



Jewish Wedding Blessings

Sheva Berachot

אני לדודי ודודי לי הרעה בשושנים

*I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies.
- Song of Solomon 6:3*

According to a well-known midrash, after God created the universe in six days, He has been arranging marriages ever since; and according to the Talmud, 40 days before a male child is conceived a voice from heaven announces whose daughter he is to marry (in Yiddish, such a “heavenly match” is called “bashert,” a word meaning “destiny”). The steps leading up to a marriage proposal are sometimes called a *shidduch* and, in former days, were arranged by the *shadkhan*, or matchmaker.



Under the Chuppah

The Betrothal - ארוסין

The process of getting married occurs in two stages: *erusim* (betrothal) and *nisuin* (marriage ceremony). *Erusin* is a religious ceremony in its own right, more binding than an engagement, and once it occurs the woman is considered legally the wife of the man. As part of the *erusim*, the husband gives the wife a *ketubah* (marriage contract) that is later signed and displayed in the couple’s home. However, since the spouses do not live together at this time, the mutual obligations of the *ketubah* do not take effect until the actual marriage ceremony (*nisuin*) is complete. Today it is common for both the *erusim* and *nusuin* ceremonies to be performed together during the wedding.

The Week before the Marriage

It is customary for the *kallah* (bride) and *chatan* (groom) not to see each other for a week preceding the wedding day. Separate receptions, called *Kabbalat Panim*, are held just prior to the wedding ceremony.



The couple is compared to to a queen and a king. The *kallah* is seated on a “throne” to receive her guests, while the *chatan* is surrounded by guests who sing and toast him. There is also a tradition for the mother of the bride and the mother of the groom to stand together and break a plate. The reason is to show the seriousness of the commitment -- just as a plate can never be fully repaired, so too a broken relationship can never be fully repaired.



The Wedding Day

The wedding day itself is thought of as a personal Yom Kippur for the bride and groom. Accordingly, both will fast (from dawn until after the completion of the marriage ceremony), and at the ceremony the groom will wear a kittel, the traditional white robe worn on Yom Kippur.

The Custom of Bedeken

Before the wedding ceremony occurs, the *chatan*, accompanied by family and friends, proceeds to the *kallah's* room and places the veil over her face. This is an ancient custom and perhaps is meant to reassure the groom that his bride is the one who is beneath the veil!



Bedeken

Coming under the Chupah

The wedding ceremony takes place under the *chupah*, a canopy held up by four poles, symbolic of their dwelling together and of the husband's bringing the bride into his home. The *chupah* may be erected outside, as a sign of the blessing given by God to the patriarch Abraham that his children shall be “as the stars of the heavens.” The cantor usually calls out for the groom with the “Barukh haba” invocation and then for the bride with the “B’rukha haba’ah” invocation.

The *chatan*, followed by the *kallah*, are usually escorted to the *chupah* by their respective sets of parents. Under the *chupah*, the *kallah* circles the *chatan* seven times (there are various explanations for this custom, such as that the number seven indicates completion or wholeness). The *kallah* then settles at her *chatan's* right-hand side.

The Kiddushin Ceremony – קידושין

Kiddushin makes formal and sanctifies the erusim ceremony. Kiddushin is the sanctification of a man and woman to each other, and a cup of wine is used for a special kiddush betrothal blessing from which the couple drinks.



The *chatan* now takes the wedding ring in his hand (often inscribed with *dodi li v'ani lo* - see below), and in clear view of two witnesses (*'edim*), declares to his wife, “Behold, you are betrothed unto me with this ring according to the laws of Moses and Israel.”



Harei 'at mekudeshet li,
betaba'at zo, kedat
Moshe v'Yisrael.

הָרִי אֶת מְקֻדְשֶׁת לִי, בְּטַבְעֶת זֶה,
כְּדַת מֹשֶׁה וְיִשְׂרָאֵל.

Behold, you are consecrated to me by this ring,
according to the ritual of Moses and Israel.

He then places the ring on the forefinger of his bride's right hand. According to Jewish law, this is the central moment of the wedding ceremony, and the couple is now fully married at this point. Once the ring is placed on the bride's finger, the ketubah (marriage contract) is read aloud and handed to the groom, who then presents it to his bride.

The Nisuin Ceremony - נְשׂוּאִין

A second cup of wine is poured out and the seven blessings (*sheva berachot*) are recited. The blessings may be recited by several different people selected by the groom and bride.

Blessing 1

Barukh attah Adonai eloheinu
melekh ha-olam,
shehakol bara likhvodo.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
שֶׁהַכֹּל בָּרָא לְכַבּוֹדּוֹ.

Blessed art Thou LORD our God, King of the universe, who created all things for His glory.

Blessing 2

Barukh attah Adonai eloheinu
melekh ha-olam,
yotzer ha-adam.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
יוֹצֵר הָאָדָם.

Blessed art Thou LORD our God, King of the universe, Fashioner of the man.



Blessing 3

Barukh attah Adonai
eloheinu melekh ha-olam,
asher yatzar et-ha-adam
b'tsalmo, b'tselem d'mut
tavnito, v'hitkin lo mimenu
binyan 'adei-'ad. Barukh
attah Adonai yotzer
ha-adam.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר יָצַר אֶת־הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ, בְּצַלְמֵם
דְּמוּת תַּבְנִיתוֹ, וְהִתְקִין לוֹ מִמֶּנּוּ בְּנִיָּן
עַד־עַד. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה יוֹצֵר הָאָדָם.

Blessed art Thou LORD our God, King of the universe, who formed the man in His image, in the image of the semblance of His likeness, and prepared for him from Himself a building for eternity. Blessed art Thou, LORD, who fashioned the man.

Blessing 4

Sos tasis v'tageil ha'akarah
b'kibbutz baneha l'tokhah
b'simchah. Barukh attah
Adonai m'sameach
tziyon b'vaneha.

שׁוֹשׁ תְּשִׁישׁ וְתִגַּל הָעַקְרָה בְּקִבוּץ בְּנֵיהָ
לְתוֹכָהּ בְּשִׂמְחָה. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה
מְשַׂמַּח צִיּוֹן בְּבָנֶיהָ.

May the barren one exult and jubilantly rejoice through the regathering of her children amidst her in gladness. Blessed art Thou, LORD, who makes Zion rejoice with her children.

Blessing 5

Sameach t'sammach reifim
ha-ahuvim k'sameichakha
y'tsirkha b'gan eden m'kedem.
Barukh attah Adonai
m'sameach chatan v'khallah.

שִׂמַּח תְּשַׂמַּח רְעִים הָאֲהוּבִים כְּשִׂמַּחְךָ
יְצִירְךָ בְּגַן עֵדֶן מִקֶּדֶם.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה מְשַׂמַּח חָתָן וְכַלָּה.

Gladden the beloved companions as you made glad your creation in the garden of Eden from days of old. Blessed art Thou, LORD, who gladdens groom and bride.



Blessing 6

Barukh attah Adonai eloheinu
 melekh ha-olam, asher bara
 sason v'simchah, chatan
 v'kallah, gilah rinnah ditzah
 v'chedvah, ahavah v'achavah,
 v'shalom v'rei'ut. M'heirah
 Adonai eloheinu yishama
 b'arei Yehudah uvchutzot
 Yerushalim kol sason v'kol
 simchah, kol chatan v'kol
 kallah, kol mitzchalot
 chatanim mechupatam
 un'arim mimishteim
 n'ginatam. Barukh attah
 Adonai m'sameach
 chatan 'im ha-kallah.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
 אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא שְׂשׂוֹן וְשִׂמְחָה, חֲתָן וְכַלָּה,
 גִּילָה רִנָּה דִיצָה וְחֲדוּוּהָ, אַהֲבָה וְאַחֲוָה,
 וְשָׁלוֹם וְרַעוּת. מְהֵרָה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ
 יִשְׁמַע בְּעָרֵי יְהוּדָה וּבְחוּצוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַיִם
 קוֹל שְׂשׂוֹן וְקוֹל שִׂמְחָה, קוֹל חֲתָן וְקוֹל
 כַּלָּה, קוֹל מִצְחָלוֹת חֲתָנִים מְחַפְּתָם
 וְנְעָרִים מְמַשְׁתֵּה נְגִינָתָם. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה
 מְשַׂמֵּחַ חֲתָן עִם הַכַּלָּה.

Blessed art Thou LORD our God, King of the universe, who created joy and gladness, groom and bride, rejoicing, glad song, pleasure, delight, love, brotherhood, peace and companionship. Soon, LORD our God, let there be heard in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem the sound of joy and the sound of gladness, the voice of the groom and the voice of the bride, the sound of jubillation of grooms from their canopies and of youths from their feasts of song. Blessed art Thou, LORD, who gladdens the groom with the bride.

Blessing 7

Barukh attah Adonai eloheinu
 melekh ha-olam, borei p'ri
 hagafen.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
 בּוֹרֵא פְרֵי הַגָּפֶן.

Blessed art Thou LORD our God, king of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

The Smashed Glass

After the seven blessings are recited, the couple drinks from the cup and the groom will smash a glass with his right foot (to symbolize that even the most blessed moment is tempered with sorrow as long as the Temple in Jerusalem has not been rebuilt). It is customary for the witnesses to shout “**Mazal Tov!**” at this point in the ceremony.





Yichud



The couple then retires briefly to a completely private room, symbolic of the groom bringing the wife into his home. Here they are alone together for the first time, and may eat a small snack to break their fast.

The Seudah

Most Jewish celebrations are followed by a dinner to honor the occasion. At this meal all guests participate in the Mitzvah of *L'Sameach Chatan v'Kallah*, to celebrate in joy with the groom and bride.

At the end of the Seudat Mitzvah (festive meal), "Birkat HaMazon" (Grace After Meals) is recited, and the Sheva Berachot (seven blessings) recited under the Chupah are once again repeated. Special music attends this joyous event!

The first Seven Days of Marriage

In the tradition that harkens back to the seven-day celebration after the marriage of Jacob to Leah (Genesis 29), for seven consecutive evenings following the wedding friends or relatives will provide festive meals in honor of the newlyweds (this is perhaps a picture of the rapture of the church -- that is, the seven year period in which believers in the Mashiach Yeshua will celebrate with Him while the great tribulation occurs on the earth).

A Note about the Wedding Rings

Wedding rings often have Song of Solomon 6:3 engraved on the the band:
Ani ledodi v'dodi li, haRo'eh baShushanim - "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine; he feedeth among the lilies":

אָנִי לְדוּדִי וְדוּדִי לִי הִרְעָה בַּשּׁוֹשְׁנִים

among the lilies he feedeth and my beloved is mine I am my beloved's

Mazal Tov!