

Customs and Traditions of Jewish Weddings

The purposes of marriage in the Bible are for companionship and procreation. In the past, Jewish marriages were usually arranged by parents, but the bride's consent was asked. Jewish weddings can occur any day of the week except on the Sabbath, on Jewish festivals, during the three weeks between the 17th of Tammuz and the 9th of Av, and the "sefirah" period Passover & Shavuot (Lag Ba-Omer and other exceptions).

For a Jewish Wedding, it is customary for the bride to wear white along with a headdress, and a veil. Despite this, Jewish brides from oriental countries wear elaborate costumes richly embroidered. The groom may wear a "kittel" (a white garment) along with a tallit.

Before the ceremony, the groom, in the presence of witnesses, undertakes an act of "kinyan" (the obligations of the Ketubah). This is done by taking a handkerchief or some other object by the Rabbi, lifting it and returning it. The groom and witnesses then sign the Ketubah. The groom is then led to the "Huppah" by two male relatives facing Jerusalem. The bride is led in by the Mothers usually to the accompaniment of a blessing of welcome chanted by the Rabbi. Sometimes the bride is led in 7 circles around the groom to ward off evil spirits.

The bride stands to the right of the groom and the Rabbi recites the marriage blessings over a goblet of wine. Both the bride & groom then drink from the glass.

The groom then places the wedding ring on the forefinger of the bride's right hand and recites the marriage formula. The "ketubah" (marriage contract) is then read, and the 7 marriage benedictions (seven blessings) are recited.

In most ceremonies, the groom then crushes a glass under his right foot and the Rabbi invokes the "priestly blessings". The couple is then escorted away.

TERMS OF INTEREST:

Huppah: The term was originally referred to as the bridal canopy or bridal chamber. It consists of a cloth spread on four staves. The cloth can be of an elaborate design or a large Talis may be spread over the staves.

The Ring: It has become universal Jewish practice to use a ring, except in a few communities where a coin is used. The ring must belong to the bridegroom and be free of any precious stones. In the ceremony, the groom gives the ring to the bride as an act of acquisition and the bride, by accepting it, becomes his wife.

Ketubah: It is a document recording, in Aramaic, the financial obligations which the husband undertakes toward his wife in respect of their marriage. It was instituted for the purpose of protecting the woman so that the husband would not find it easy to divorce her.

By Anna Karden

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