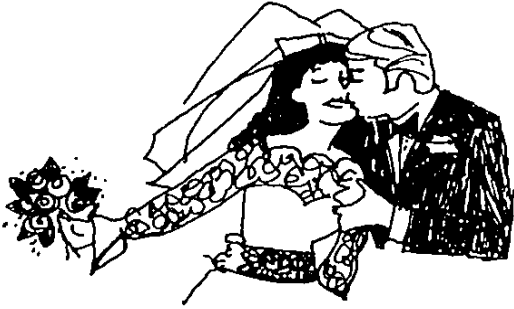


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Circle without beginning

And as this round is nowhere found
To flaw, or else to sever;
So let our love as endless prove,
As pure as gold, forever!

—Robert Herrick
(1591-1674)

No one knows for certain when the custom of the wedding ring began, but it has been used around the world as a talisman of love and allegiance.

One can easily see how this circle, without a beginning or an end, came to represent eternity, perfection and completeness.

Freudian psychology, which tends to reduce the entire universe to sexual terms, sees the finger as a male symbol joined in marriage to the female symbol, the ring.

Early Northern myths tell of marriage ceremonies in which the bride and groom pledged their troth by swearing on the sacred ring of Thor.

Anglo-Saxon swords had rings attached to the hilts. It was upon these rings that men swore their allegiance to their rulers. Here, too, the ring symbolized a promise or a pledge between two people.

Huge wedding rings were used in medieval Germany. They were not worn on the finger, but were, instead, grasped by both the bride and groom as they repeated their vows.

However, wedding rings as we know

them were widely used in the Middle Ages. At that time, Jewish girls wore plain gold bands, but for the wedding ceremony it was customary to borrow a more elaborate, bejeweled or engraved ring belonging to the congregation or synagogue. (Today, the custom is reversed—Jewish brides wear a plain gold band for the ceremony and a more elaborate one afterward.)

In the same period, Christian betrothal and wedding rings were often engraved with verses or mottoes expressing love. Such rings were called posy rings. This fashion remained popular until well into the 18th century.

In the time of Elizabeth I, rings were sometimes presented to each wedding guest.

It has long been the belief of many that the wedding band should never be removed or the marriage itself would not endure. If the wedding ring broke, many believed that it was an omen foretelling the death of one of the marriage partners.

There was a wedding ring, called a gimmel, which was made to be broken apart. The ring was made of two hoops that entwined. They were worn separately by the bride and groom during the period of their betrothal. The two hoops were then joined together to become a single ring at the time of the marriage rites.

Turkish puzzle rings became popular at the time of the Crusades. These rings were

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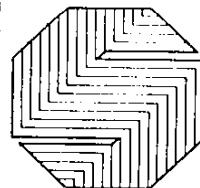
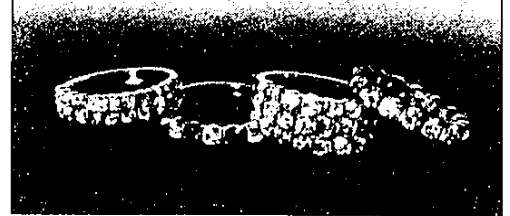
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