

A Pagan Wedding Ceremony

By Rev. G. B. Marian & Rev. C. Doran

Universal Life Church Monastery

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The ritual “circle” is bedecked with flowers and fruits of the season, particularly the favorites of the couple, with an altar arranged to hold:

- Images of Ishtar and Seth
- Two large virgin candles representing each Deity
- Wand lighter (to light the candles)
- Hand-fasting cords
- Incense (couple’s choice on incense)
- Jump-Broom (resting upright) – Make sure to decorate!
- Officiant’s Book of Shadows

The processional includes:

- Mother of the Bride
- Mother of the Groom
- Groom
- Bridesmaids & Groomsmen
- Maiden (i.e., a virgin)
- Bride & Father

Introduction

[Officiant]:

“That which is Below corresponds to that which is Above, and that which is Above corresponds to that which is Below, to accomplish the miracles of the One Thing.’ So it is said in The Emerald Tablet of Hermes Trismegistus. The macrocosm is reflected in the microcosm, and vice-versa; within each lies the other, and by understanding one, we can better understand its opposite. As above, so below.”

“Marriage, then, is truly a sacred event. It is not simply a process by which two people come together; it is not merely a signing of one’s name upon a legal document. It is nothing less than a coming together of God and Goddess in human flesh, a royal wedding between the King and Queen of Heaven on earth. Just as God and Goddess bring forth the bounty of Creation in spirit, so shall Their earthly counterparts, the bride and the groom, bring forth the bounty of Creation in matter.”

“[Bride], daughter of [Bride’s Mother] and [Bride’s Father], and [Groom], son of [Groom’s Mother] and [Groom’s Father]; you have chosen to be married on this day in the sight of a generous Lady and a generous Lord who have brought you together from across a great distance. You would never have met had it not been for Their divine intervention; your union was predestined from the beginning. Just as you gave yourselves to your Lady and your Lord, so did They give you to each other as lovers, partners, and friends.”

“All of us are gathered here today to witness this sacred event, this miracle of heaven that is now manifest on earth. Your families and your friends are all present; but what kind of wedding would this be were we not to welcome the Ones who first orchestrated your engagement? Let us speak words of praise and devotion to Them; let us bid Them welcome.”

Invocation

The bride lights the candle dedicated to Ishtar while the officiant recites the following invocation:

[Officiant]: “Ishtar, the Great Goddess, Lady of Love and War, is exalted upon Her throne in heaven. She rides Her chariot of lions to war as Venus at dawn; She beckons Her lovers as Venus at twilight. O Ishtar, Radiant Lady of Heaven! We humbly beseech You; come forth and descend from Your seat! Attend and bear witness to this joyous occasion that shall now take place in Your holy name.”

The groom lights the candle dedicated to Seth-Typhon while the officiant recites the following invocation:

[Officiant]: “Seth, the Red God, Lord of Storms and Frontiers, is exalted upon His throne in heaven. He sends forth His iron from behind the Great Bear; He guides and protects the Sun as Mercury. O Seth, Strong Bull of Heaven! We humbly beseech You; come forth and descend from Your seat! Attend and bear witness to this joyous occasion that shall now take place in Your holy name.”

Remonstrance to Outsiders:

[Officiant]:

“No evil shall enter this place of worship. No evil shall come between this bride and this groom. No evil

shall possess those whom they count among their family and friends. All evil is frightened away by the flame of Ishtar and the thunder of Seth!"

Declaration of Intent

[Officiant]: "Marriage is an act of faith and a personal commitment as well as a moral and physical union between both parties. Blending both fabrics of love; light and shadowed, we read this in Pablo Neruda's Sonnet XVII."

The officiant then recites Sonnet XVII.

Honoring Ancestors

[Officiant]: "As we witness the joining of this couple as they embark on the road of Life, I ask now that we gather all our precious wishes of affection and fondest hopes and attune our hearts to [Bride and Groom] at this time. Blend it also with thoughts of those who are not presently with us, who have gone on before, and embrace their energy. Let us remember..."

The officiant slowly lists the deceased relatives of the bride and groom, starting with those from the bride's family and ending with those from the groom's family.

[Officiant]: "Let their spirits join and witness this celebration of hearts and dedication of self."

Marriage Vows

[Officiant]: "[Bride] & [Groom], please join hands."

The bride and the groom join hands.

[Officiant]: "[Bride], daughter of [Bride's Mother and Father]; do you take [Groom], son of [Groom's Mother and Father], to be your lawfully wedded husband?"

[Bride]: "I do."

[Officiant]: "[Groom], son of [Groom's Mother and Father]; do you take [Bride], daughter of [Bride's Mother and Father], to be your lawfully wedded wife?"

[Groom]: "I do."

[Officiant]: "Do you both promise to love and to cherish each other, in sickness and in health, for richer or poorer, for better or worse, and forsaking all others, to keep yourselves only unto each other, for so long as you both shall live?"

[Bride & Groom]: "We do."

[Officiant]: “Do you promise in the presence of your Gods, your friends and your family that you will at all times and in all circumstances conduct yourselves toward one another as wife and husband?”

[Bride & Groom]: “We do.”

[Officiant]: “Do you together promise you will love, cherish and respect on another throughout the years?”

[Bride & Groom]: “We do.”

Exchange of Rings

[Officiant]: “The ring, a circle, is one of nature’s simplest forms. The arc of the rainbow, the halo of the moon and the smallest of raindrops simulate the circle. A circle is the symbol of the sun and the earth and the universe. It is a symbol of perfection and of peace. In these rings is the symbol of unity, in which your lives are now joined, so that wherever you go, you will always return to one another and to your togetherness. As the circle turns again unto itself, so does marriage turn unto itself for its refreshment and renewal. May these rings remind you always of the vows you have taken here today; a never-ending promise that as rings have no end so, too, does your love have no end.”

The groom first takes the ring for the bride from the officiant. Placing the ring first on the bride’s thumb, the groom repeats after the officiant:

[Officiant & Groom]:

“By this ring I promise:

Honor [thumb],

Fidelity [index],

Love [middle],

Soul Eternal [ring finger].”

[Officiant & Groom]: “In the name of the Ishtar and Seth, and all who witness here, I pledge you my troth, always being your true friend, loving and cherishing you through the darkness and light, throughout our lifetime together to beyond the imaginable reaches of time and knowledge. I give you this ring as a symbol of my love and commitment; with all that I am, and all that I have, I honor you.”

The bride then takes the ring for the groom from the officiant. Placing the ring first on the groom’s thumb, the bride repeats after the officiant:

[Officiant & Bride]:

“By this ring I promise:

Honor [thumb],

Fidelity [index],

Love [middle],

Soul Eternal [ring finger].”

[Officiant & Bride]: “In the name of the Ishtar and Seth, and all who witness here, I pledge you my troth, always being your true friend, loving and cherishing you through the darkness and light, throughout our lifetime together to beyond the imaginable reaches of time and knowledge. I give you this ring as a symbol of my love and commitment; with all that I am, and all that I have, I honor you.”

Declaration of Love & Family Blessings

The maiden now steps forward to present the handfasting cord to all who are present.

[Officiant]: “This is the Cord of Hand-Fasting. It will bind [Bride & Groom] together with the bonds of love and support from each other, the support of their Gods, and the support of their family and friends. We ask that all here bring forth good thoughts of love and positive energy to flow into these “bonds of love” so that [Bride & Groom] may share in the closeness of your thoughts and well wishes. For such bonds to be strong, they need support, not only from the couple themselves but also from the support of their community of family and friends as this is a sacred commitment not given lightly between two people.”

Following a brief pause, the maiden presents the cord to the officiant.

[Officiant]: “[Bride & Groom], as I tie these cords on you, I will remind those present that this union unites not only these two people, but brings together two halves of a circle, much like that of a ring. When a man and a woman pledge their hearts to each other, they not only create a home and a family of their own, they also carry with them the support, good will and hopes of all that care for them as individuals. This union is a confirmation to the families from which you come from that they are worthy and that their contribution to your lives shall be continued in the home that you now create. In a close and personal way, your marriage is a uniting of these two families that bore and raised you. By uniting together, each of you joins the family of the other to bear its strengths and promises into the future as it lies within your ability to do so.”

As the bride and groom hold the ends of the cord, the officiant passes the Book of Shadows to the maid of honor. The maid of honor then speaks the following prayer to Ishtar while the officiant ties the cord to the bride and groom’s wrists.

[Maid of Honor]: “Good it is to implore You, mighty Ishtar, for grace is in the oath by Your name. Your beholding is favor, Your command is light. Please bestow Your blessings upon this couple whom You have deemed fit to unite in holy matrimony. Command that they shall prosper; faithfully behold them and receive their supplications. May they possess peace of heart; may Your countenance be bright. May the spirits who come before You be propitious; may the spirits who follow You be propitious.”

The maid of honor now passes the Book of Shadows to the best man, who then recites the following prayer to Seth:

[Best Man]: “The people rejoice in Your strength, mighty Seth; all Gods and creatures are stricken with awe when You thunder in heaven. Please make firm the mouths and the eyes of this couple whom You have deemed fit to unite in holy matrimony. Establish shining crowns upon their heads, like unto the disk of the Sun; give to them all life, all strength and all health. Conquer their foes with Your mighty red hand; drive their enemies away with Your terrible roar.”

The best man then passes the Book of Shadows back to the officiant.

[Officiant]: “[Bride & Groom], raise high your intent and promise to each other so that all gathered here may witness the fullness of your vows.”

The bride and groom raise their hands so that everyone may see the handfasting cord, which by now hangs loosely around their wrists.

[Officiant]: “Then may the tie that now binds you be as sweet as the precious scent of Ishtar; yet may it be as firm as the iron that issues forth from Seth!”

The bride and groom now repeat the following after the officiant:

[Officiant, Bride & Groom]: “As this cord is wrapped around, so then too are we now bound.”

[Officiant:] “As this knot is tied, so are your lives now bound for as long as your love shall last.”

The bride and groom now pull their hands apart and pull the ends of the cord, thus creating a love-knot.

Devocation of Deities

The bride extinguishes the candle dedicated to Ishtar while the officiant recites the following:

[Officiant:] “Thank You, Goddess Ishtar, for attending and bearing witness to this wondrous event. May this couple never know a moment without Your virtuous guidance and love. Blessed be!”

The groom extinguishes the candle dedicated to Seth-Typhon while the officiant recites the following:

[Officiant:] “Thank You, Lord Seth, for attending and bearing witness to this wondrous event. May this couple never know a moment without Your generous protection and strength. Amen!”

Presentation of Couple & the Broom

[Officiant]: “As you have now both pledged to the other your lifelong commitment, love and devotion, and so pledged to united, by the Laws of the State of [Your State Here] and the County of [Your County Here], do I now pronounce you husband and wife! Partake ye now of each other’s breath, and go forth into the world as wife and husband!”

The bride and the groom kiss.

[Officiant]: “Friends & Family, I present to you [Wife & Husband]!”

The maiden now steps back and hands one bridesmaid and one groomsman the ceremonial broom. The bridesmaid and groomsman crouch down on either side of the broom, holding it a safe distance above the ground. The officiant leads everyone present to chant, “JUMP THE BROOM!” three times; then the newlyweds jump over the broom and the ceremony is complete.