

Different cultural weddings

People have weddings to celebrate the beginning of a young couple's life together. This is a joyful occasion. In many cultures it also forms a connection between two families.

Traditional African Weddings

One old custom is for the husband's family to 'kidnap' the bride and bring her to the husband's home. This custom is called *ukutwala*. Nowadays, it is not often done.

Another custom is for the two families to negotiate *lobola*. *Lobola* is the payment the groom's family makes to the bride's family. Originally the payment was in cattle but nowadays it is usually in money. Other gifts are also exchanged.

On the wedding day, the bride's family brings her to the groom's home, and a festival begins. The families slaughter animals in honour of their ancestors and the community brings gifts and gathers to celebrate. Later, the groom and the bride walk along the main road for everyone to see them as a couple.

Some couples choose to have more than one wedding – an African wedding and a western wedding. In some African culture, men are allowed to have more than one wife.

Muslim weddings

A Muslim marriage is a promise to God made by two people and blessed by an Imam. The couple give their vows separately. The ceremony, called the *Nikah*, usually takes place in the mosque. There is a reading from the *Qu'ran*, and the couple exchange vows in front of witnesses. The groom gives the bride a gift, which is usually a ring, but can also be jewellery or money, or even land, or education.

Christian weddings

A priest blesses a Christian wedding in a church. The couple exchange rings as they make their vows or promises to God and to each other in front of a congregation. The bride wears a white dress, symbolising purity and happiness. After the church ceremony there is usually a reception and the guests enjoy wedding cake and celebrate the marriage.

Jewish weddings

Jewish weddings have many traditions. Commonly, the couple have a wedding contract called a *ketuba*. They are married under a wedding canopy called a *chuppah*. The groom gives the bride a ring. He also breaks a glass with his foot to remind people that even in times of joy they must not forget the sad times when the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed. Later there is feasting and dancing.

Hindu weddings

In the old days, Hindu parents chose who their child would marry, but usually they would consult with their son or daughter. Both the groom and the bride (separately) sometimes have to have a beautification ceremony in the morning before the wedding. The bride and groom are rubbed with a paste of chickpeas, tumeric and rose water. The bride often has beautiful designs painted with henna on her hands and feet. At the

ceremony, the bride and groom make their vows to each other, surrounded by family and friends. They often exchange sweets, rings and garlands of flowers. Another custom is to light a fire, and the bride goes around the fire seven times.

Buddhist weddings

Before the wedding takes place, the bride and groom visit a monk (a Buddhist holy person) who checks their horoscopes and gives them advice. He also advises them on the best date for the wedding to take place.

On their wedding day, the couple both wear beautiful silk clothes and sit together on silk cushions. A silk scarf is wrapped around the hands of the bride and bridegroom and they both eat from a silver bowl. This symbolises that they will now share everything.

