

# *The Wedding Guide*

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## *Initial Preparations*

- **Shomer:**

The chasan should choose a friend to help with the preparations for and at the wedding (we will see that he should have helpers). His two jobs are: being the "shomer", literally a guard; and of supervising all technical details of the wedding ceremony. Being shomer, "guarding", means to make sure that the chasan is never alone from sunrise on the day of the wedding until the chupah. "Technical details" mean simply making sure that everyone (eidim, Rabbis, parents, etc.) and everything (wine, ring, kesubah, etc.) are at the right places (at the chupah, near so-and-so, etc.) at the right times (at the tenaim, at the chupah, etc.).

- **Forms:**

In Israel, several forms have to be filled out that register the wedding with the Rabbanut and/or another Beis Din (outside of Israel, follow the instructions of the officiating rabbi.) Among these forms is a request for proof that the chasan and kallah are Jewish. The forms will state what form of proof is acceptable. There will also be a blank kesubah, which is to be filled out the same way as the real kesubah and signed by eidim and then returned to be part of their permanent files. It does not have to be filled out or signed at the wedding, but that will be the time when the signatures of the eidim will be most readily available. Make sure the copy of the kesubah is returned to the Rabbanut or Beis Din within a week. *Make sure both families agree to the amounts written in the Tenaim and Kesubah, this should be done with a Rabbi before the wedding.*

- **Honors:**

The choosing of honors should be divided equally between chasan and kallah. Prepare a list of all those to be honored, including a list of second choices as well, for it is almost certain that some of those honored will be absent or late. It may be better not to tell people which honors they are to receive to avoid offending anyone if last minute changes occur. If the couple wants to be sure that certain people will attend (especially regarding the Rebbeim, who receive many invitations to many simchas), be sure to give a personal invitation or reminder, in addition to the printed invitation. Make sure to make up the list of honors (see form at end of packet) well in advance of the wedding. Don't leave it for the last minute!

## *Honors To Be Distributed*

The most important people at a wedding are the two witnesses to the kiddushin. Without them, the marriage is not halachically valid. However, for various reasons, a different hierarchy of honor has developed. (For example, even though Sheva Brachos is generally more important than Krias HaKesubah, and HaGefen & Shehakol Bara more than Asher Bara, the following order of honor is generally maintained.)

- 1. Mesader Kiddushin:** One person who recites the brachos of the Kiddushin under the chupah.
- 2. Krias HaKesubah:** One person who reads the kesubah aloud at the chupah.
- 3. Sheva Brachos:** Six people who say seven brachos (the first two are said by the same person). These must be observant, but need not be married. The brachos are listed in order of honor and numbered according to the order they are recited:
  1. *Asher Bara* (6)
  2. *Hagefen & Shehakol Bara* (1)
  3. *Yotzer Ha'adam* (2)
  4. *Asher Yatzar* (3)
  5. *Sos Tasis* (4)
  6. *Sameach Tisamach* (5)
- 4. Eidei Kiddushin:** Two witnesses at the Kiddushin (observant, non-relatives).
- 5. Krias HaTenaim:** One person to read the Shtar Tenaim.
- 6. Eidei Tenaim:** Two witnesses at the Tenaim (observant, non-relatives).
- 7. Omdim:** Two men who each represent the chasan or kallah in the terms of the tenaim contract. Two women then share in breaking the plate. If possible these four should be the couple's parents; the parents need not be married for this.
- 8. Unterfirir (Shoshvinin):** Two men and two women (the parents, if possible) to accompany the chasan and kallah to the chupah. Some are careful that they should be married couples.
- 9. Chazan:** One person to sing as the chasan and kallah approach the chupah, and to announce the others who are called up to the chupah.
- 10. Three Friends:** One to help put the kittel on the chasan, one to help the shoshvinin with the candles and one (observant) to keep and pour the wine at the chupah.



# *Things To Be Obtained Before The Wedding*

*These are grouped in the order that they will be distributed at the wedding. It will be helpful to arrange these items separately before the wedding.*

## **Group 1 / Shomer (Friend 1)**

- **Shtar Tenaim:** When no formal tenaim have been contracted before the day of the wedding, they are formalized at the wedding before the chupah. In Israel the standard version is used. In America, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein's version is usually used. Two copies of this form are needed, plus spares (see attached samples).
- **Handkerchief:** For kinyanim. (Brought by Mesader Kiddushin, but good to be safe.)
- **Plate:** To be broken at the Tenaim; made of earthenware and wrapped.

## **Group 2 / Friend 1**

- **Kittel:** White robe symbolizing the chasan's being free of sin.
- **Ashes:** To be put on the chasan's forehead just before the chupah, in commemoration of the destruction of the Temple.

## **Group 3 / Friend 2**

- **Candle Holders:** Four are needed, one for each of the shoshvinin.
- **Candles:** Make sure they fit into the holders - they shouldn't blow out in the wind.
- **Matches:** A minor but important detail.

## **Group 4 / Friend 3**

- **Wine:** One bottle is needed at the chupah (white wine is fine so as not to stain the kallah's dress), and a second at the seudah (with corkscrew).
- **Kiddush Cup:** Make sure that it holds a revi'is of wine. (Two separate cups are needed after the seudah for bentching and sheva brachos.)
- **Glass Cup:** Wrapped. To be broken at the chupah.

## **Group 5 / Shomer**

- **Booklet:** For the tefilos which the chasan's friends want him to say under the chupah.
- **List of Honors:** See attached list to be filled out.
- **Siddur:** With brachos of kiddushin in addition to the standard sheva brachos. Where relevant, the siddur should have the owner's name in it.
- **Ring:** Simple (plain, without decoration or engraving) gold or silver band, depending on the custom. It must belong to the chasan.
- **Kesubah/Pen:** The "Nachalas Shiva" version is used. If it will be a standard form, it should be filled out only by the Mesader Kiddushin, and not until the wedding. If it will be handwritten, a draft should be checked by the Mesader Kiddushin before it's written. He should check it again after it is written. Then, avoid letting anyone see it until the wedding, to prevent anyone from raising shailos on it. In any event, whether it will be handwritten or not, have one or two spare form printed kesubos available.
- **Handkerchief:** For kinyan on the kesubah under the chupah.

## The Day Of The Wedding

- The minhag is to go to the mikvah in the morning. Remember the inyan of the day: *Teshuvah*.
- Remember to fast, unless exempt (such as on Rosh Chodesh). The fast continues until the chupah or tzeis hakochavim, whichever is first.
- The minhag is for the chasan to send the kallah a bouquet of flowers (preferably in the color and style of her choice) which she holds under the chupah.
- Some daven mincha at the Kotel.
- If fasting, remember to say "*Aneinu*" in the Shemonah Esrei of mincha.
- Remember to have a "*Viduy*" booklet of the Yom Kippur<sup>1</sup> service at mincha in order to say the entire sections of "*viduy*" and "*al chet*". After saying the last bracha of the Shemonah Esrei, say the posuk "y'hiyu l'ratzon..." and then continue with "*viduy*". One says "*viduy*" even when one is not fasting.
- The small notebook should be made available for those who wish to write a tefillah for the chasan to say under the chupah. The shomer should hold onto this book. To make it easier for the chasan, these tefillos should be written in the exact words that the chasan is to say. Each person should write on a different page to insure privacy.
- Make sure that the chasan owns the ring, and has made a kinyan on it by raising it in the air at least one tefach (about ten centimetres/four inches).
- Have the plate and glass adequately wrapped to avoid a mess.
- Make sure the chasan has practiced "*Harei aht mekudeshes li...*" and "*Im eshkachech...*" which he will say to the kallah under the chupah.

*(These are included in the summary pages taken to the wedding for the chasan to read under the chupah.)*

הָרִי אֶת מְקַדְשֵׁת לִי בְּטַבַּעַת זֹו כְּדַת מֹשֶׁה וְיִשְׂרָאֵל

*Harei At Mekudeshes Li b'Tabaas zu k'Daas Moshe v'Yisrael*

*Behold, you are betrothed to me with this ring according to the Law of Moses and Israel.*

אִם אֶשְׁכַּח יְרוּשָׁלַם, תִּשְׁכַּח יְמִינִי. תִּדְבֵק לְשׁוֹנֵי לְחֻפֵי, אִם לֹא אֶזְכְּרֶנִּי; אִם לֹא אֶעֱלֶה אֶת יְרוּשָׁלַם עַל רֹאשׁ שִׁמְחָתִי.

*Im eshkachech yerushalayim, tishkach yemini. Tidbak leshoni l'chiki, im lo ezkarechi. Im lo a'aleh es yerushalayim al rosh simchasi.*

*If I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill. May my tongue cling to my palate, if I do not remember you, if I do not bring up Jerusalem at the beginning of my joy.*

*(Psalms 137)*

<sup>1</sup> Or a Yom Kippur Machzor

## *Schedule Of Events*

The basic schedule of events is written below. Each step will be covered in greater detail later. There is a tendency for certain steps to follow others with little or no time in between. Things will be very rushed for the shomer. We have seen, and will see below, that in certain places the shomer must delegate responsibility to other people. The more helpers that the shomer can find, the smoother things will run.

- **Preparations:** The shomer sees to it that everything at the wedding is in order.
- **Tenaim:** In the event that formal tenaim were not contracted long before the wedding (which is usually the case) they are formalized shortly before the chupah. Depending on the time of day, they may (or may not) daven Mincha or Ma'ariv, either before or after the Tenaim. (Make sure siddurim are available for the minyan.)
- **Badeken:** The chasan is ushered to the kallah to lower the veil. The shomer is not needed at this point, but this will almost certainly be followed immediately by the kittel.
- **Kittel:** As the guests proceed to the chupah, the chasan puts on the kittel, then goes to the chupah (sometimes the Rabbi has the chasan don the kittel before the badeken).
- **Chupah:** This consists of,
  - **Kiddushin** - betrothal.
  - **Kesubah** - reading and contracting the kesubah.
  - **Birchos Nisuin** - marriage blessings.
- **Yichud:** The chasan and kallah are alone in a private room, followed by the seudah.