter are seen as the next in line to get married (not necessarily to each other) (Monger 2013:302). The catching of the garter or the flowers is therefore seen as good luck; this, as well as the cake, is something that is unique to Christianity and regarded a fertility symbol. This is not one of the oldest traditions but dates back to the 17th and 18th centuries (Monger 2013:302). It is also considered bad luck for the bride and groom to see each other on the day of the ceremony, before the ceremony commences (Kightly 1986:229). The bridesmaids and groomsmen will help keep them apart until the ceremony (Monger 2013:647). This dates back to a time of arranged marriage when the couple would only meet during the ceremony.

In Orthodox Judaism at the end of the *Nissuin* ceremony the groom steps on the glass (traditionally the one used within the *Nissuin* blessing or another cup) and shatters it (Greenberg 1990:10). The glass is traditionally wrapped in a cloth (Greenberg 1990:10). The bride's and groom's old lives are now gone, broken like the glass, and the past is gone, and their new lives can now begin together (Lamm 1991:231). This tradition is also considered to ward off evil and is thus a ritual that is done for good luck (Monger 2013:429). This tradition is also done in remembrance of the fallen temple of Jerusalem (Lamm 1991:230). This is a very important part of the ceremony, the crowd also shouts '*mazel tov*'; in other words, 'good luck (Greenberg 1990:10). This is something unique to Judaism in this

study. This ritual is seen as both joy and sadness, considering the temple. Furthermore, the *Chuppah* in Judaism underneath the open sky is seen as a fertility symbol as their offspring will be as many as there are stars in the sky (Monger 2013:121).

In Islamic tradition in Brunei, the bride and groom are not allowed to fall asleep on the night after the ceremony; it is believed that the one who does fall asleep will die first (Monger 2013:103). In this study, the concept of not falling asleep on the wedding night is unique to Islam. As seen within the Henna ceremonies above, Henna is used as a form of protection to the bride and sometimes the groom; Henna is a symbol of blessing to protect them from evil (Spurles 2004:155). The Henna ceremonies are also seen in Kurdish Jewish tradition in the marriage rituals and are also seen as spiritual protection (Cohn-Sherbok 2003:540). In keeping with the concept of warding off evil, or confusing evil spirits, bridesmaids in Christian traditions were once dressed in white just like the bride so they may confuse any spirits or evil that may befall the bride on the day of the marriage celebration (Pleck 2000:211-212; Mills 1969:6). Today Christians do not practice this anymore.

The concept of fertility and good luck rituals are mostly based on culture and does not always have a religious connection. This does not mean that they cannot have a religious connection as seen in Judaism with the remembrance of the temple. Good luck rituals are usually in place to ward off evil as seen above as all three Abrahamic religions have had good luck or ward off evil symbols, either currently, and/or historically. The bride and grooms' relationship have changed, and they are now newlyweds, this may be challenging, as they start the path into

the unknown. It will also be tragic if something were to happen to the bride and groom after the marriage ceremony because their lives together have only begun. With divorce being a reality in all three religions (although highly frowned upon) the concept of good luck rituals also makes sense. The good luck rituals are not just about warding off evil, but so the guests at the wedding have an opportunity as with confetti for example to show their joy and hope that the couple receives blessings in their married life.

Fertility rituals play a big part in Abrahamic marriage ceremonies. This should not be surprising as marriage is seen as both the safe and normal place for sex to be practised and for children to be brought into the world. It is not uncommon for Abrahamic religions to ban birth control unless it is life-threatening for the mother. This being said, there are Abrahamic traditions that do allow birth control. Giving birth is hazardous even today with modern technology something can still go wrong. This is the reason why good luck and fertility rituals also overlap. (Greenberg 1990) The good luck and fertility rituals are seen within all the Abrahamic religions; having an interreligious conversation to try and better understand these rituals within their context can be good. In an interfaith conversation, this topic can promote an understanding of how culture can play a role within marriage rituals. These rituals do not just have a religious side but a cultural one as well. The rituals can aid in bonding as they appear across the board in the Abrahamic religions.

6.14. Feasting

All the Abrahamic religions have a marriage feast. With this, the researcher means a gathering of the guests directly after (or shortly after) the marriage

ceremony, where traditional food is served with music and dancing to celebrate the marriage ceremony. In Islam, the marriage feast can last for days after the ceremony (Monger 2013:40). In Islam, men and women do not usually interact in public, this means that two venues need to be used; one for men and one for women (Monger 2013:167). In a lot of the Islamic cities, this is changing to one venue as it becomes more common for men and women to socialise (Monger 2013:251). In extremely rural Islamic areas this concept of separation might still strictly be adhered to (Monger 2013:251). This means that men will dance with men and women will dance with women (Monger 2013:210). In Orthodox Judaism, the men and women will also be separated, and thus two venues will be used (Monger 2013:209). The Reformed Jewish tradition, on the other hand, does allow men and women to mix and dance together (Monger 2013:209). In Christianity, one venue is used, and men and women can dance together.

In Islamic traditions, venues are typically used for the marriage feast, like a town hall or specific venue for marriages (Nikahnama.com 2017a). In Islam, thrones are used for the bride and groom to sit on at the venue (Monger 2013:150). This is a widespread phenomenon found in Islam. In Christianity, the Church hall, town hall or a venue specifically for weddings are typically used for the feast. In Orthodox Judaism, the marriage ceremony and feast are typically held at the house of the groom or the Synagogue courtyard (Monger 2013:121). In Reformed Judaism, the couple will be encouraged to hold the ceremony in the Synagogue (Monger 2013:396). Venues specifically for weddings may also be used for the feast.

In Judaism, the feast is seen as very important (Greenberg 1990:10). The couple could easily fall into the stress of their new lives together (Lamm 1991:232). The marriage feast is a time for celebration, and the guests at the marriage ceremony must help keep the bride's and groom's mind on the happiness of the moment (Lamm 1991:232). This is a very good point made by Judaism for all the Abrahamic religions, especially if marriage is facilitated, but even for marriages that are not. In a facilitated marriage, the bride and groom might have met on the night of the marriage ceremony for the first time or have spent very little time together. Thus, the bride and groom may have concerns about the unknown. If the newlyweds are young people, financial strain might be one of the things they will typically worry about. Living together for the first time, as this is not permitted in the Abrahamic religions before marriage, can also cause stress. It should be noted that some couples do live together before marriage although not permitted. Being intimate with each other for the first time may also be a concern for the newlyweds (sex is permitted within marriage and frowned upon outside marriage in all three Abrahamic religions). Young newlyweds traditionally expect the woman to be a virgin. The concept of male virginity and feminism will be discussed in the next section, *Consummation and post-wedding bonding time*.

The poor were always invited to join in the wedding feast in Judaism, but today it is more common to make a donation to charity. The concept behind this is that one must share one's good fortune (Lamm 1991:232). This is something unique to Judaism. It is interesting to see that the concept of dance, music and food is a theme that is found throughout the Abrahamic religious feasts. The wedding feast and celebration is something that the Abrahamic religions have in common and

can thus bond over when considered in an interfaith conversation. It should be noted that there are elements that are unique, and this is to be treasured by the community that partakes in certain practices.

6.15. Consummation and post-wedding bonding time

Consummation of the marriage is very important in all three Abrahamic religions. If it is a woman's first marriage, historically in all the Abrahamic religions and still used in some Islamic traditions today, a token of her virginity would have been displayed on a handkerchief (Monger 2013:151). This is not practised in Judaism or Christianity anymore (Greenberg 1990:10). This does not mean that virginity of the woman is not highly valued still today in all the Abrahamic religions. It has been recognised medically that a hymen or lack thereof is not proof of whether a girl is a virgin (McIntosh 2011). Over the years misconceptions about the hymen and the fact that a girl does not have to bleed with her first time, have caused a lot of women great anguish over the years as they were ashamed for not being "pure". Virginity, as discussed in this dissertation, is the concept of not having had sexual intercourse with another person before.

Interesting enough, not one of the Abrahamic religions have a strong tradition of the importance of male virginity (not having had sex before). In modern times, young boys will be encouraged not to have sex before marriage by religious leaders. Of course, adultery and sex outside the construct of marriage are seen as wrong in all the Abrahamic religions. However, it is still culturally more acceptable (and encouraged by peers) for men to have had a sexual relationship before getting married. One of the most extreme examples are girls in Islamic traditions that are chaperoned by an older woman after being veiled and reaching

puberty (Monger 2013:26,140). The question stands why the same is not being done to boys when they reach puberty. If female virginity is to be considered necessary, male virginity should be too. This view is slowly starting to shift with the feminist movement changing some of the ideas surrounding virginity. The consummation of the marriage seals the marriage. It is the last step of what needs to be done for the marriage to be seen as valid. With globalisation and global trends, the concept of virginity is starting to become less important.

The concept of virginity can be very important in interreligious conversation. The topic of virginity and consummation in the light of globalisation and feminism can be an interesting point to discuss in interreligious conversation. These conversations can help promote equality between sexes as well as the moral concept of sexual activities. It is a fact that sexuality is seen by the Abrahamic religions as belonging inside marriage. This is not always the case in Western cultures and is mostly not portrayed in this way by the media. This is a good topic for interreligious conversation.

Post-marriage ceremony bonding time is a very important topic. This is the time in which the bride and groom can start settling into the concept of married life. In Islamic Brunei tradition, the newlyweds usually do not leave the house for the first seven days, wherein they may also have another ritual bath (Monger 2013:103). In Judaism, the newlyweds must spend as much time as possible together in the first week (Lamm 1991:235). We see that the Jewish tradition and the Islamic Brunei tradition are very similar in this regard. The perception is that this is a very good bonding time for the bride and groom. In Christianity, the bride and groom would in modern times, if they can afford it, go away on a honeymoon. This is a

short vacation after the marriage ceremony so that they can relax and bond together. In Islam and Judaism, honeymoons are not normal practice although not forbidden. The idea in Judaism is that the couple can start settling into their new home as husband and wife (Lamm 1991:235). In Judaism, the seven blessings (used in the Nusien ceremony) will also be recited twice daily in the first week with a Minyan present. In Judaism, the husband and wife must make every effort to bond as much as possible within the first year (Lamm 1991:233). Spending enough time together and settling into their new roles (Lamm 1991:233).

Spending enough time together and getting used to new roles is a very important aspect of a newlywed's life. There is a cliché that couples tend to fight a lot in their first year of marriage; which is potentially attributed to getting used to sharing the same space and maturing into the role of a spouse. The concept of the Western style honeymoon is not a very old tradition. The concept of a honeymoon, however, can help a couple to relax and bond in a different way after the marriage ceremony as a lot of stress can accumulate in the organising of a marriage ceremony. Both concepts have their merits but, in the end, the most important aspect of both the honeymoon and settling in at home have one big similarity, the bonding time that crucial in a new marriage. Having time to bond is a very important practice in all three Abrahamic religions. It can be an interesting topic for interreligious discussion, especially regarding the practices to ensure bonding, within the first year of marriage.

6.16. Wedding attire

The wedding attire can be a very important part of the proceedings for both the bride and groom. Wedding attire is mostly a cultural aspect and is not mandated by most religious entities. Of course, wedding attire is also a very personal preference. There are also religious concepts within some of the clothing pieces that are chosen.

6.16.1. Bride

The Western style white wedding dress has taken the world by storm. More and more religious and cultural traditions are starting to change to the concept of the white wedding dress. The white dress is one of the most iconic pieces of wedding attire in modern times. By far one of the most influential dresses was that of Queen Victoria. She married the man that she loved, on the 10th of February 1840, something that was very rare for royalty in that era (McBride-Mellinger 1993:24). The white wedding dress is both a symbol of love and purity. The concept of the white wedding dress being connected to both love and purity has advanced its growing popularity (Pleck 2000:214). Westernisation is causing brides, for example in Islam, insisting on having a Western white wedding dress (Fluehr-Lobban 1994:71; al Faruqi 1990:86).

In Judaism, the bride also wears white, the concept is based on the idea of purity and not just sexual purity, but purity from sin as the bride's and groom's sins are forgiven on the wedding day (Lamm 1991:186). The concept of sin being forgiven on the day of the wedding is unique to Judaism (Lamm 1991:186). Thus, a Western style white dress can be worn, but with their own extra symbolism of purity from sin (Lamm 1991:186). Wearing too much jewellery by a Jewish bride

on the day of the marriage ceremony is seen as disrespectful; it should be done modestly (Monger 2013:429). As the groom mostly does not wear jewellery, this is also a sign of equality between the bride and groom (Lamm 1991:186).

In Bangladesh Islamic tradition, the bride will wear a red sari on the day of the marriage ceremony (Monger 2013:42; al Faruqi 1990:86; Nikahnama.com 2017a). In Brunei, the bride will wear a light colour with floral patterns and lace on the fabric (Nikahnama.com 2017c). In Egypt, a more flowy garment that will cover the bride's arms, hands and shoulders are worn (Nikahnama.com 2017c). The Islamic bride wedding attire is thus a lot more colourful than the white Western dress and symbolises joy. Some Islamic brides do insist on having a white Western style wedding dress (Fluehr-Lobban 1994:71; al Faruqi 1990:86).

On the one hand, the marriage ceremony is a special day for the couple, and they should be able to wear what makes them feel the most like a bride and groom. On the other hand, this may cause conflict if a more traditional garment is preferable by the two families. Conflict is something that can naturally occur when planning a marriage celebration; the wedding attire can be an additional source of conflict. The marriage garment is not just a piece of clothing but rather something that makes the bride feel more like a bride and makes her appear that way to others as well. Stepping outside the construct of what is culturally expected from the wedding attire can thus be a probable source of conflict. However, it is important for the bride to be able to choose what she would like to wear on the day of the ceremony. It should be noted that lost or fading cultural traditions will accrue as the white Western dress becomes the symbol of marriage celebrations. The continuation of traditions, as well as the understanding of how

these traditions are changing because of globalisation, can be an important interreligious topic.

6.16.1.a Crowning and veiling

The researcher is positioning crowning and veiling within the section on wedding attire, as it forms part of the wedding attire. Veiling and crowning also occur in different timeframes within marriage rituals; this section is, therefore, a more harmonious place to discuss it within the Abrahamic marriage rituals. It is striking that all three Abrahamic religions have some practice of a veil as part of a young woman's wedding attire. In Islam, a young girl will be veiled traditionally as soon as she reaches puberty (Monger 2013:26,248). Feminism and Westernisation have had a big influence on the relaxation of when a young girl is veiled (Monger 2013:26). The reason for this is because a girl can reach puberty at a very young age, as soon as she is veiled, she is eligible to marry. Being able to marry should mean one must be of legal consenting age as well rather than just reaching puberty. Traditionally the bride will wear a veil or a scarf on the day of the marriage ceremony (Monger 2013:42).

In Orthodox Judaism, a bride undergoes a *Bedeken* or veiling ceremony on the day of the wedding (Monger 2013:428). After the groom has signed the *Ketubah*, he is taken to the bride where he then puts a veil over her face (Greenberg 1990:8). By doing so, he acknowledges that she is the woman he agreed to marry. The veil is a sign of the bride's dignity and modesty (Lamm 1991:208-209). In the reformed Jewish tradition, this ritual is seen as sexist and has thus been abolished (Cohn-Sherbok 2003:541).

Most Christian brides usually with a first marriage wear a veil when entering the Church or chapel (Yarwood 1978:440). The veil traditionally hangs over her face. If the father of the bride gives her away (a practice that is becoming less and less used) he may take the veil from the front of her face and take it back to reveal her face (Monger 2013:277). The veil is not one of the oldest traditions in Christianity and only stems from the 16th century (McBride-Mellinger 1993:15-16). The concept of the veil points to the sexual purity of the bride just like the white dress (Pleck 2000:214). In the Christian Greek Orthodox Church, the bride and groom are crowned before they walk around the table. They are crowned with glory and honour on the day of their wedding (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America, n.d.). Crowning of the bride and groom is a very old practice that had its disputes in its first appearance in Christianity (Monger 2013:198). However, it is now commonly used within the Greek Orthodox Church.

The concept of brides and veils have been used since ancient Greece (McBride-Mellinger 1993:14). These old traditions also thought of the concepts of the veil and the bride's purity (Pleck 2000:214). However, it also symbolises, the concept of the bride being between life cycles, the veil acts as a barrier between her and other evil forces (Walker 1988:161). The concept of veiling and only women being veiled has been disputed in feminism especially because of the perception of the veil as a metaphor for the girl or women's virginity or purity (Walker 1988:317). The wedding veil can be a good point to promote interreligious conversation because of the symbolic connections and change in these traditions.

6.16.2. Groom

In Christianity, the groom usually wears a Western style suit (Yarwood 1978:442). The suit does not have any symbolic meaning but is rather seen as a formal dress that men can wear to most formal events or, depending on one's profession, it can also be used for business (Pleck 2000:215). The bride and her mother may have a say over the groom's attire for the ceremony, but this will depend on the personal dynamic and feelings of the couple (Pleck 2000:215). The Western style suit is being used widely among different cultures and traditions in marriage ceremonies.

In Judaism, the groom will wear a *kittle* (prayer shawl) over his clothing. The *kittle* is white and is a symbol of purity, the purity refers to here is the same as that of the bride's, seen above, as their sins are forgiven on the day of the wedding (Lamm 1991:186-187). The concept of the groom's clothes being a sign of purity is something that is unique to Judaism in the context of this study. This is a good example of equality between genders within marriage rituals. The groom along with all the other male guests will wear *Kippahs* (traditional Jewish head covering) as part of the wedding attire (Frank 2010:204). The groom often wears Western-style suits underneath the *kittle*.

In Bangladesh, the groom wears a knee-high white coat, called a *Sherwani*, with pants underneath (Monger 2013:42; Nikahnama.com 2017a). In most Indian countries, the groom will wear a *Nehru* Jacket; this is a jacket that usually has buttons and a collar (al Faruqi 1990:86). In Brunei, the groom wears colourful pants. The traditional turban is worn in Bangladesh and Brunei (Nikahnama.com 2017b). In Egypt, a robe may be worn by the groom with floral patterns on the

fabric (Nikahnama.com 2017b). In Malaysia, the groom may wear excessive jewellery to show his money and status (al Faruqi 1990:87). A Western style suit is commonly worn today by men in Islamic marriage ceremonies (Nikahnama.com 2017a). The traditional Islamic clothing can differ vastly from the Western style suit. Some form of a traditional head covering, e.g. turbans and caps are usually worn by Islamic men (Nikahnama.com 2017b).

The grooms wedding attire can be a good topic for interreligious conversation; this is because of Westernisation and the question of tradition preservation. The Abrahamic religions have all started to move toward the Western style suit for male marriage ceremonial attire. The same problem is encountered here as with the bride's dress. For some, the preservation of the old traditions is very important; for others, it is more important for the man to feel like a groom on his wedding day. Because of this disagreement and Westernisation, having an interreligious conversation regarding the groom's attire might bring some insight or ease into the changing attire of grooms.

6.16.3. Rings

Rings are an important symbol as they are used in daily life to remind of one's commitment and love. Rings can have different meanings:

“Mourning rings, engagement rings, betrothal or love rings, wedding rings, signet rings or magic rings.”

(Yarwood 1978:336)

The symbol of the ring is a very ancient one (Yarwood 1978:336). The symbol of the wedding ring is mostly seen as continuity, and infinity (Yarwood 1978:442). In different cultures and countries, the wedding ring may be worn differently (Yarwood 1978:422). In the past, the wedding ring was worn on the third finger, of the left hand in England and on the right hand in parts of Europe (Yarwood 1978:442). Jewish women wear their wedding rings on their right hand on the index finger (Yarwood 1978:442). In many cultures, today the wedding ring is placed on the fourth finger of the left hand; this tradition was started by the ancient Egyptians (Walker 1988:12). The ancient Egyptians believed that there was a vein going directly from that finger all the way to the heart (Walker 1988:12). This tradition is used in most Christian traditions, as well as in Western culture, but not with the meaning given by the ancient Egyptians. However, it should be understood that today wedding rings are worn differently and used for different symbols in different contexts. In all the Abrahamic religions rings are given as a physical sign of marriage.

The engagement ring is the first physical symbol of a wedding to come (Mills 1969:13). The engagement ring also has the non-ending, symbolic value; it is thus a good symbol of what is to come (Mills 1969:13). Engagement rings are also commonly used in the Abrahamic religions. In Islam, two rings are given with the engagement (Nikahnama.com 2017c). In Christianity, a diamond ring is a modern norm although some women prefer a different ring. In Judaism, only one ring is given, but it is given in the betrothal, *Kiddushin* ceremony that forms part of the marriage ceremony (Greenberg 1990:9). This can be interpreted as both a wedding and engagement ring. In the Jewish Orthodox, the bride's acceptance

of the ring is also her consent to the marriage (Greenberg 1990:9). The ring thus plays an important part in the ceremony. If the value of the ring is misleading the marriage may be dissolved (Lamm 1991:221). The bride in the Reformed Jewish tradition also gives a ring to the groom. This is not done in the Orthodox tradition (Braybrooke 1995:34).

The Orthodox Jewish wedding rings come in two styles: a plain metal ring and a traditional ring that is in the shape of the temple (Monger 2013:426). The plain metal ring may not include gemstones as the value of the ring may be misleading (Lamm 1991:221). In Judaism, a circle is seen as the perfect form, although a perfect circle is never possible, and this is a metaphor for the flawed human nature that extends into marriage as well (Lamm 1991:222). In the Reformed Jewish tradition, the ring would be one the bride would want to wear (Silverman 1970:205).

The concept of the wedding ring is one that is shared within all the Abrahamic marriage celebrations. More than one ring can be given as seen above. The bride and groom mostly both give each other wedding rings except in the Orthodox Jewish tradition. The Western diamond ring is becoming more popular among the Islamic and Jewish traditions although this is not traditional. This is a direct influence of Westernisation. The Western diamond wedding ring has been marketed by De Beer's diamond company since 1947 stating that "Diamonds are forever" (De Beers n.d.). De Beers made the diamond ring a symbol of everlasting love. Most couples in Western culture get engaged with a diamond wedding ring. This concept is seen above spreading throughout the world. The concept within cultures adopting the Western style suit, diamond ring and white wedding dress

is strongly rooted in what these things represent. Eternal love has been marketed within these objects and have now become a symbol in Western society and is spreading to the rest of the world. This is seen as both a good and a bad thing; on the one hand, it is becoming more acceptable for the couple to make their own choices regarding wedding attire. On the other hand, these objects may be a point of disagreement between families and may eventually also lead to the difference between these unique elements that make up a religion and cultural ritual. The marriage and engagement rings are relatable topics for interreligious conversation as it is shared by all the Abrahamic religions in this study. Marketing and Westernisation are topics that may also be discussed within interreligious conversations with regards to the impact that it has on rituals.

6.17. Participants

There are many participants within the Abrahamic marriage ceremonies. This can include the matchmaker, the officiant, the witnesses and the community.

In Islam, marriages are still usually facilitated. Cities, education and workplaces have all contributed to the fact that single men and woman may meet, and they can decide to get married. Professional matchmakers can be used to help facilitate marriage (Monger 2013:40,70,248). In Bangladesh, they call the professional matchmaker *Ghatak* (Monger 2013:40; Nikahnama.com 2017). In Judaism, matchmakers were also used and are called a *Shadachan* (Monger 2013:427). The bride and groom in a modern Jewish marriage would have seen each other and had the opportunity to get to know each other. Parents and friends may also act as matchmakers within Islam and Judaism (Monger 2013:40,76). The concept of facilitated marriage has not disappeared within Judaism but is

less prominent, and the couple would have to decide to get married or not after getting to know each other. Marriage was also facilitated in Christian history, but this is not done anymore. Facilitating marriage and matchmakers may be a point of conversation especially for Western tradition to better understand these traditions in modern times. Particular emphasis can be placed that the concept of marriage for love is just as strange to some traditions as facilitated marriages are to others.

In Christianity, it is generally an ordained person from the denomination to which the couple belongs that performs the ceremony. In Judaism, a Rabbi will officiate the marriage and in Islam, there will either be a religious leader or a judge (Greenberg 1990:8; Glasse 2002:296). The concept behind these officiants throughout the Abrahamic religions is that the person must be able to legally officiate the marriage ceremony, be it in the eyes of the religion or the law. This is also an important topic for conversation as it is something that these religions have in common. The use of an officiator (officiant) is to make sure the act of marriage is lawful, official and authoritative.

The witnesses to the marriage ceremony and contract signing are very important. In most Christian traditions, because the contract is a complete civil one and not necessarily affiliated with Christianity, the number of witnesses will need to be stated by law. Mostly only two witnesses are necessary within Christianity. Nonetheless, the concept of family and community witnessing this event is very important to the couple. In Islam, two adult Muslim men are necessary to witness the signing of the contract and the consent of both the bride and groom (Nikahnama.com 2017a). In Judaism ten adult Jewish men must be witness to

the ceremony; they are called *Minyan* (Lamm 1991:185). At least one *Minyan* will also be present for the reading of the seven blessings the week after the ceremony (Lamm 1991:235).

The Jewish community thus requires the most witnesses to the event, one of the reasons is that in Orthodox Judaism and in Jewish history the bride gives silent consent (Lamm 1991:221). They are also in place to testify whether the value of the ring was misleading or not (Lamm 1991:221). Consent is one of the major things that all the mainstream Abrahamic traditions agree must be given by the bride and groom. This does not mean that everyone sees consent in the same way. In the Reformed Jewish tradition, the rabbi would ask the bride's and groom's consent in the ceremony; the bride is also not silent as in the Orthodox tradition (Lamm 1991:221; Cohn-Sherbok 2003:542). This is a feminist influence with the perception in mind that equality is needed between men and women. Feminism has also started to help rethink and reform what it means to consent in Islam (Fluehr-Lobban 1994:67). Christianity was historically also not immune to forced marriage. Marriage should be with consent from both the bride and the groom. Although the Abrahamic religions did not always protect women in the past, it is evident that all three religions do believe that marriage should be done through the consent of both the bride and groom. This is leading to reform of old traditions, making sure that the marriage ceremony of contract signing is properly witnessed, and that the bride and groom are not getting married by force.

In Christianity, there are usually bridesmaids and groomsmen. These are close friends and family of the bride and groom that are asked by the couple, and it is considered an honour to be chosen. In Judaism, *Shoshbins* may be used

(Monger 2013:427-428). They are similar to bridesmaids and groomsmen but have a bigger financial obligation towards the couple's ceremony (Monger 2013:60). The financial obligation will rest on the bride and groom as well as on their *Shoshbins* for marriage ceremonies (Monger 2013:60). Today Judaism also use a more Western concept of bridesmaids and groomsmen (Cohn-Sherbok, D & Cohn-Sherbok, L 1999:108).

The bridesmaids' and groomsmen's historical necessity in Christianity was very different from their responsibilities today. Historically the bridesmaids would dress like the bride to ward off or confuse evil spirits (Pleck 2000:211-212). The groomsmen would historically be there to fight off anyone who would try to kidnap the bride or bring harm to the groom (Pleck 2000:230). Today the groomsmen keep the ring safe, and the bridesmaids help plan the wedding (Kightly 1986:230). The bridesmaids and groomsmen also keep the bride and groom relaxed on their wedding day, help set up the decorations if needed and keep the bride and groom apart until the ceremony (Kightly 1986:229). In Judaism, the bride and groom should also not see each other, but for a week before the marriage ceremony for this, they will be chaperoned (Lamm 1991:188). In Islam a girl will be chaperoned from the day she is veiled to the day of her wedding (Monger 2013:26,140). Understanding that the extremeness of the circumstances is different, it is interesting to note that all three religions do have some kind of chaperone in common.

The concept of the faith communities and the community within family and friends are very important within marriage celebrations. In Christianity, a marriage ceremony may be small and intimate or have an extravagant number of guests.

In the context of this study, it has been found that Islam marriage celebration usually has an extravagant number of guests. Jewish marriage ceremonies may also vary in size depending on the couple and their family's preferences, but the concept that the community must view the marriage ceremony is very important.

Marriage is not only about the binding of the couple but also the binding of their families. This is seen in all the Abrahamic religions, especially in Judaism and Islam. Although Christianity might place less emphasis on the binding of two families, it does not mean that it is not important. It should be understood that the two families are bound by this relationship even if the emphasis lies on the couple within Christianity. In theory, these two families in the Abrahamic religion are bound as one family through the couple. They must thus act according to how families will act towards one another, theoretically with support, love and sacrifice.

Through the marriage ceremony, the couple becomes a part of the greater community and are seen more as adults than before. This is especially true for Judaism and Islam. Marriage is seen in all three religions as the place for the fulfilment of one's sexual need, have children and raise those children according to one's religious beliefs. Through this, there is a growth in Abrahamic religions. Thus, the concept of the community present in marriage ceremonies is essential for this reason. The couple is not just being married to each other but is being initiated into the community and adulthood. This might sound strange, especially to a Western concept of thinking, but there is a definite concept of the community treating a couple differently when they are married, even in Western culture. All these factors will play an important role within an interreligious conversation, to better understand the other, as well as bonding with them.

6.18. Conclusion

In this Chapter, marriage ceremonies have been discussed in Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Within the Abrahamic religions, there is more than one element that overlaps, and there are elements in every religion that is unique. Feminism, globalisation and Westernisation are elements that are changing some of the practices within the marriage ceremonies. All of these elements are a reason to have an interreligious conversation. These interreligious conversations should help religions to better understand and tolerate the other. Such conversations can help religious leaders to recognise the gaps in their own rituals, and through a creative process, help keep their rituals alive and relevant. Having interreligious conversations can help one realise the uniqueness of one's own tradition and that of others, while also promoting the bond between these religions through their similarities.

Chapter 7 concludes this dissertation with a summarising description of every Chapter, along with an analysis providing perspective on the importance of this information and to whom it may be of concern. Chapter 7 further includes concepts for future research and identify the gaps in knowledge that exist within the field of marriage ceremonial rituals.

7. Chapter seven: Conclusion

7.1. The previous Chapters

The research introduction in Chapter 1 of this dissertation explained the background of the study, formulated the problem statement and detailed the purpose of the study, research hypothesis, methodology, proposed contributions,

and the structure of the dissertation. By seeing that there are both different and similar elements to marriage rituals within the Abrahamic religions it is possible to understand each religion within the context of their rituals better, therefore the hypothesis was not rejected. The dissertation did anticipate similarities within the marriage rituals but did not expect them to be as numerous. The body of this work met the purpose of the study by finding a better understanding of the Abrahamic religion's marriage practices. Identification of these similarities creates a hope that people will be able to humanise and tolerate the other. Furthermore, the study allowed for an understanding of what many of these rituals mean within their context and how this enriches marriage rituals and their past. It has also been clearly shown how globalisation, Westernisation and feminism all have influenced the rituals at hand. A comprehensive understanding of marriage rituals within the Abrahamic religions has been discussed.

Chapter 2 defined core concepts. This included religion, rituals, comparative study, tolerance and narrative, phenomenology and marriage. This section has given a clear view of what the core concepts mean to enhance the reader's understanding of the dissertation's perspective.

Chapter 3 dealt with marriage ceremonies within Christianity. The focus was on: *pre-marriage ceremonial traditions, marriage ceremonial rituals, post-marriage ceremonial traditions* and *important elements*. The section on *pre-marriage ceremonial traditions* elaborated on the proposal of marriage, engagement period, bans, engagement ceremonies, kitchen teas and bachelor parties. The section on *marriage ceremonial rituals* went into detail about the entrance, sermon, intention stating and vows, dowry or *Las Arras*, crowning, Eucharist and

feasting. The section on *post-marriage ceremonial traditions* gave a detailed discussion on consummation and honeymoon, ceremonies and church support. This was followed by wedding attire and participants in the section that dealt with *important elements*.

The denominations that were the main focus for Chapter 3 was the Roman Catholic Church, Greek Orthodox Church, the Church of England and the Presbyterian Church. The reason these churches were chosen is that they are regarded to be representative of the diversity within Christianity. These churches are also all leading world churches. The churches that were chosen to have very strongly defined liturgy and since this is not a field study strong liturgy would be needed. This does not imply that there are no other leading churches that could have been used. It should be noted that there will be churches that will differ from this study and this is not a comprehensive overview that reflects all denominations. When encountering marriage rituals within Christianity, variations would be found from what was described in this dissertation. However, it should be possible to distinguish a Christian marriage ritual when encountered.

In Chapter 4, the dissertation described marriage ceremonies within Judaism. The focus was *pre-marriage ceremonial traditions*, *marriage ceremonial rituals*, *post-marriage ceremonial traditions* and *important elements*. In the section on *pre-marriage ceremonial traditions*, an in-depth discussion on *Aufruf*, purifying rituals and religious art was provided. This was complemented by the section on *marriage ceremonial rituals* where fasting, date and location, *Ketubah*, *Bedeken*, *Chuppah*, *Kiddushin*, *Nissuin*, breaking the glass, *Yichud*, *Seudat Mitzvah* and *Shevah Berachot* were discussed. The Chapter proceeded to provide detailed

information on the first week and year after the ceremony under the heading *post-marriage ceremonial traditions*. Finally, the section on *important elements* included a discussion of wedding attire, important participants and community.

The main focus in Chapter 4 was on Reformed Judaism and Orthodox Judaism. These two traditions have been chosen because they are a good representative of the diversity within Judaism. These two traditions are leading world Jewish traditions that have given a good representation of what marriage rituals in Judaism entails. It should be noted that these traditions do not reflect all the Jewish traditions in the world, and variation will thus be encountered within other traditions. However, the study provides the core information required to distinguish a Jewish marriage ritual when one is encountered.

Chapter 5 looked at marriage ceremonies within Islam. The focus was on *pre-marriage ceremonial traditions*, *marriage ceremonial rituals*, *post-marriage ceremonial traditions* and *important elements*. The section on *pre-marriage ceremonial traditions* discussed veiling, engagement, engagement period, betrothal ceremonies, purifying rituals and religious art. The discussion moved on to look at, the *Katb el Katb*, collecting the bride, feasting, *Nikah*, *Rusmat*, *Bersanding* ceremony and consummation under the heading *marriage ceremonial rituals*. The section on *post-marriage ceremonial traditions* went on to discuss the week after the marriage ceremony. The Chapter concluded with a discussion of *important elements* that looked at wedding attire and participants.

In Chapter 5, the main focus was on Egypt, Brunei and Bangladesh. These places were strategically chosen because they serve a good example of the diversity

that exists within Islamic marriage rituals. Mention was made of other traditions as well including South African Islamic traditions, but the main focus did not lie with these traditions. There will always be traditions that differ from the ones discussed in this study, especially when taking into consideration that traditions can differ vastly depending on geographical location. Hence, there are traditions that vary from the ones described in this Chapter. The Chapter nonetheless provides sufficient insight for the reader to identify marriage ceremonies as Islamic when one is encountered.

In Chapter 6, marriage rituals in Christianity, Judaism and Islam were compared to provide a clear indication of where these religions overlap and where they are unique. Influences of Westernisation, modernisation and feminism within these rituals, as well as the value of the rituals were also discussed. The following topics were used when looking at the marriage ceremonies within these three traditions; proposing marriage, betrothal ceremonies, public marriage announcement , group activity, purifying rituals and religious art, date and location, entrance and procession, sermon, blessings, consent, dowry, finances, contract, food, fertility and good luck rituals, feasting, consummation and post-marriage bonding time, wedding attire and participants.

The emphasis in Chapter 6 was both on how marriage rituals in the Abrahamic religions can be the same and yet unique. When looking at each Chapter individually, it would seem that the marriage rituals within each religion have very few things in common. This, however, is not true when one takes a closer look. It is astonishing, when considering historical contexts, how much the Abrahamic religions have in common with regards to their marriage ceremonies. Particular

emphasis was placed on some of the elements that help shape marriage rituals such as religion, culture, civil law and personal preferences. It is essential to understand that all these elements play a major role in how a marriage ceremony will take place. Not only that but if one of these elements are altered the whole form of the ceremony may change.

7.2. Why the information is important and to whom

Most often when a conversation arises about different religions the most common question that is found is, what makes 'them' different from 'us'? This is a very important question that can increase the understanding of the uniqueness of one's own religion. Within the context of rituals asking the question 'Why we are unique?' or 'What makes them different?' are relevant, as rituals are one of the ways groups can distinguish themselves from the other (Abo-Zena 2010:646). The problem here is that if either of these questions stands alone the definitive answer highlights differentiation, rather than having relevance to tolerance and understanding. People tend to fear what they do not understand. By asking questions that only gives an understanding of the divide will result in the divide becoming more prominent. Yet again, it needs to be understood that these questions are important and need to be asked but in conjunction with additional questions to promote understanding. Understanding of what makes other religions unique is important if one wants the best possible understanding of the other. Thus, this statement puts it into clear terms:

“to understand our differences is not to know the weakness of the other but is an opportunity to first reaffirm our own identity, and second, to understand the other.” (Beyers 2017:vii)

This question is very relevant to this study as we saw unique elements within the marriage rituals of Christianity, Judaism and Islam. A good question to add to the conversation is ‘What similarities do ‘we’ have?’. Within these two questions, it is already clear that the “us” and “them” can create a divide, but the “we” can build a relationship. It is not a matter of the divide being negative; having a sense of who one is and how one’s religion is unique is very good. However, the problem is that the other can seem like an “ultimate evil” if this is the only question that is asked. When trying to build a new social relationship, asking some questions about the other person and finding common denominators rather than just pointing out differences, can help the relationship establish and grow. Asking this question in isolation can also have a range of problems as the differences between religions are what make them unique. This question should be asked with the previous question on what “makes us different from them”. ‘What similarities do ‘we’ have?’ this question is very relevant to this study as we saw that the Abrahamic religions do have factors that are the same in their marriage rituals.

Another critical question is: “Where did the traditions that are practised today come from?”. Most couples that get married have little knowledge of the origin of the traditions that they practice on their wedding. There are many practices that the bride and groom might want to exclude if they understood the meaning and origin of the practice. There are practices that are not necessary for the legal or

religious part of the rituals and can easily be excluded. Today, numerous practices are done blindly after the concept of adhering to tradition, rather than understanding the true meaning and origin of the ritual. It is essential that both the officiant and the couple understand the meaning behind marriage rituals; this includes pre- and post-marriage rituals as well.

Another question that should be asked is “is there a need within the community, surrounding marriage ceremonies, that is not being addressed?” Rituals are part of the living narrative of people. When a ritual becomes static, it can very easily outlive its use. One must also understand that factors like globalisation, Westernisation, feminism and contact with other cultures, religions and civil laws have influenced the way rituals are shaped today. It needs to be taken into consideration that the rituals did originate 100% from either Christian, Jewish or Islamic context, as not one of these religions is in complete isolation from the world. One of the most significant considerations that religious leaders should address is, what the spiritual needs of the people in the religion are. Creative leadership is needed to prevent rituals from becoming static and to ensure that rituals do not reform in a way that renders them utterly contradictory to the convictions of the religion. This by no means implies that religions will and should not be susceptible to change from outside movements like feminism, but rather that religious leaders should evaluate and address the needs of the people.

By understanding the needs of the people, one can ask the next two questions: “How can this need be addressed?”, and “How can the narrative of the people be kept alive?”. When investigating these questions, an answer may be to have a better understanding of the ritual at hand outside of the religious context that the

people are found in. In other words, by studying what other cultures and religions do within their rituals, it should be possible to activate creative processes. This does not mean that one religion must copy another or that religions can force their ideas on other religions. This instead means that within the creative process ideas can be formed that are still unique to the religion at hand. This is not to be confused with examples where, due to globalisation, cultures and religions have started to copy each other. This should rather be seen as a creative process wherein each religion still has its own unique concepts and rituals.

By seeing how other religions address certain needs in their community, it is possible to gain inspiration and insight into the human mind. Hereby, copying the relevant ritual is not being proposed, rather the learning from the other within the creative process of creating new paths in rituals is being promoted. This is also evident in Van der Leeuw's work on phenomenology where he states that scholars should never make the mistake of thinking rituals are static and unchangeable (Van der Leeuw 1938:674). This question "How can the narrative of the people be kept alive?" along with the previous question of "what are the needs of the people" are both very relevant to this study because of the unique attributes of each religion within the ceremonies. When studying the concept of marriage rituals, the creative processes can be set on course because of the many facades within marriage rituals.

This study provides useful guidelines to scholars who aspire to gain a better understanding of their own religion's marriage rituals, compared to that of other traditions. Scholars can also promote their understanding of how marriage rituals compare within the Abrahamic religions. Scholars can understand and see both

the uniqueness and similarities within the Abrahamic religions' marriage rituals as seen contextually in this study. Religious leaders can use this study to educate themselves and couples on where certain aspects of marriage rituals originated as well as their specific meaning. When religious leaders have identified needs of people within their community regarding marriage rituals, these leaders can then use this study to help within the creative process to keep the narrative alive.

7.3. Possible future research in marriage rituals

There are definite gaps that still need to be addressed in the field of marriage rituals within the context of Abrahamic religions. It is impossible to speak to all these shortcomings in the knowledge pool within the limited structure of a single dissertation. These gaps propose an opportunity for further study of marriage rituals.

The first big gap within the research field is specific to the South African contextual wedding ceremonies. This applies to all Abrahamic religions within South Africa. Very little is written about the rituals themselves as well as their meaning and origin. It is surprisingly challenging to find pre-marriage-, marriage- and post-marriage rituals within the South African context. The absence of literature in this area poses an excellent opportunity for a study that can be done phenomenologically in the field. What does come up in literature sources quite often is some problems within the South African marriage system. This includes the non-recognition of marriages of groups like Islam and Judaism. If the ceremony is only fulfilled by their religious traditions, additional legal steps must be taken according to the country's marriage act. The topic of non-recognition of specific marriages is something that frequently features when searching for the

keywords “marriage rituals in South Africa” within media. However, comprehensive knowledge on this topic is largely lacking in the academic literature. This lack of a sound body of literature on the topic of rituals, therefore, presents a civil problem that can have a lasting effect on how rituals in these cultures are practised. It would be very interesting to learn how this problem has already affected rituals, more specifically how specific elements were lost or added, within these religions over the past century. This topic can make for a very good starting point for a large conversation on religion in South Africa.

Another gap exists in the fact that there are not many people who compare marriage rituals or use them for inter-religious dialogue within Abrahamic religions; however, it is not entirely unheard of. Adding to this is the fact that marriage traditions of other religions are also rarely used for inter-religious dialogue. By learning about other marriage traditions, it is possible to understand one’s own religious traditions better and gain tolerance toward others. It is particularly important in the South African context to start more conversations in the interreligious world; paths need to be created where one talks to the other instead of talking about the other (Beyers 2017:107).

One more gap in this area is that the needs of the people are not always identified by religious leaders. It should be understood that rituals fulfil certain needs and also reflects realities for the group by which it is practised (Grimes 2010:43). If this is understood, it is easy to see why rituals are not static and must keep changing to be a part of the living narrative of people. The understanding that needs may arise within the community regarding marriage rituals, can help the religious leaders to identify the needs. After the needs have been identified, they

can be addressed. This is also an idea that can be focused on in future research studies. As seen above, not all religious leaders and their communities know the historical and symbolic meaning of all the rituals that they practice within marriage. This is true for pre-marriage, marriage and post-marriage rituals. Formulating theories that can help religious leaders in the pursuit of the best possible ritual practices and the renewal thereof for their communities, is also a valid point for further research.

Furthermore, liturgical and non-liturgical concepts and specific views of different traditions towards these elements need to be stated more clearly. Even though some traditions are not considered liturgical, its meaning and origin should be recorded in writing and explained. The modern meaning of older elements (and their contextual relevance to the ritual) can be added to future studies. By giving something new meaning or adapting old rituals, they can be modernised, without them being compromised. Tradition is important, and its preservation without making the ritual static poses a feasible option to address the needs of the people. This can make a good point for future research.

Controversial marriages, such as LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay Bisexual, Transgender and Queer), interreligious- and intercultural marriages are topics that can also be further explored within marriage rituals in future studies. These topics are highly controversial, especially within religious communities and may even be shunned because of the communities' beliefs. This also means that it will be very complicated for these marriages to find officiants for the marriage celebration and a method of doing so, especially with interfaith marriages. Controversial

marriages occur more often than in the past. Because these marriages are so controversial, it can make for an interesting new field of study.

7.4. Conclusion

As seen above, this dissertation has started to fill a gap that was identified from studying the existing literature on marriage rituals. The study has further identified a plethora of topics in the field of marriage rituals that should be further explored by future research. While understanding that:

“the promise of tolerance is that coexistence in disagreement is possible” (Fros, 2013:1),

the ultimate objective of this work was to increase tolerance and understanding through studying and comparing marriage rituals in different religions.

The study concludes with the anticipation that the comprehensive body of evidence provided here will provide the reader with insight on- and an understanding of, the importance of rituals. Rituals can serve as a point of humanisation between religions and within the process of discussion people need remember to humanise and tolerate the other (Beyers 2017:vi). Rituals serve as a point from which different religions can converse. Finally, the author of this work aspires to inspire, in the faith that rituals will remain dynamic to fulfil the vital role of the living narrative of people.

Bibliography

Abo-Zena, M., 2010, *Encyclopaedia of identity*, Sage, London.

al Faruqi, L., 1990, 'Marriage in Islam'. In: *Marriage amongst the religions of the world*, pp. 79-94, The Edwin Mellen Press, New York

Anon, 2000, *Oxford english dictionary*, Viewed 12 February 2019, from [Online] at:<http://www.oed.com.uplib.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/114320?redirectedFrom=marriage#eid>.

Armstrong, K., 1993, *The history of God: the 4000- year quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, Gramercy Books, New York.

Beyers, J., 2017, *Understanding the other*, African Sun Media, Bloemfontein.

Braybrooke, M., 1995, *How to understand Judaism*, SCM Press LTD, Britain.

Bridges, J., & Curtis, B., 2003. *A gentleman gets dressed up*, Rutledge Hill Press, Nashville.

Bronstein, J., & Bretherton, D., 2012, *The encyclopaedia of peace psychology*, Wiley-Blackwell, United Kingdom.

Carmody, D., 1990, 'Marriage in roman catholicism'. In: *Marriage among the religions of the world*, pp. 39-57, The Edwin Mellen Press, New York.

Chabad, n.d., *Chabad.org.*, viewed 08 October 2018, from https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/476757/jewish/Jewish-Wedding-Ceremony.htm.

Chaudhry, H., 2002, *Women's rights in Islam*, Adam Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi.

Chidester, D., 1992, *Religions of South Africa*, Routledge, London & New York.

Chidester, D., 2012, *Wild religion: tracking the sacred in South Africa*, University of California Press, Berkeley.

Chidester, D., 2018, *Religion: material dynamics*, University of California Press, California.

Chryssides, G. & Greaves, R., 2014, *The study of religion; An introduction to key ideas and methods*, Bloomsbury Publishing, London & New York.

Cohn-Sherbok, D. & Cohn-Sherbok, L., 1999, *Judaism a short introduction*, Oneworld Publications, Boston.

Cohn-Sherbok, D., 2003, *Judaism; history, belief and practice*, Routledge, London and New York.

Constantelos, D., 1990, 'Marriage in the greek orthodox tradition'. In: *Marriage among the religions of the world*, pp. 27-37, The Edwin Mellen Press, New York.

Cox, J., 2007, *From primitive to indigenous: the academic study of indigenous religions*, Ashgate, England.

Cox, J., 2010, *An introduction to the phenomenology of religion*, MPG Book Group, London.

De Beers, n.d., *A diamond is forever*, viewed 07 September 2018, from <https://www.debeersgroup.com/the-group/about-debeers-group/brands/a-diamond-is-forever>.

Douglas, A., 2005, 'Major contributions of philosophical phenomenology and hermeneutics to the study of religion'. In: *How to do comparative religion?* pp. 5-28, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin & New York.

Eliade, M., 1987, *The sacred and the profane: the nature of religion*, Harcourt, San Diego, New York & London.

Eliade, M., 1996, *Patterns in comparative religion*, University of Nebraska Press, London.

Family Law, n.d., *Formalities for marriages and civil unions in South Africa*, viewed 08 October 2018, from <https://www.divorcelaws.co.za/formalities-for-marriage-in-south-africa.html>.

Ferguson, J., 1978, *Religions of the world: A study for every man*, Lutterworth, Guildford.

Ferguson, J., 2018, *Moral values in the ancient world*, Routledge, United Kingdom.

Fluehr-Lobban, C., 1994, *Islamic society in practice*, University Press of Florida, Florida.

Frank, A., 2010, *The Routledge encyclopaedia of religious rites, rituals, and festivals*, Routledge, New York & London.

Frost, R., 2013, *Toleration in conflict; past and present*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Gay, A., Green, A. & Banim, M., 2001, *Through the wardrobe; woman's relationship with their clothes*, Berg, New York.

Glasse, C., 2002, *The concise encyclopaedia of Islam*, revised edn., Stacey International London.

Goldman, M., n.d., *Chad.org.*, viewed 09 October 2018, from https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/569022/jewish/What-are-a-husbands-responsibilities-during-the-1st-year.htm.

Gottschall, J., 2012, *The story telling animal*, Ebook edn., Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, New York.

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America., 2017, *Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America*, viewed 2018, from <https://www.goarch.org/-/the-service-of-the-crowning-the-service-of-marriage>.

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Of America, n.d., *The Service of Betrothal*, Viewed 2018 from <https://www.goarch.org/-/the-service-of-betrothal>.

Greenberg, B., 1990, 'Marriage in the jewish tradition'. In: *Marriage among the religions of the world*, pp. 1-25, The Edwin Mellen Press, New York.

Grimes, R., 2010, *Beginnings in ritual studies*, Ritual Studies International, Canada:

Grimes, R., 2014, *The craft of ritual studies*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Hall, T., Pillgrim, R. & Cavanagh, R., 1985. *Religion an introduction*, Harper and Row, San Francisco.

Hedges, P., 2010, *Controversies in interreligious dialogue and the theology of religion*, SCM press, London.

High Court of South Africa, 2018, *South Africa legal information institute*, viewed 13 October 2018, from <http://www.saflii.org/za/cases/ZAWCHC/2018/109.html>.

Islamic Sharia Law, 2006, *Islamic-Laws.com*., viewed 13 October 2018, from [www.islamic-laws.com/download/Islaamic Sharia Law sunni.pdf](http://www.islamic-laws.com/download/Islaamic_Sharia_Law_sunni.pdf).

Jensen L., 2015, *Thought Catalog*, viewed 05- March 2019, from <https://thoughtcatalog.com/lorenzo-jensen-iii/2015/07/heres-what-the-worlds-major-religions-say-about-your-period/>.

Jones, G., 1991, *Christian Theology; a brief introduction*, Polity Press, United Kingdom.

Jones, P., n.d., *Marriage registrar*, viewed 12 February 2019, from http://www.marriageregistrar.co.za/marriage_types.htm.

Kalir, J., 1980, *Introduction to Judaism*, University Press Of America, Washington.

Kightly, C., 1986, *The customs and ceremonies of britain; An encyclopaedia of living traditions*, Thames And Huston, London.

Kruger, J., 1982, *Studying Religion: A methodological introduction to the science of religion*, University of South Africa, Pretoria.

Lamm, M., 1991, *The Jewish way in love and marriage*, Johnathan David Publishers Inc., New York.

Marx, K., 1844, 'A Contribution to The Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right', *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*, Issue 1.

Marx, k., & Engels, F., 1957, *On religion*, Foreign Languages, Pub. House, Moscow.

McBride-Mellinger, M., 1993, *The wedding dress*, Random house, Inc, New York.

McIntosh, E., 2011, *The hymen- myth or medical fact?* Viewed 17 October 2018, from <https://www.health24.com/Lifestyle/Woman/Your-body/The-hymen-myth-or-medical-fact-20120721>.

Mills, B., 1969, *Reflection of social, historical, and cultural influences on the modes of wedding dress and customs from 100 years in America, 1865-1965*, University of Pretoria, Pretoria.

Mir-hosseini, Z., 2011, *Marriage on trial*, I.B. Tauris Publishers, London & New York.

Mokgoro, J.Y., 2003, *Justice.gov.*, Viewed 14 October 2018, from [\[www.justice.gov.za/salrc/reports/r_prij59_2003jul.pdf\]](http://www.justice.gov.za/salrc/reports/r_prij59_2003jul.pdf).

Monger, G., 2013, *Marriage customs of the world: an encyclopaedia of dating customs and wedding traditions*, Kindle edn. Praeger, Santa Barbra, Denver & Oxford.

Muller, R., 1991, *The study of theology: from biblical interpretation to contemporary formulation*, Zondervan Publishers, United States.

Neusner, J., 1979, *The way of Torah; An introduction to Judaism*, Duxbury Press, California.

Neusner, J., 2006, *Judaism basics*, Routledge, London & New York.

Nikahnama.com, 2017a, *Muslim marriage in Bangladesh*, Viewed 16 October, 2018 from <http://www.nikahnama.com/bangladesh/index.html>.

Nikahnama.com, 2017b, *Muslim marriage in Brunei*, viewed 16 October 2018, from <http://www.nikahnama.com/brunei/>.

Nikahnama.com, 2017c, *Muslim marriage in Egypt*, viewed 16 October 2018, from <http://www.nikahnama.com/egypt/index.html>.

Oxford English Dictionary, 2000, *Oxford English Dictionary*, viewed 01 October 2018, from <http://www.oed.com.uplib.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/548?redirectedFrom=Abraham+eid>.

Oxford English Dictionary, 2018, *Oxford English dictionary*, viewed 13 October 2018, from <http://www.oed.com.uplib.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/177544?redirectedFrom=Sharia#eid>.

Paas, S., 2006, *Beliefs and practices of Muslims*, Good Messenger Publications, Zomba.

Paul, P., 2003, *Time magazine*, viewed 05 March 2019, from content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,490683,00.html.

Pleck, E., 2000, *Celebrating the family; ethnicity, consumer, culture and family rituals*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, & London, England.

Posner, M., n.d., *Chabad.*, viewed 08 October 2018, from https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2997967/jewish/What-to-Expect-at-an-Aufruf.htm.

Presbyterian Church USA, 2003, *The companion to the book of common worship*, Geneva Press, Louisville.

Russell, B., 2004, *History of western philosophy*, Routledge, London.

Russel, B., 2008, *Why I am not a Christian: and other essays on religion and related subjects*, Barlow Press., United Kingdom.

Salamone, F., 2004, *The Routledge Encyclopaedia of religious rites, rituals, and festivals*, Berkshire Publishing Group, London & New York.

Salamone, F., 2010, *The Routledge encyclopaedia of religious rites, rituals, and festivals*, Routledge, New York & London.

Scarsibrick, D., 1993, *Ring; symbols of wealth, power and affection*, Thomas and Hudson LTD., London.

Segal, R., 2005, *Myth and ritual. In: The Routledge companion to the study of religion*, Routledge, New York & London.

- Shepard, W., 2009, *Introducing Islam*, Routledge, London & New York.
- Silverman, W., 1970, *Basic Reformed Judaism*, Philosophical Library, New York.
- Smith, W., 1979, *Faith and belief*, Princeton University Press, New York.
- Smith, W., 1989, *Towards a world theology: faith and the comparative history of religion*, Macmillan, Hampshire.
- Smith, W., 1991, *The meaning and end of religion*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis.
- Spurles, P., 2004, *Henna for brides and Gazelles; Ritual, women's work and tourism in morocco*, University de Montreal, Canada.
- Stein, J., 2012, 'The encyclopaedia of peace psychology'. In: *Emotion, cognition and choice*, Wiley-Blackwell, United Kingdom.
- The Church of England, 2017, *Church of England*. Viewed 2018, from <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/1173941/cw%20pastoral%20services%20marriage%20web.pdf>.
- Tillich, P., 2000, *The courage to be*, Yale University Press, New Haven.
- Tillich, P., 2009, *Dynamics of Faith*, HarperOne, New York.
- Tillich, P., 2013, *Systematic theology*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Tylor, E., 1871, *Primitive culture: research into development of mythology, philosophy, religion, art and custom*, John Murray, London.
- Tylor, E., 1889, *Anthropology an introduction to the study of man and civilization*, Macmillan, London & New York.

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2017, *Diocese of La Crosse Serving The 19 Countries Of West Central Wisconsin*, viewed 2018, from <http://diolc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Matrimony-FINAL-for-publishers-2016.03.01-1.pdf>.

Van der Leeuw, G., 1938, *Religion in essence & manifestation*, Tubingen: s.n.

van Gennep, A., 1960, *The rites of passage*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Vogel, F., 2008, *The Islamic marriage contract; case studies in Islamic family law*, Harvard University press, Massachusetts.

Walker, B., 1988, *The woman's dictionary of symbols and sacred objects*, Harper Collins Publishers, New York.

Williamson, R., 1994, *Wedding style for the unique bride*, Foulsham, London, New York, Toronto & Sydney.

Woram, C., 1993, *Wedding dress style*, The Apple Press, London.

Yarwood, D., 1978, *The encyclopaedia of world costume*, B.T Batsford, London.

Yates, W., 1990, 'The Protestant view of marriage'. In: *Marriage among the religions of the world*, pp. 59-78, The Edwin Mellen Press, New York.