
CELEBRATING A JEWISH WEDDING II

Chuppah to Sheva Berachot

For anyone who has been to a Jewish wedding there are certain moments that make an indelible impression: the bride and groom walking down to the chuppah, the bride circling seven times around the groom, the giving of the ring, the melodious singing of the Seven Blessings (*Sheva Berachot*), the breaking of the glass, the wedding feast and dancing, and the second recitation of the Sheva Berachot following the festive meal.

This class will examine the significance of all these moments, as well as the week of Sheva Berachot following the wedding. In the previous Morasha class on Celebrating a Jewish Wedding, we discussed all the events from the couple's engagement until the *bedeken* (veiling of the bride). In this second class, we continue as the couple is escorted to the ceremony under the wedding canopy (chuppah).

The following questions will be addressed in this class:

- Why are the bride and groom escorted to the chuppah with candles?
- Why does the wedding ceremony take place under a canopy?
- Why does the bride circle the groom seven times?
- What is the significance of the ring?
- Why is a glass broken as part of the wedding ceremony?
- Why are there celebrations the entire week following the wedding?

Class Outline:

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SECTION I. THE WEDDING CANOPY (CHUPPAH) AND THE CUSTOM OF THE CANDLES

After the bride is veiled, the *chatan* (groom), followed by the *kallah* (bride) are led to the chuppah by escorts holding candles.

1. **Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, *Made in Heaven*, pp. 153-155 – The groom and bride are escorted to the chuppah with candles, which symbolizes both joy and God’s arrival at Mt. Sinai.**

It is a custom for the ones leading the groom and bride to the chuppah to carry candles in their hands. On the simplest level, the reason for this custom is that candles and light are always associated with joy. It is thus written, “The Jews had light, gladness, joy, and honor, *לְיָהוּדִים הָיְתָה אֹרֶה וְשִׂמְחָה וְשֵׁשׁן וְיָקָר*” (Esther 8:16). The candles indicate that the couple’s life together will be one of light and joy.

This same light and joy was also present at Mount Sinai, at the great wedding between Israel and God, when the Torah was given. The Torah describes Mount Sinai as surrounded by lightning flashes and fire. The Israelites were accompanied by lightning (Shemot/Exodus 19:16), and God was accompanied by fire (Ibid. 19:18). The bride and groom today are similarly accompanied by fire.

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (1910-1995), the revered halachic authority, had sensitivity for every Jew. Once, at a wedding, he saw an innovative practice. As the bride and groom were walking to the chuppah, their parents were holding candles encased in protective glasses.

After the wedding, R' Shlomo Zalman summoned one of his grandsons. He asked him to purchase a number of such glass holders and make it known that people making weddings could borrow them for the occasion.

“At times,” explained R' Shlomo Zalman, “the parents might be accompanying their child to the chuppah and a sudden gust of wind might blow out the exposed flame in their candles. Some people might think – mistakenly, of course – that such a natural occurrence as a flame going out means that the marriage is not meant to be. By providing them with this protective glassware, we can avoid such unnecessary heartache” (Rabbi Paysach Krohn, *Along the Maggid's Journey*, pp. 266-267).

2. **Ibid. pp. 149-150 – The groom is brought to the chuppah first so that he can welcome the bride into his domain. It is also symbolic of the fact that Adam was created before Eve, and that God came to Mt. Sinai before the people arrived.**

It is customary that the groom be led to the chuppah first. There are several reasons for this. The first reason is legalistic. The chuppah is seen as the domain of the groom; he must, therefore, be the first one there to make it his domain. Only then, does he welcome his bride into the chuppah. It is very much like buying or building a house, and then bringing one's bride into it. This custom is also rooted in the very first wedding. After Adam and Eve were created, the Torah says that God took Eve, “and brought her to Adam” (Bereishit/Genesis 2:22).

Adam was the first of the two created. Looking at the [very beginning of] Creation, each subsequent creature involved a higher form of life. Since Eve would have to be able to hold new life (the fetus) in her body, her essence was considered more refined than that of Adam, and she was created later [Rashi on Bereishit 2:22]. Thus Adam was the first human in the world; only later did he have Eve brought to him. Adam was thus the first one under the chuppah that God had made in the Garden of Eden, and Eve was brought into this chuppah. Similarly, today, the groom is the first one under the chuppah, and the bride is brought to him.

This was reflected in the wedding between God and Israel. The Torah says, “Moses led the people out of the camp to greet God” (Shemot 19:17). The Midrash teaches that Moses led the Israelites to God, just as a bride is led to the groom [Pirkei D'Rebbi Eliezer 40]. Just as God was the first one at Sinai, so the groom is the first one at the chuppah.

The deeper symbolism of the wedding canopy is expressed in the following source.

3. **Talmud Bavli (Babylonian Talmud), Bava Batra 75a, with Maharal, Chiddushei Aggadot – The chuppah designates the entity beneath it as something distinct. In the same sense, the bride and groom are “designated” by the chuppah as a separate entity. They have entered their own, independent domain.**

In the future God will make seven canopies [*chuppot*] for each and every righteous person ... Each one will have a distinct chuppah according to his level.

Maharal:

The explanation is that each righteous individual will be unique [in the World to Come]. The *tzaddik* (righteous person) will not be as he is in this world where he is indistinguishable from society. In the future there will be a canopy for each one, which is a sign of importance and

עתיד הקב"ה לעשות שבע חופות לכל צדיק וצדיק ...
שכל אחד וא' עושה לו הקב"ה חופה לפי כבודו.

מהר"ל

פי' החופה הזאת שיהיה כל צדיק וצדיק מיוחד
בפני עצמו, ולא יהיה הצדיק כמו שהוא בעולם הזה
שמשותפין כלם ביחד, אבל לעתיד יהיה לכל אחד
חופה בפני עצמו וזהו חשיבות ומעלה בפני עצמו...

significance for each one in his own right ...

This is the idea of a chuppah, for the chuppah designates that which is underneath it.

וזהו ענין החופה שהחופה (ש)מיחד אשר תחתיו.

Additionally, the chuppah is compared to the open tent of Avraham (Abraham), which was open on all sides to permit guests to enter (Bartenura on Avot 1:5). In coming under the chuppah, the couple begins their life in a “house” resembling that of Avraham, the first Jew. They make a statement that their house will be open to guests and hospitality, just like Avraham’s (Ezer Mekudash, Even Ha’Ezer 55:1).

Finally, some have the custom to place the chuppah outdoors as a fortuitous sign that their offspring be as numerous as the stars.

4. Rema, Even Ha’ezer 61:1 – Some have the custom to place the chuppah under the sky.

Some rule to place the chuppah under the sky, as a good sign that their children should be as numerous as the stars of the sky [just as God promised Avraham, Bereishit 15:5].

יש אומרים לעשות החופה תחת השמים, לסימן טוב שיהא זרעם ככוכבי השמים.

PART A. BETROTHAL (ERUSIN) AND MARRIAGE (NESUIN)

In order to fully understand the significance of the chuppah, one must understand the structure of a Jewish wedding. The Biblically defined wedding ceremony actually consists of two parts: Betrothal, or *erusin* (אירוסין), and marriage, or *nesuin* (נישואין).

To describe them briefly:

1. Erusin is like an engagement (rather than a marriage), in that it does not permit the couple to live together or share marital intimacy. On the other hand, as soon as erusin is completed, the woman has the full status of a married woman, and the man also has the status of a married man, and they may not be intimate with anyone else (Devarim/Deuteronomy 20:7; Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, *Made in Heaven*, pp. 133-4). For this reason, nowadays the erusin is not conducted separately from the nesuin – we do not want a situation where she is considered married but not living with her husband.
2. Nesuin is derived from the word to lift or take (נשא), and indicates that the man is taking the woman as a wife. From this point they are husband and wife, and may live together and share intimacy.

The following source describes how the erusin and nesuin were originally two separate events, as much as one year apart, to enable the groom to accrue assets for the marriage. However, since the 11th century, the custom is to perform both at the wedding.

1. Rabbi Mordechai Farkash, *The Order of Kiddushin and Nesuin*, p. 7 – Today, erusin and nesuin are both performed at the wedding.

In the times of the Sages, the bride would remain in her father’s home after the erusin, until the chuppah phase was reached. The erusin period would last for a long time, usually an entire year. Later, however [at the time of Rashi, 1040-1105],

בזמן חז”ל, היתה הכלה נשארת לאחר ה”אירוסין” בבית אביה, עד כניסתה לחופה. תקופת האירוסין הייתה נמשכת זמן רב, בדרך כלל כשנה תמימה. אולם בתקופה מאוחרת יותר, התחילו לעשות את

the erusin and the nesuin began to be performed on the same day and at the same event. This is the custom today – both phases of the marriage are performed together at the wedding.

ה"אירוסין" וה"נישואין" בזה אחר זה במעמד אחד. וכן נהוג בזמננו לעשות את הקניינים של שני שלבי האישות יחד במעמד החתונה.

How are erusin and nesuin accomplished at a wedding?

2. **Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, *Made in Heaven*, pp. 134, 137 – Erusin is accomplished by placing the ring on the bride's finger. Nesuin is accomplished by means of the chuppah.**

Erusin is completed when the groom places the ring on the bride's finger. [In truth] it can be accomplished by his giving her anything of value and declaring her to be his bride, and her accepting it. This rite is also known as *kiddushin* (קדושיין), meaning sanctification ...

There are two basic ways of accomplishing nesuin. First, it can be done by consummating the marriage. Second, it can be accomplished by chuppah ... Nesuin was seen as a holy rite, where people would be invited and the Seven Blessings recited. Without such a ceremony, the marriage would not be complete.

As mentioned, nesuin is accomplished by the bride and groom standing together under the chuppah. Torah law recognizes it as an act that binds the couple together. There is, however, a dispute among the early authorities exactly as to how they must demonstrate their status. As described in the next source, there are three main opinions.

3. ***Ibid.*, pp. 138-141 – Three approaches as to how the chuppah makes the couple married: (1) the chuppah alludes to the couple being alone and intimate, (2) it symbolizes the husband's obligations to his bride, and (3) it represents the man and wife setting up their home together.**

1. The first opinion is that chuppah alludes to the couple being alone together. In a number of places, the Torah recognizes that for a couple, being alone together is a prelude to intimacy. This is why an unmarried couple is forbidden to be alone together in a place where they would have enough privacy to be intimate. However, once the couple is married, the very fact that the two are together indicates that they are ready for intimacy. This symbolic act is enough to complete the nesuin.

2. The second opinion is that chuppah consists of the husband performing any of his husbandly duties toward his bride. The three basic husbandly obligations spelled out in the Torah are "food, clothing, and conjugal rights" (Shemot 21:10). Therefore, by feeding or clothing the bride, the man attains the status of her husband. As we have seen, this is one reason for veiling the bride, since it is a symbolic act of "clothing" her ...

3. The third opinion is that chuppah consists of the husband and wife setting up a house together. Since as man and wife they will be living together, any manner in which they do so symbolically constitutes chuppah. As soon as the two are in a single domain, the nesuin is complete, and they are man and wife. The third opinion is also alluded to in the Torah. The Torah speaks of a wife as being "in the house of her husband" (Bamidbar/Numbers 30:11). This indicates that coming together in one house makes the couple man and wife.

What is done in practice? The next source explains.

4. **Ibid., pp. 141-142 – Today we follow all three opinions.**

The prevalent custom is to follow all three opinions. Therefore, (1) the couple is secluded together; (2) they are under a cloth; and (3) they are placed in a symbolic house. Regarding the first opinion, the seclusion (*yichud*) takes place after the ceremony. The last two opinions involve the marriage canopy that is customarily used at all weddings today. The canopy usually consists of a square piece of velvet or other cloth, held by four poles. The poles may be held up by four men, or they may be on a frame so that they are self-supporting. In one sense, the canopy, or *chuppah*, is a symbolic house. It is a single domain into which the groom welcomes the bride. Although other people may be under the *chuppah*, it is still a domain where bride and groom are together, and this completes the *nesuin*.

5. **Enactment of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel – It is prohibited to get married without a chuppah procedure. This was instituted to avoid any halachic uncertainty regarding a person's marital status.**

It is prohibited for any man and woman of Israel to marry and to wed prior to the time of the *chuppah*. This proscription applies with the full force of excommunication upon any man of Israel who agrees to bear witness on such a marriage, and he is considered a legal criminal deserving of punishment. Any man who weds a wife at a time other than the *chuppah* ceremony will be required to divorce his wife.

אסור לכל איש ואישה מישראל לקדש ולארס שלא בשעת חופה. איסור זה רובץ בחרם גמור על כל איש מישראל שהוא נזקק להעיד על קידושין ואירוסין כאלה, והוא נחשב לחוטא פלילי שראוי להיענש עליו. כל איש שארס לו אישה שלא בשעת חופה, חייב לגרש ארוסתו זאת בגט כריתות כדת משה וישראל.

KEY THEMES OF SECTION I:

- ⌘ The wedding ceremony begins with the escort of the groom and bride to the *chuppah*. Those escorting them carry candles in their hands. On a simple level, the light of the candles symbolizes joy.
- ⌘ On a deeper level, this same light and joy was also present at Mount Sinai, at the great wedding between Israel and God, when the Torah was given. The Torah describes Mount Sinai as surrounded by lightning and fire, so too the bride and groom are accompanied by fire.
- ⌘ Since the groom arrives at the *chuppah* first, it functions as the groom's legal domain into which he welcomes his bride. Additionally, the *chuppah*'s borders symbolize the boundaries which the couple must make to protect their marriage spiritually and physically. On the other hand, the *chuppah* is open on all sides, so that they can begin their life in a "home" that resembles Avraham's house of kindness.

SECTION II. CIRCLING THE GROOM

As the next source describes, when the bride arrives with her escorts at the *chuppah*, she circles the groom three or seven times (depending on their custom). Many interpretations have been given to this custom. After the bride completes the circuits, the officiating rabbi (*mesader kiddushin*) recites a blessing over the forthcoming wedding.

1. Rabbi Menachem Packsher, Invei HaGefen 6:24 – Circling the groom.

The groom stands beneath the canopy ... and the escorts take the bride around the groom three times, and some have the custom of circling seven times. While they encircle it is customary for the cantor to sing, “He will bless the groom and the bride.”

ומעמידין את החתן תחת החופה... והשושבינות מסבבין עם הכלה סביב החתן ג' פעמים, ויש נוהגין ז' פעמים, ובשעה שמסבבין את הכלה נוהגין לומר הפיוט “הוא יברך את החתן ואת הכלה”.

The bride walks around the groom to show that she will protect him and help define him in their married life.

2. Talmud Bavli, Yevamot 62b, with Maharal, Chidushei Aggadot – The bride is like a “protective wall” around the groom, in the sense that she completes him and therefore gives him strength.

A man who is without a woman ... lacks a protective wall.

Maharal:

For a husband is made complete through his wife, and has no lacking. Something that is complete has strength like a wall. Therefore, one who is unmarried is incomplete and does not have this wall which provides strength.

שרוי בלא אשה... שרוי בלא חומה.

מהר"ל:

כי על ידי האשה האדם הוא שלם ואינו חסר, והדבר שהוא שלם יש לו חוזק כמו חומה, ולכך זה כאשר אין לו אשה הוא חסר ודבר שהוא חסר אין לו חוזק ואין לו חומה שהוא בחוזק

When the bride circles the groom, she accomplishes two things: (1) she causes her husband to turn inward to work on refining his character, and (2) she completes him by helping him to define himself.

The bride walks around the groom seven times to symbolize that she will help build him and define him as man was originally created during the seven days of Creation. (Rabbi Beryl Gershenfeld. See also Sefer Ta'amei HaMinhagim 967).

3. Teshurah, year 5759 (1999) (based on letters of the Lubavitcher Rebbe) – Just like the Jewish People encircled the walls of Jericho and caused them to fall, so too the partition between the husband and wife falls through marriage.

Some explain that just as Yehoshua (Joshua) and the nation of Israel encircled the walls of Jericho seven times, until the walls collapsed [Yehoshua 6:15], so the bride encircles the groom seven times, in order that the partition between them should fall, and they should live a good and content life.

ויש מסבירים שכשם שיהושע ובני ישראל הקיפו את חומות יריחו שבעה פעמים, עד שנפלו החומות, כך הכלה מקיפה את החתן שבעה פעמים, בכדי שאחר כך יפלו המחיצה שבינו לבניה, ויחיו חיים טובים ומאושרים.

What should the groom think about while under the chuppah?

4. Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe, Alei Shur, Vol. II, p. 218 – The groom should focus on being unconditionally responsible for his wife.

Occasionally, chatanim ask, “What should one

מדי פעם שואלים חתנים על מה עליהם לתת את

focus upon during the wedding day?” This is our recommendation to them: When they are standing under the chuppah, they should take upon themselves to assume responsibility for their wives their whole lives, in every possible situation, and that they will never negate this responsibility. As the Sages said, “It is good for a man to carry responsibility in his youth – this is the responsibility of one’s wife” (Eichah/Lamentations Rabbah 3:24). In Hebrew, the one who marries is called *nosei isha* [literally one who carries a wife]. This is a wonderful expression, for he needs to “carry” the responsibility of his wife his entire life!

דעתם ביום חתונתם, וזאת היא עצתינו להם: בעמדם תחת החופה יתקבלו על עצמם לשאת את העול האשה עד מאה ועשרים בכל מצב שיהיה ולעולם לא לפרוק עולה מעל עצמם. הוא אשר אמרו חז"ל: “טוב לגבר כי ישא עול נעוריו- עול אשה” (איכה רבה ג, כד). בלשון הקדש קוראים למתחתן “נושא אשה”, וזה ביטוי נפלא, כי הוא ממש צריך לשאת את אשתו להיות סובל אותה כל ימי חייו!

KEY THEMES OF SECTION II:

- ∞ The bride encircles the groom to symbolize that a wife is like a “surrounding wall” which protects her husband and helps define him.
- ∞ Additionally, she causes her husband to turn inward to work on refining his character.
- ∞ Finally, just like the Jewish People encircled the walls of Jericho and caused them to fall, so too the partition between the husband and wife falls through marriage.

SECTION III. GIVING THE RING

The erusin part of the marriage, which is the first component in effecting a Jewish marriage, can be achieved by the groom giving any item of value to the bride. The ancient and universal custom is to use a ring. The erusin and the nesuin (which follows immediately after) are the most crucial parts of the wedding ceremony. A rabbi officiates ensuring that everything is done according to the principles of *halachah* (Jewish law).

In the next source, we will see that the giving of the ring to accomplish erusin is preceded by the blessing on nesuin, which praises and thanks God for giving us the laws of sexual morality, which preserve the sanctity of family life and the Jewish People.

1. Rabbi Menachem Packsher, Invei HaGefen 6:30-31 – The blessing of the betrothal (*birkat ha-erusin*).

The officiating rabbi stands in front of the bride and groom ... He takes a cup of wine in his hand, and recites the blessing of the betrothal [erusin]... and then gives the bride and groom a sip of the wine.

המסדר קידושין עומד לפני החתן והכלה ... ולוקח הכוס יין בידו ומברך ברכת האירוסין... ונותן לחתן וכלה לטעום מן היין.

2. Rabbi Yehoshua Pfeffer, Jerusalem – The groom gives a ring to the bride to accomplish erusin.

After the bride and groom sip from the wine, the groom places the wedding band on the bride's right index finger. While putting the ring on her finger, the groom says in Hebrew (and, if he does not understand Hebrew, in the vernacular): "With this ring, you are consecrated to me according to the law of Moses and Israel, **הרי את מקודשת לי בטבעת זו כדת משה וישראל**."

The *erusin* must be witnessed by two valid witnesses [Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 33-34]. These witnesses stand beneath the chuppah and must see the groom placing the ring on the bride's finger, and hear him say the words above.

The bride must not give the groom a ring beneath the chuppah. If they so wish, this may be done at a later time.

As soon as the ring is placed on the bride's finger, the couple is considered legally married in Jewish law. In the following story we see that the exact moment of the marriage is in the hands of Heaven.

The Brisker Rav, Rabbi Velvel Soloveitchik (1887-1959), was officiating at a wedding. He had recited the marriage blessings [for erusin], and the groom was about to place the ring upon his bride's right index finger. In his nervousness, the groom dropped the ring. The groom's father quickly picked it up and returned it to his embarrassed son. The groom tried again, but he was so flustered that he misjudged the position of the bride's outstretched index finger and jammed the ring onto the side of her finger, and it fell down again. Once more, the groom's father picked it up and gave it back to his son. By now, the bride had become nervous. The groom finally placed the ring on her finger, but her hand trembled so much that the ring slipped off and fell yet another time to the floor. Some spectators gasped, and a relative standing nearby quickly retrieved the ring and gave it back to the groom.

The Brisker Rav now stepped in. In a fatherly manner, he instructed the groom to calm down and try again to place the ring on his bride's finger. Finally it was done, and everyone breathed a sigh of relief.

After the chuppah, a number of students approached the Brisker Rav and asked, "Wasn't the fact that the ring dropped three times a possible sign from Heaven that this match was not meant to be?"

"Not at all," he answered. "There is a set time for everything to happen, and the time for this marriage to take effect had not yet arrived. The ring had to drop three times until it was the right time" (Rabbi Paysach Krohn, Along the Maggid's Journey, pp. 267-268).

3. Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah #552 – The ring on her finger serves as a constant reminder that she is married.

The root of the mitzvah to perform the erusin procedure ... is so that the bride should always remember that she is married to this man, and she will never betray him ... Thus they will live and be married in peace. Because of this, the Jewish custom is to perform the erusin with a ring, something which is a constant reminder as it is always on her finger.

משרשי המצוה שתצונו התורה לעשות מעשה באשה ... כדי שתתן אל לבה לעולם שהיא קנויה לאותו האיש ולא תזנה תחתיו... ובכן יהיה שבתם וקמתם בשלום לעולם. ומהיות מיסוד המצוה מה שזכרת, נהגו ישראל לקדש בטבעת להיות בידה תמיד למזכרת.

KEY THEMES OF SECTION III:

- ∞ The ring accomplishes erusin, which means that the couple may not marry anyone else, but they still need to do the procedure of nesuin to permit them to be intimate with each other. The ring on her finger serves as a constant reminder that she is married.

SECTION IV. READING THE KETUBAH, THE SHEVA BERACHOT, AND BREAKING THE GLASS

PART A. READING THE KETUBAH

Following the giving of the ring, the *ketubah* (marriage contract) is read out loud, which forms a separation between the erusin element (giving of the ring) of the ceremony and the nesuin element (the reading of the Sheva Berachot; Rema, Even HaEzer 62:9).

1. **Rabbi Menachem Packsher, Invei HaGefen 6:39-40 – The ketubah is read aloud under the chuppah and is then given to the bride or to one of her attendants.**

Reading the ketubah out loud is an ancient custom which separates between the blessings of the erusin (kiddushin) and the nesuin ... therefore it is read out loud under the chuppah ... there are places in which an honored person is asked to read out the ketubah.

After reading out the ketubah, it is given to the bride ... who then gives it to [one of her relatives or attendants] who will ensure that it reaches her house.

קריאת הכתובה היא מנהג אבותינו כדי להפסיק בין ברכת אירוסין ונשואין... ומש"כ מקריאין את הכתובה תחת החופה... ויש מקומות שמכבדין לאחד מהחשובים שבקהל להקראותה.

אחר קריאתה מוסרין את הכתובה ליד הכלה... ולקחת אח"כ ממנה ולמסור הכתובה [לאחד מקרוביה] שידאוג שיגיע לבית הכלה.

2. **Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, Made in Heaven, p. 99 – The ketubah is symbolic of the marriage document between God and the Jewish People.**

The ketubah also has a symbolic meaning. Since the bride and groom represent Israel and God at Sinai when the Torah was given, the ketubah represents the "Book of the Covenant" that Moses wrote prior to the revelation at Sinai (Shemot 24:4, 7). The Book of the Covenant spelled out the mutual obligations of God and Israel, just as the ketubah spells out the obligations between husband and wife [Sefer HaKaneh 99b].

Some have the custom for the rabbi to say inspirational words to the bride and groom after the reading of the ketubah. (Others have the custom for the rabbi to speak before the chuppah ceremony begins [Keter Shem Tov 1, 6, note 697]). Following is one example. (In this particular case the chuppah story itself is prefaced by an earlier account of the family showing the tremendous dedication that is invested into marriage).

Mrs. Anatoly Sharansky traveled around the world for nine years trying to secure the release of her husband from Russia, who was imprisoned there for wanting to emigrate to Israel. During all that time, she was Mrs. Sharansky. You could say, "He was arrested right after the wedding. All they had was a ceremony. They didn't even get to know each other as husband and wife. There may have been a wedding, but there really wasn't much of a marriage. What made her so devoted to this man in Russia?"

She was devoted because he was her husband, she was his wife and their marriage was sacred. She was loyal to him because nine years earlier she ceased being half a being; she was a whole being and her other half, her husband, was in jail.

So what does "happily ever after" really mean? It means that you never step out of the relationship and look at the

marriage, at your husband or your wife, as an outsider. It means that you accept that this person is your purpose in life, and that it's a sacred responsibility to make him or her happy. If your husband or wife happens to have a problem, and you have to take care of that problem, that's not an interference in your life. This is your life. He is your life. She is your life.

If the two of you wholeheartedly believe that this is what your lives are all about and acknowledge the sanctity of your marriage, the result will be loyalty, reverence; and the two halves become a sacred whole.

(Based on Rabbi Manis Friedman, Doesn't Anyone Blush Anymore? p. 31.)

There is a striking postscript to this story. After nine years, Anatoly Sharansky was freed from Russia following a worldwide campaign orchestrated by Mrs. Avital Sharansky. He was flown to Israel and reunited with his wife. Twenty-five years later, in 2008, he expressed the following words at the chuppah of their Israeli-born daughter, just before breaking the glass. (In Israel, the glass is broken before reading the ketubah):

In Jewish tradition after erusin and chuppah we take one step back, look at our personal simchah from a broader perspective, and break a glass in memory of Jerusalem. And here I want to say a few words. This moment takes me back to our chuppah, Avital's and mine, 34 years ago. It was in a small, one-room Moscow apartment where four friends held a sheet above our head. The number of guests hardly reached a minyan. It was the first chuppah in our lives that we ever saw and all that we could do was simply repeat after the rabbi every move and every word – while hardly understanding any of them.

But when it came to breaking the glass, the rabbi spoke about Jerusalem and we became instantly reconnected to our reality. It was so obvious to us that we were in the very last stages, the final meters, of the thousands of years of struggle to return to Jerusalem. And this chuppah, ours, invigorated our determination to win this battle (against the Russian authorities) and made us feel powerfully that it was within our reach.

Today, we are standing here: You, Rachel, are the first sabra in the Sharansky family, and you, Micha, the first new immigrant in the Danzinger family. And we are in Jerusalem! The dream has come true. But if we are here already, in the unified capital of the reborn Jewish state, what is the meaning today of breaking the glass? What is the dream we still yearn for? What is our – your – challenge?

When I compare your chuppah and our chuppah, I think that the challenge which you face is much more difficult. Our aim was so simple and so clear. We had to win the battle and nothing could deter us. Today, on the one hand you have to be builders and guardians of Jerusalem, and at the same time guardians of the idea of Jerusalem. You have to physically build the earthly Jerusalem and keep alive the power, energy, and uniqueness of the Heavenly Jerusalem. The power of unity, and connection to the generations of our people is in the Heavenly Jerusalem, of Yerushalayim shel Ma'alah ...

Now let's break the glass.

PART B. THE SHEVA BERACHOT

With the first part of the marriage ceremony completed (with the giving of the ring), the second part begins. Essentially, the second part consists of the reading of the Seven Blessings (Sheva Berachot). A number of honorees are called up for the recitation of the Sheva Berachot, all of which commemorate the union and the joy of the bride and the groom.

1. Rabbi Yehoshua Pfeffer, Ner LeElef – The Sheva Berachot are recited by honored guests in the presence of ten adult men.

It is customary to honor friends and relatives with the recitation of the blessings of the Sheva Berachot.

The first blessing over the cup of wine (*hagafen*) and the second blessing are recited by the same person; another five men are honored with the remaining five. The last blessing, known as the *brachah ach'rita*, is considered the most prestigious, and is normally reserved for a very special individual. The Seven Blessings are only recited in the presence of a quorum (ten adult men). These blessings are a crucial part of the wedding ceremony, as the couple is forbidden to live together without them.

2. **Ashkenazi Prayer Book, the Sheva Berachot text (based on the translation by Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, Made in Heaven, pp. 187-190)**

1. Blessed are You, Lord, our God, King of the universe, Who creates the fruit of the vine.

2. Blessed are You, Lord, our God, King of the universe, Who created all things for His glory.

3. Blessed are You, Lord, our God, King of the universe, Creator of man.

4. Blessed are You, Lord, our God, King of the universe, Who created man in His image – in the image set forth by His plan – and prepared for him a structure to last for all time. Blessed are You, God, Creator of mankind.

5. May the barren one rejoice and be glad, when her children are gathered back to her in joy. Blessed are You, God, Who makes Zion rejoice in her children.

6. May you grant great joy to these beloved companions, just as you granted happiness to the work of Your hands long ago in the Garden of Eden. Blessed are You, God, Who grants joy to groom and bride.

7. Blessed are You, Lord, our God, King of the universe, Who created happiness and joy, groom and bride, rejoicing and song, delight and cheer, love and harmony, peace and companionship. Soon, Lord our God, may there be heard in the cities of Yehudah (Judah) and in the streets of Jerusalem, the sound of gladness, the sound of joy, the sound of the groom, and sound of the bride, the sound of rejoicing from grooms at their weddings, and young people at their feasts of song. Blessed are You, God, Who grants joy to the groom with the bride.

1. ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם בורא פרי הגפן.

2. ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם שהכל ברא לכבודו.

3. ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם יוצר האדם.

4. ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם אשר יצר את האדם בצלמו, בצלם דמות תבניתו, והתקין לו ממנו בנין עדי עד. ברוך אתה ה' יוצר האדם.

5. שוש תשיש ותגל העקרה, בקבוץ בניה לתוכה בשמחה. ברוך אתה ה' משמח ציון בבניה.

6. שמח תשמח רעים האהובים, כשמחך יצריך בגן עדן מקדם. ברוך אתה ה' משמח חתן וכלה.

7. ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם, אשר ברא ששון ושמחה, חתן וכלה, גילה רינה, דיצה וחדוה, אהבה ואחוה ושלוש ורעות. מהרה ה' אלקינו ישמע בערי יהודה ובחצות ירושלים, קול ששון וקול שמחה, קול חתן וקול כלה, קול מצהלות חתנים מחופתם, ונערים ממושתה נגינתם. ברוך אתה ה' משמח חתן עם הכלה.

3. Talmud Bavli, Yevamot 62b, with Rabbi Yitzchak Minkovsky (1784-1852), Keren Orah – The Seven Blessings reflect the many benefits of marriage.

Whoever lacks a wife also lacks joy, blessing, goodness, Torah, a [protective] wall, and peace.

Keren Orah:

These six benefits of marriage correspond to the six blessings recited in the Sheva Berachot described below (not including the first blessing on the wine):

1. The first blessing, *Who has created everything for His glory* [highlights the role of a woman as being a source of *blessing*]. A single man is incomplete in his existence and purpose in Creation. [Only at the point in his life when he marries is he considered a whole man, and may be the subject of the blessing that *all is created for His glory*, for only then is he fulfilling his potential in life, thereby glorifying God.] But without a wife, this blessing cannot be said on this single man, since he lacks everything.

2. The second blessing, *Who creates man* correlates to the benefit that marriage is a source of *goodness*. Man's creation was not complete until God made him a helper [i.e. a wife, who changes his status to one of "goodness"]. As the verse states, "It is not good for man to be alone. I will make him a helper who will stand opposite him" [Bereishit 2:18].

3. The third blessing, *Who created man in His image – in the image set forth by His plan – and prepared for him a structure [i.e. Chavah] to last for all time*, refers to the fact that a wife is a *protective wall* for her husband, shielding him from sin.

4. The fourth blessing, *May the barren one rejoice and be glad*, alludes to the *joy* that a woman brings into the life of her husband.

5. The fifth blessing, *May you grant great joy to these beloved companions, just as you granted happiness to the work of Your hands long ago in the Garden of Eden*, alludes to the *Torah* that a woman brings to a husband ... The greatest joy that is available to man is the joy of Torah, and she assists her husband in studying the Torah in purity and happiness.

כל אדם שאין לו אשה שרוי בלא שמחה, בלא ברכה,
בלא טובה ... בלא תורה, בלא חומה ... בלא שלום

קרן אורה:

יש לכיין ששה דברים אלו כנגד ששה ברכות חתנים
לבד ברכת היין.

1. ברכה ראשונה היא ברכת "שהכל ברא לכבודו". ואם
הוא בלא אשה אין בריאותו שלימה, ואין יכול לברך, כי
חסר הוא מכל.

2. "בלא טובה" הוא כנגד ברכת "יוצר האדם", ולא
נשלמה יצירתו עד אשר נעשה לו עזר. וכמו שכתוב
"לא טוב" כו'.

3. "בלא חומה" הוא כנגד ברכת "אשר יצר את האדם"
כו'. והתקין לו ממונו "בנין עדי עד", כי לחומה היא לו
להגן עליו מעבירה.

4. "בלא שמחה" היא כנגד ברכת "שוש תשיש ...
משמח ציון בבניה".

5. "בלא תורה" הוא כנגד ברכת "שמח תשמח רעים
האהובים כשמחך יצריך בגן עדן מקדם" ... כי תכלית
השמחה הוא שמחת התורה, והיא עוזרתו ללמוד תורה
בטהרה ובשמחת לב.

6. The sixth blessing, *Who created ... love and harmony, peace and companionship*, refers to the benefit of *peace*. Peace is the ultimate of all blessings that a person could want, and she is the one who brings blessing to his life.

6. "בלא שלום" כנגד ברכת "אשר ברא אהבה ואחוה ושלום וריעות", כי סוף כל הברכות הוא השלום. והיא הכלי המחזקת ברכה.

4. **Rabbi Menachem Packsher, Invei HaGefen 6:41 – The Seven Blessings correspond to the seven days of Creation, and the seven canopies that God made for Adam in the Garden of Eden.**

These [blessings] are seven blessings that are made in honor of the bride and groom. They correspond to the seven canopies that God made for Adam in the Garden of Eden [Kol Bo 75], and also to the seven "voices" that were pronounced on Mount Sinai [Tashbatz 466]. They also correspond to the seven days of Creation [Mateh Moshe 12].

הם ז' ברכות שמברכין לכבודם של החתן והכלה והם כנגד ז' חופות שעשה הקב"ה לאדם הראשון בגן עדן, וכמו במתן תורה היו ז' קולות תקנו כנגדן ז' ב, וכן כנגד ז' ימי בראשית שנברא בהם העולם.

It should be noted that the couple is blessed *twice* with Sheva Berachot during the wedding: first under the chuppah, and the second at the end of the Bircat HaMazon (Grace after Meals) at the end of the wedding meal.

PART C. BREAKING THE GLASS

It is the custom for the groom to break a glass to conclude the ceremony. The usual practice is for the officiating rabbi to wrap the glass in a napkin, and place it near the groom's foot. The groom then shatters the glass with his right foot (Rema, Even HaEzer 65:3). Usually a glass cup is used, but anything made of glass, including a light bulb can be used (Mateh Moshe 3:1:9). (In Israel, the custom is to break the glass earlier, after the giving of the ring – Invei HaGefen 6:37).

As reflected in the next verse, the reason for breaking the glass is to remind us that even amidst great joy, our world is incomplete without the Temple in Jerusalem.

1. **Tehillim/Psalms 137:5 – Remembering Jerusalem at all times.**

If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its strength. Let my tongue stick to my palate if I will not remember you, if I will not bring Jerusalem to mind during my greatest joy.

אם אֶשְׁכַּחךְ יְרוּשָׁלַם תִּשְׁכַּח יְמִינִי. תִּדְבַק לְשׁוֹנֵי לְחִכִּי
אם לא אֶזְכְּרְכִי אם לא אֶעֱלֶה אֶת יְרוּשָׁלַם עַל רֹאשׁ
שִׁמְחָתִי.

2. **Rema, Orach Chaim 560:2 – The glass is broken to remind us of the destruction of the Temple.**

It is the custom to break a glass at the chuppah ... to remind us of Jerusalem [whose Temple lies in ruins].

נהגו לשבר כוס בשעת חופה... כדי לזכור את ירושלים.

3. **Rabbi Yehoshua Pfeffer, Morasha – The finality of the broken glass symbolizes the permanence of the couple’s bond.**

The breaking of the glass is also a metaphor for the finality of the bond that has been established. Just as breaking a glass is a deed which cannot be undone, so, too, we pray that this relationship last forever.

KEY THEMES OF SECTION IV:

- ∞ The ketubah is read under the chuppah to form a separation between the giving of the ring (erusin) and the reading of the Seven Blessings (nesuin). The ketubah is symbolic of the marriage document between God and the Jewish People – the Torah.
- ∞ The Sheva Berachot (Seven Blessings) are then recited, which ask God to bless this couple with the same joy and peace that Adam and Chavah enjoyed in the Garden of Eden. They are recited by honored guests in the presence of ten adult men. They correspond to the many benefits of a marriage including joy, goodness, Torah, protection from outside influences, and peace.
- ∞ To conclude the ceremony, a glass is broken by the groom to remind us of the destruction of the Temple even amidst our great joy. Additionally, the finality of the broken glass symbolizes our hopes for the permanence of the couple’s bond.

SECTION V. YICHUD – SECLUSION

The final stage of the legal marriage ceremony is *yichud*: the seclusion of the bride and groom in a private room. The main reason for the seclusion is that, according to many authorities, the marriage is not complete until the couple has had a chance to be alone together. Thus, only after the couple has been alone, are they considered completely married according to *all* opinions (Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, *Made in Heaven*, pp. 206-7).

1. **Rabbi Yehoshua Pfeffer, Morasha – The yichud (seclusion).**

Immediately after the chuppah, the bride and groom are escorted with singing and dancing to the “yichud (seclusion) room,” where they spend a few minutes alone. The couple is traditionally escorted into the room by the attending guests, and the appointed witnesses *must* see their entry into the room. The couple remains secluded in the room for at least eight minutes; often, they do so for much longer.

The witnesses must ascertain that there is no one in the room besides the bride and groom, and observe the door being shut and locked. They then wait outside the room for the aforementioned amount of time.

Once inside the room, the couple breaks their wedding day fast. It is also a time when the bride and groom customarily exchange gifts. The bride also dons the jewelry which she removed, according to custom, before the chuppah.

As we see in the next source, the yichud room provides a moment of intimacy for the bride and groom, a time in which they can escape from the crowds, and focus on their newly formed relationship.

2. **Ibid.** – The message of yichud: finding time for one another.

After all the public pomp and ceremony, it is time for the bride and groom to share some private moments; the purpose of the entire ceremony! Even while surrounded by a crowd clamoring to shower them with love and attention, they must take a break to be there for each other. This is an important lesson for marriage – the couple should never allow the hustle and bustle of life to completely engulf them; they must always find private time for each other.

KEY THEMES OF SECTION V:

☞ Immediately after the chuppah, the bride and groom are escorted with singing and dancing to the “yichud (seclusion) room,” where they spend a few minutes alone.

SECTION VI. THE WEDDING FEAST

The final part of the marriage ceremony is the wedding feast, which includes eating, dancing, and festivities. The goal of the feast is to bring joy to the bride and groom. In fact, gladdening and entertaining the bride and groom is viewed by the Sages as an important mitzvah, and each guest should invest energy and attention to its proper fulfillment (Rambam, Hilchot Eivel 14:1).

Reuvain and Gabi Erlanger, from Lucerne, Switzerland, both played musical instruments and sang beautifully. They decided to form a two-man band to perform at weddings throughout Switzerland. In 1974 the two brothers were hired to perform at a wedding in Lugano, a city in southern Switzerland, a three-hour journey by train from Lucerne. Since they had been told that the wedding would be well attended and it would be held in a large hall, they thought it would be wise to bring along a third musician. A friend who played the flute agreed to come along, but he got sick right before the wedding and couldn't join them.

They traveled to Lugano, just the two of them, disappointed and apprehensive about how feeble their music might sound in the large hall. As they entered the hall, one of the guests stared at the brothers in disbelief; as a native New-Yorker, he was accustomed to hearing five- to seven-piece bands at every Jewish wedding. Now he was looking at one fellow with an accordion and another with a drum. Sarcastically he asked, “Will there be music here tonight?”

“We are the band,” they answered apologetically.

As they set up their accordion and drums, plugged in amplifiers and checked microphones, a teen-aged boy came over and asked shyly, “Would it be all right if I played my violin with you?”

The brothers were astounded! The young boy looked like a foreigner. He was obviously a wedding guest, but from where? And why did he ask to play? Did the brothers look so pathetic that they needed help?

“Where are you from?” Reuvain asked. And then, laughing, he added, “And what made you bring your violin to the wedding?”

“I am from Israel,” the young man replied “and I learn in Yeshivat Be'er Yaakov. Before I left the yeshivah to come to the wedding, I said goodbye to the Mashgiach (spiritual director), Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe. I asked him if I should take my violin along and he said ‘Of course you should. You are going to Switzerland to bring joy to the bride and groom. Take your violin. One never knows where you will find the opportunity to use it and fulfill the mitzvah of celebrating with the bride and groom. It could be at the wedding or the Sheva Berachot. If you have the talent, use it.’”

The boy paused for a moment and then added, “That’s why I took the violin. The Mashgiach suggested that I bring it.”

Remarkably, the young man even had the appropriate cord to connect his violin to the Erlangers’ amplifying system. All evening, the three blended their musical artistry so that their melodious tones exhilarated and uplifted the large crowd (adapted from Rabbi Paysach Krohn, *Along the Maggid’s Journey*, pp. 147-149).

1. Rabbi Yehoshua Pfeffer, *Morasha – The wedding meal – music, singing, dancing, and eating!*

The bride and groom enter the wedding hall, where they are enthusiastically greeted with music, singing, and dancing. The singing, dancing, and merrymaking are the central feature of the affair, and continue until the Grace after Meals, with several intermissions when the various food courses are served. The men dance with the groom, and the women dance with the bride in separate circles.

After the first round of dancing, the bride and groom take their seat at the head table. Also seated by the head table are the bride and groom’s parents, grandparents, the rabbi, and any other dignitaries in attendance. Traditionally, the groom recites the *hamotzi* blessing on an oversized challah, which is then sliced and shared with the guests.

The sixth blessing of the Sheva Berachot calls on God to bring joy to the bride and groom. As the next source shows, we too bring joy to the couple by dancing and performing.

2. Talmud Bavli, Ketubot 17a – The Sage was rewarded for dancing in front of the bride and groom to make them happy.

Rabbi Shmuel bar Rav Yitzchak used to dance [in front of the bride and juggle] three [myrtle branches]. Rav Zeira exclaimed, “The elderly man is shaming us [with his behavior]!” When Rabbi Shmuel died, a pillar of fire formed a partition between him and the rest of the world, and we have learned that a pillar of fire only appears for one or two exceptional individuals in a generation. Rav Zeira stated, “It was the myrtle branches that gave him the merit.” Some say, “His behavior, as though he was a fool, gave him the merit.” Others say, “His approach [readiness to belittle himself for the sake of cheering the bride] gave him the merit.”

רב שמואל בר רב יצחק מרקד אתלת, א"ר זירא: קא מכסיף לן סבא! כי נח נפשיה, איפסיק עמודא דנורא בין דידיה לכולי עלמא; וגמירי, דלא אפסיק עמודא דנורא אלא אי אחד בדרא אי לתרי בדרא. א"ר זירא: אהנייה ליה שוטייה לסבא, ואמרי לה: שטותיה לסבא, ואמרי לה: שיטתיה לסבא.

Based on the previous source, it is the custom today to entertain the bride and groom with all sorts of antics (Yerushalmi, Chagigah 2:1; Sichot HaRan 86).

3. Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe, *Alei Shur I*, p. 246 – Bringing happiness to the couple brings God’s Presence to their new home.

What is the mitzvah to bring joy to the chatan and kallah? Besides the component of practicing kindness to endear the wife to the husband, there is also a mitzvah to be among those who help to bring God’s Presence into the home that is now being established. For behold, God’s Presence only dwells amidst joy! (Rosh, Berachot 5:3)

ומהי המצוה לשמח חתן וכלה- מלבד מה שיש בה גמילות חסד “לחבבה על בעלה,”- אם לא זו: להיות מן העוזרים להוריד את השכינה לתוך הבית הנוסד זה עתה, שהרי “אין השכינה שורה אלא מתוך שמחה!” (ברכות לא, א וברא"ש שם)

KEY THEMES OF SECTION VI:

- ⌘ After leaving the yichud room, the new couple is greeted in the wedding hall with music, singing, and dancing. Since it is a great mitzvah to bring joy to the couple, everyone joins in the dancing, and some perform antics and feats to entertain the couple.
- ⌘ Since God's Presence only dwells amidst joy, bringing happiness to the couple helps to bring God's Presence to their new home.

SECTION VII. CELEBRATING THE WEEK OF SHEVA BERACHOT

It is customary for bride and groom to celebrate their marriage for seven days after the ceremony. During the seven-day period the groom should not go out to work or business and should be completely free to spend time with his new bride (Rema, Even HaEzer 64:1). During this week it is customary to make festive meals each night called “Sheva Berachot” – the seven blessings which are said at the end of Grace after Meals just as under the chuppah.

1. **Rabbi Moshe Bamberger, Sheva Berachos, ArtScroll, pp. 27-28 – The objective of the week-long wedding celebration is to gladden the hearts of the new couple, and to thank God for bringing about this sacred union.**

The number seven, in Jewish thought, marks completion – seven days in the week, seven years in the Sabbatical Year cycle, and so on. Therefore, if either the bride or the groom has never been married, their joy is so complete that the wedding is celebrated for seven days following the marriage ceremony. During these seven days, the groom and bride wear fine clothing, eat, drink, and rejoice together, refrain from working to devote themselves to their celebration, and each may not go outside unescorted. This week, full of joy, pomp, and circumstance surrounding the new couple, is designed to accord the groom, along with his bride, the royal treatment ...

During this week it is customary that each day the new couple is regaled by family and friends at festive meals. At these feasts, inspirational words of Torah are spoken, praises for the attributes of the groom and bride are expressed, and joyful song fills the air. The objective is to gladden the hearts of the new couple, and to offer praise and thanksgiving to God for bringing about this sacred union.

These seven days of celebratory meals are ... commonly referred to as the “week of Sheva Berachot,” for the seven blessings recited under the canopy are reiterated after each meal arranged for and attended by the newlywed couple, assuming two conditions are met: (1) at least ten men are present at the meal, and (2) one man must be a newcomer (*panim chadashot*) who was not at the wedding or any previous Sheva Berachot meal.

A final note: Rabbi Beryl Gershenfeld related in the name of Rav Chatzkel Levenstein (mashgiach of Mir Yeshivah), “There are a few people who *naturally* will end up enjoying extraordinary marriages. There are a few people who *naturally* will end up enduring terrible marriages. Most people have mediocre marriages. The key is knowing that we can all work on making our marriages great.”

KEY THEMES OF SECTION VII:

- ∞ It is customary for bride and groom to celebrate their marriage for seven days after the wedding, including celebratory meals when the seven blessings recited under the canopy are reiterated after each meal.
- ∞ The objective of the week-long wedding celebration is to praise the bride and groom and give them confidence in their abilities to be husband and wife. Additionally, we thank God for bringing about this sacred union.

CLASS SUMMARY:

WHY ARE THE BRIDE AND GROOM ESCORTED TO THE CHUPPAH WITH CANDLES?

On a simple level, the light of the candles symbolizes joy. On a deeper level, this same light and joy from the wedding was also present at Mount Sinai at the great wedding between the nation of Israel and God, when the Torah was given. The Torah describes Mount Sinai as having been surrounded by lightning and fire, so too the bride and groom are accompanied by fire.

WHY DOES THE WEDDING CEREMONY TAKE PLACE UNDER A CANOPY?

The chuppah functions as the groom's legal domain into which he welcomes his bride. Additionally, the chuppah's borders symbolize the boundaries which the couple must make to protect their marriage spiritually and physically. On the other hand, the chuppah is open on all sides, so that they can begin their life in a "house" that resembles Avraham's house of kindness.

WHY DOES THE BRIDE CIRCLE THE GROOM SEVEN TIMES?

This symbolizes the fact that a wife is like a "surrounding wall" who protects her husband and helps to define him. Additionally, it symbolizes the wife helping to re-create her husband just as he was originally created during the seven days of Creation. Finally, just like the Jewish People encircled the walls of Jericho and caused them to fall, so too the partition between husband and wife falls through marriage.

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RING?

The ring accomplishes erusin, which means that the couple may not marry anyone else, but they still need to do the procedure of nesuin to permit them to be intimate with each other. The ring on her finger serves as a constant reminder that she is married.

WHY IS A GLASS BROKEN AS PART OF THE WEDDING CEREMONY?

A glass is broken even amidst our great joy to remind us of the destruction of the Temple. Additionally, the finality of the broken glass symbolizes our hopes for the permanence of the couple's bond.

WHY ARE THERE CELEBRATIONS THE ENTIRE WEEK FOLLOWING THE WEDDING?

The objective of the week-long wedding celebration is to gladden the hearts of the new couple so that the love between them grows, and to thank God for bringing about this sacred union.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED READING & SOURCES

Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, *Made in Heaven: A Jewish Wedding Guide*, Moznaim Publishing Company.

Rabbi Maurice Lamm, *The Jewish Way in Love and Marriage*, Harper and Row Publishers.

Rabbi Moshe Bamberger, *Sheva Berachos*, Mesorah Publications.