

Liturgy We Live *by Dr. Gil Haas*

An Jewish “espousal” is a pledge to marry that was considered final. All that remained was its consummation once the husband completed financial and housing arrangements. A young Jewish woman in the first century would be of marriageable age when she became twelve and a half years of age. Once the groom was identified, the bride and groom would exchange marital consent; Mary and Joseph had completed the contract of betrothal from St. Matthew’s testimony. But, the bride remained in her father’s house between three months and a year; in Mary’s case this may have been with her cousin, Elizabeth. Luke’s narrative implies that Mary had left her father’s house with Joseph, and it seems that their betrothal had been converted into a chaste marriage. Since Joseph was aware of the circumstances of Jesus’ conception, Luke was probably referring to a non-consummated marriage when he labels Mary as Joseph’s “espoused wife”. When Joseph learned that Mary was pregnant, he does what the angel commanded him, and “took unto him his wife”. Presumably this occurred in Nazareth as Joseph would not have brought Mary to Bethlehem if she were still a member of her father’s household.

If you have a liturgical question or an inquiry about anything that transpires during or around our worship service, please forward the question you would like researched to: gghaas@aol.com, or drop the question in the offering basin. Please note whether we can credit you as the source of the question.