

MARRIAGE

VOCABULARY

KIDDUSHIN

KETUBAH (PL. KETUBOT)

CHATAN

KALAH

CHUPAH

RING, TABA'AT

"HAREI AT MEKUDESHEI LI"

SHEVAH BERACHOT

KIDDUSH CUP

GLASS TO BREAK

YICHUD

AUFRUF

MIKVEH

FASTING

CHANUKAT HABAYIT

MEZUZAH

TZEDAKA

SHALOM BAYIT

GET

"I AM MY BELOVED'S AND MY BELOVED IS MINE"

symbols and ideals of the Jewish marriage ceremony as practiced at Beth-El Zedeck

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PRONOUNCEMENT AND BENEDECTION

The groom and bride are pronounced husband and wife before the community and in the presence of God with the privileges and responsibilities of their respective and mutual roles. The pronouncement is made in keeping with hallowed Jewish law, which the rabbi embodies and under State Law, of which she/he is a designated representative.

During this pronouncement and blessing (and/or during the Sheva Berakhot) some couples follow a Sephardic practice of wrapping themselves under a Tallit. The spread tallit symbolizes the caring divine presence and expresses the dedication of the couple to a life of mitzvah.

THE BROKEN CUP

The breaking of the glass of wine has been interpreted variously. The glass contained the wine, a symbol of joy; the shattered glass symbolizes unrestored Zion and an unredeemed world to which the couple dedicate themselves to bring about wholeness and healing. The broken glass is specifically associated with the destruction of the Temple, which the couple now pledge to rebuild as they establish their own Mikdash Me'at, the Little Sanctuary of the Home.

Finally, the broken cup serves as a reminder that life is made of many little fragments, fragments of joy and sorrow, bitterness and sweetness, failure and success. The couple faces life in its multiplicity and commits itself to fashion from its separate fragments and pieces a new unity with facets of beauty, truth, joy, and peace.

Amidst the shattering of the glass and explosions of MAZAL TOVI the newlyweds seal their love with a kiss. They now emerge from the Huppah, the ideal symbol of their home, to build their real home within the community of Israel. They pledge to improve the world by translating their deepest hopes and loftiest aspirations into reality . . .

INTRODUCTION

The Jewish wedding ceremony is a capsule in time and space of the eternal Jewish ideals of joy, love, covenant, and shalom.

Through words and symbols this event, known traditionally as Huppah (the wedding canopy) or as Kiddushin (a Hebrew word which means "consecration" or "sanctification") gives expression to the belief that life is fullest when it is shared with another who can multiply one's joys and lighten one's burdens. Lo toy heyot ha'adam levado - "It is not good that the human should dwell alone" is the judgment of the biblical tradition. With brevity, beauty and dignity the Jewish marriage ceremony weds two loving people to one another, linking them to the community, to the people of Israel and to the human family, past, present, and future.

The wedding ritual is marked by two distinct moments known as ERUSIN (Betrothal) and NISSUIN (the Marriage proper; literally: "to uplift"). Erusin and Nissuin, set within the framework of introductory and transitional phases, produce a liturgy which links the couple in a covenant of love and law, joy and discipline, reciprocity and responsibility.

As the couple arrives, amidst appropriate Jewish music, under the Huppah (symbol of the home they will establish), the ceremony begins with words of welcome and blessing:

Berukhim Haba'im B'shem Adonai; Berakhukhem Mibeit Adonai

"Blessed are you who come in the name of the Eternal; We bless you out of this house of God."

Mi Adir Al Hakol; Mi Barukh Al Hakol; Mi Gadol Al Hakol; Hu Yevarekh Et Hehatan V'Hakalah.

"May God who is supreme source of blessing and glory, bless this bridegroom and this bride."

ERUSIN ערוסין

The Erusin represents the first stage and the legally binding moment of the ceremony. This event would, in rabbinic times, take place as early as a year prior to the finalization of the wedding event itself. It constitutes the covenantal or "acquisitional" dimension of the ritual when bride and groom enter into a unique sphere of relationship towards one another.

The bride and groom are reminded in the words of this berakha that the spiritual and the physical dimensions of marriage are integral to one another, that sexual expression under covenant is both sanctioned and sanctified.

Wine:

At this point the bride and groom recite the blessing (...bore p'ri hagafen) and drink their first cup of wine in anticipation of the joy and harmony which they await for one another and together. Joy: for "wine rejoiceth the human heart"; harmony: because they drink from a single cup as they commit themselves to draw from a shared cup of life.

Ring:

In the presence of two witnesses and in the midst of the celebratory community, the couple proclaims its bond through the ring exchange. In ancient times, a coin, or any item of a minimal recognizable value, would be used. From the seventh century on, the ring became the symbol of the ancient monetary transaction. Since the middle ages, it has been customary for the ring to be smooth, of plain metal, without stones to indicate that the happiness of marriage is not dependent upon whether one is wealthy or poor.

It is customary at Beth-El Zedeck for both bride and groom to exchange rings as they recite the ancient formula in mutuality and equality. It is this verbal affirmation which voices the ideal of "consecration" or "sanctification" known in Hebrew as Kiddushin. Bride and groom designate one another within a special sphere of holiness and privacy. The words of the ring exchange are: Harei At (Atah) Mekudeshet (Mekudash) Li B'taba'at Zo Kedat Moshe v'Yisrael

"With this ring you are consecrated unto me as my wife/husband according to the Law of Moses and (the faith of) Israel."

WEDDING ADDRESS AND KETUBAH

Following the rite of Erusin, it is customary for the rabbi or officiant to address the couple with appropriate personal remarks and then to read the Ketubah. The Ketubah is the marital contract which has for two thousand years served as the legal document expressing the values of holiness, love and law which are enshrined in the Jewish domestic tradition.

The art of Ketubah calligraphy and artistic decoration is famous. Modern Ketubot add contemporary values to the age-old concepts enshrined in the marital covenant.

NISSUIN or SHEVA B'RAKHOT נישואין

The Seven Blessings are the essence of the second main portion of the marriage ceremony. Seven is in the Jewish tradition the number which points to wholeness, harmony, and creativity. This sevenfold blessing contains wishes and expression of thanksgiving. The bride and groom, created in the divine image, are now called upon to perpetuate and sanctify life and enhance the community of Israel, bringing blessing to the human family of which they are focal representatives. The prayer blends present joy to a future of redemption for Israel and all humanity. Thus the seven blessings reflect a movement of growth in meaning and depth, from the personal to the collective, from the private to the universal.

The Sheva B'rahkot conclude as the Bride and Groom once again bless and share the wine, symbol of life's wholeness, its bitterness and its sweetness, through which they have vowed to "stand in love" by one another.

אם
יש
משהו
לשמוע
במהלך
הטקס
נא
לומר
הערות
אל
הרב
בחדר
ההוא
לפני
ההתחלה

Sheva Brachot

These are the Seven Blessings from the Talmud (Ketubot 8a) that are recited for a couple during their wedding. The words speak about the primordial love between the first two human beings in the Garden of Eden and of the love of a world redeemed with the coming of the Messiah.

Blessing 1

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן

Praised are You, Adonai our God, who rules the universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

Blessing 2

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַכֹּל בְּרָא לְכַבוֹדוֹ

Praised are You, Adonai our God, who rules the universe, Whose majesty is evident in all creation.

Blessing 3

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, יוֹצֵר הָאָדָם

Praised are You, Adonai our God, who rules the universe, Creator of human beings.

Blessing 4

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר יָצַר אֶת הָאָדָם
בְּצַלְמוֹ, בְּצַלְמֵךְ דְּמוּת תְּבִנִיתוֹ, וְהִתְקִין לוֹ מִמֶּנּוּ בְנֵי עֵדִי
עַד. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, יוֹצֵר הָאָדָם

Praised are You, Adonai our God, who rules the universe, Who made us in the divine image, so that together we might perpetuate life. Praised are You, Adonai, Creator of human beings.

שׁוֹשׁ תְּשׁוּשׁ וְתִגַּל הָעֵקֶרֶה, בְּקִבוּץ בָּנֶיהָ לְתוֹכָהּ
בְּשִׂמְחָה. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, מְשַׂמֵּחַ צִיּוֹן בְּבָנֶיהָ

Blessing 5

May Zion rejoice as her children return to her in joy. Praised are You, Adonai, Who causes Zion to rejoice with her children.

שִׂמְחַת תְּשִׂמַּח רְעִים הָאֲהוּבִים, כְּשִׂמְחַת יְצִירָהּ בְּגֵן עֵדֶן
מִקֶּדֶם. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, מְשַׂמֵּחַ חֲתָן וְכַלָּה

Blessing 6

Grant perfect joy to these loving companions, as You did for the first couple in the Garden of Eden. Praised are You, Adonai, Who creates the joy of bride and groom.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא שְׂשׂוֹן
וְשִׂמְחָה, חֲתָן וְכַלָּה, גִּילָה, רִנָּה, דִּיצָה וְחֻדוּהָ, אֲהָבָה
וְאַחֲוָה וְשִׁלוֹם וְרַעוּת. מְהֵרָה, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יִשְׁמַע בְּעָרֵי
יְהוּדָה וּבְחֻצוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַיִם, קוֹל שְׂשׂוֹן וְקוֹל שִׂמְחָה, קוֹל
חֲתָן וְקוֹל כַּלָּה, קוֹל מִצְהָלוֹת חֲתָנִים מְחַפְּתִים וְנָעָרִים
מְמֻשְׁתֵּה נְגִינָתָם. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, מְשַׂמֵּחַ חֲתָן עִם הַכַּלָּה

Blessing 7

Praised are You, Adonai our God, who rules the universe, Who creates joy and gladness, bride and groom, pleasure, song, delight, laughter, love and harmony, peace and companionship. Adonai our God, may there always be heard in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem voices of joy and gladness, of happiness, voices of brides and grooms, the jubilant voices of those joined in marriage under the chuppah, the voices of young people feasting and singing. Praised are You, Adonai, Who causes groom and bride to rejoice together.