

Jewish Marriage

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Kiddushin

- Commonly translated as betrothal, this is the period before the Wedding ceremony (usually 12 months).
- Whilst it is referred to as betrothal, the man and woman are now fully fledged husband and wife, after this point a *get* (divorce) would be required for them to leave each other.
- Whilst the couple are now husband and wife, they are not permitted to live together as such until the second part of the wedding, the Nisu'in.
- There are three ways to betroth a woman: a money transaction, a document, or sexual intercourse (with marriage in mind). The last one is least popular, as betrothal must be witnessed by 2 kosher witnesses.

Nisu'in

- The Wedding Day is the happiest and holiest of a person's life; a personal Yom Kippur for the *chatan* (groom) and *kallah* (bride). All past mistakes are forgiven as they merge into a new and complete soul.
- The *badeken* is the veiling of the *kallah* by the *chatan*. The veil symbolises the idea of modesty and teaches that while physical appearance may be a factor in love, the soul and character of a person are more important.
- The wedding ceremony takes place under the *chuppah*, a symbol of the home to be built and shared by the couple. It is open on all sides – welcoming all guests in. The *chatan*, and the *kallah*, are usually escorted to the *chuppah* by their respective parents.
- Under the *chuppah*, the *kallah* circles the *chatan* seven times. Just as the world was built in seven days, the *kallah* is symbolically building the walls of their new life together.
- Two cups of wine are used in the wedding ceremony. The first cup accompanies the blessings recited by the rabbi.

The Ring

- In Jewish law, a marriage becomes official when the *chatan* gives an object of value to the *kallah*. This is traditionally done with a ring. The ring should be made of plain gold, without blemishes or ornamentation (e.g. stones) – just as it is hoped that the marriage will be one of simple beauty.
- The *chatan* now takes the wedding ring in his hand, and in clear view of two witnesses, declares to the *kallah*, “Behold, you are betrothed unto me with this ring, according to the law 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.

Breaking the Glass

- A glass is placed on the floor, and the ***chatan*** shatters it with his foot. This is an expression of sadness at the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, and identifies the couple with the spiritual destiny of the Jewish people. A Jew, even at this moment of extreme happiness, is aware that he/she must “*set Jerusalem above my highest joy.*”
- Some joke that this is the last time the groom gets to “put his foot down.”
- This marks the conclusion of the ceremony. With shouts of “**Mazel Tov,**” the *chatan* and *kallah* are then given an enthusiastic reception from the guests as they leave the *chuppah* together.

Scripture

- “A man without a woman is doomed to an existence without joy, without blessing, without experiencing life’s true goodness, without Torah, without protection and without peace.” – ***Talmud***
- “A man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” - ***Genesis 2:24***
- “God created the first human being half male, half female. He then separated the two parts to form a man and a woman.” - ***Midrash***