

Wedding Structure at a Glantz

Adapted from various sources and written by Hazzan Howard Glantz last edited June 20, 2019

What follows is a guide I have constructed to be helpful for you as you begin this journey. My goal is to present as much as possible in a concise but helpful manner to anyone interested.

The process from engagement to that special day, can be exhausting, but this guide is not exhaustive. Further reading from the sources I list as well as many others, may bring important insights for you that I did not include. Please feel free to share with me anything you learn about or see at other weddings and we can discuss how I might incorporate it into your ceremony.

These are topics that follow the course of what I, as officiant will preside over from arrival onwards. They may or may not be the order in which you wish to learn and so this table allows you to hyperlink to the section you wish.

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Engagement and Engagement

From the moment you make the commitment to make the commitment to marry, your relationship to each other and your relationships to others will inevitably go through some changes. Whether your engagement period will be one month or more than a year, it is good to have time with your officiant whom you are 'engaging' to perform the ceremony.

When distance and/or schedule make meeting in person untenable, technology can be quite useful and we can set times for Facetime, Skype, Zoom, etc. Generally speaking, 3 meetings of about one hour each will go along way to make me familiar enough with you and your needs so that the ceremony will reflect exactly what you are hoping for. In these meetings we will review all of the topics that follow and it will be my pleasure to clarify and elaborate.

There is a Jewish engagement ceremony which is called [Tena'im](#). You can read more at the [link](#). It is not mandatory but it may be something you feel suits you. It need not be a large affair

but there are couples who invite close to if not as many to the Tena'im as they do the actual wedding.

The Ketubah

A *ketubah* is a wedding contract. The word *ketubah* shares the same Hebrew root as the word for writing or written, *kotev* or *katuv*.

I encourage you to begin this process sooner than later in your preparations. Choosing the text and style of this document may be more important to you over time than many other choices you'll make together. *Ketubot* can be simply folding documents you will keep in a drawer and cost relatively little, to ornate paper cut, commissioned pieces of art that hang on your wall prominently for decades to come.

The most traditional *ketubot* (plural of *ketubah*), include language with which one would be uncomfortable, especially were Aramaic one's first language, so choose the wording carefully. Modern *ketubot* are legal Jewishly and formalize the covenant between both partners in a more egalitarian manner with mutually protective clauses. Learn more about the [ketubah text here](#)

[The Lieberman Clause](#)

Several websites, like [ketubah.com](#), [Modernketubah.com](#) and [ketubah-gallery.com](#), offer a variety of texts and artistic styles. Please be in touch regarding your choices and feel free to ask me to proof before making final payment. My links do not identify me as the source for your referral. I do not receive any benefits from any of the links provided herein.

Oftentimes, the *ketubah* signing is 15 - 30 minutes before the beginning of the wedding ceremony, though the timing can vary. A *ketubah* signing is a great opportunity to celebrate with the wedding party and where state marriage license documents are signed as well.

Can I get a witness?

Witnesses sign the actual *ketubah* by hand and thus, should know how to write their name properly in Hebrew characters. I am always happy to be in contact with your *ketubah* signers. It is far easier to make people comfortable in advance of the event rather than on the spot.

Ketubah witnesses **cannot** be related to you in nearly any way, so it's better to stick to friends who are not related to either of you at all OR... to each other. There is still debate about the validity of a witness based on Jewish observance level and gender. I require only that witnesses to this Jewish document be, in fact, Jewish.

The witnesses for your civil documents can be any adults of legal age, with no regard to their relation to you or each other. They do not necessarily have to be Jewish.

Bedecken (Veiling the Bride)

This is most commonly performed in the same time period as the ketubah signing. *Bedecken*, which means "checking" (to be certain) is a Jewish custom that, in weddings between a bride and a groom, involves the groom putting a wedding veil on the bride shortly before the ceremony.

I am honored to participate in same sex Jewish marriages. I will work with you to determine how we adapt this and many other aspects of our tradition based on norms to which we need no longer to be limited.

Not every bride chooses to wear a veil or a veil that covers the face. The groom(s) and/or bride(s) can still "verify" that this person is in fact the *besher(e)* - intended one. This is a serious ritual but it can also be laced (pun intended!) with humor from the biblical source that you can read about [here](#). Modern rituals abound created especially for unions that require some alteration of texts, etc., read more [here](#).

The Ceremony

Processional

In traditional Jewish weddings the entire wedding party processes down the aisle. An option is for the officiant(s) to be first. I do not need to be in the processional. I can already be waiting at the *chuppah* (wedding canopy) when the ceremony begins.

There are no set Jewish rules regarding the processional, just customs. You will find various preferences in culture and from one planner to another. You can be as conventional or atypical as you would like. In any case, it does help for me, your officiant, to have the list in order even if just prior to walking.

Music

Most couples have music during the processional. I will gladly give you as much guidance as you wish regarding these selections. If there are no musicians or recorded music that you wish, having me play guitar and sing lightly in the background is also an option.

At the Chuppah

A chuppah is an open walled canopy that symbolizes the home that the couple will build together. It can be as simple as a fabric or Tallis held up by four sticks to an ornate floral creation. Learn more [here](#). I encourage you to be involved in it's selection or creation.

In traditional Jewish weddings, at the end of the processional, the bride walks slowly around the groom. The number of times around varies but most typical is seven times. A popular variation on traditional circling is for each partner to circle the other three times, followed by a final, seventh circle that the couple does together. Circling symbolizes the creation of a new home and the intertwining of the lives of both partners.

Liturgy-Welcome and the First Cup. The ceremony begins with the welcoming text *B'ruchim Haba'im* and the betrothal blessing. Wine represents joy in Judaism, and after reciting the blessing, I invite each of you to sip from the cup. I highly recommend you do some taste testing of kosher wine and/or kosher grape juice and might I suggest white or at least, blush just in case there's a spill.

The Shehecheyanu blessing option: This brief blessing gives thanks for the delight of reaching this wonderful moment and can be inserted here or at the very beginning once under the chuppah.

Vows and Ring Ceremony

Under separate cover or in document I will share with you, this area is thoroughly covered. The rings used for the ceremony should be plain with no artwork or stones whose value would be debatable. They can be changed to the bands you may prefer immediately after. I will gladly explain this further in our meetings.

The Sheva Brachot/Seven Blessings

The seven blessings are made using a second cup of wine. You have the option of providing two cups from your respective families as a way of including more of a personal touch. I encourage you to share with me a few particulars about these cups so that I can impart that information when I use them respectively.

Tallis

Sometimes Couples incorporate one or more prayer shawls into the ceremony. From the chuppah itself or tacked under the one your venue or florist provides/creates to draping one or more across your shoulders during the sheva brachot connecting with previous generations in your respective families. We'll discuss this more fully when we are together.

Breaking the Glass

Jewish weddings do not traditionally end with a kiss. Not to worry though - you'll still get to smack lips! The smashing of a glass (a wrapped up - preferably used - lightbulb works too!) is usually performed by the groom. In the spirit of egalitarianism, some couples may prefer to perform this differently or even together. Most couples do kiss right after the smashing of the glass and I usually lead everyone in a short round of Siman Tov u'Mazel Tov before the recessional.

More on the etymology and popularity of this custom [here](#).

Recessional and Alone Time (*Yichud*)

Most couples like to have music resume for the recessional. If you wish me to mention the composers or titles of songs that are likely played without lyrics, please ask!

I highly recommend the Jewish tradition called *yichud*, which means "alone time for the couple." Take at least a little time to be alone together in a private space immediately following the ceremony. Oftentimes this is the same room in which ketubah had been signed. Many synagogues and other venues have a Bride's Room which can serve this purpose as well. Having the break (*yichud*) between the ceremony and celebrating with guests can be rewarding and grounding. It's also a chance to eat a little something as you will likely already be hungry and have less opportunity to eat during the affair than will everyone else.

Sources for further learning and explication

Books

[The Creative Jewish Wedding Book \(2nd Edition\)](#): A Hands-On Guide to New & Old Traditions, Ceremonies & Celebrations, Jewish Lights; 2 edition (February 1, 2009) ISBN-13: 978-1580233989

[The Jewish Wedding Now](#), Anita Diamant, Scribner (June 6, 2017) ISBN-13: 978-1501153945

[The Wedding Planner & Organizer](#), Mindy Weiss, Workman Publishing Company; Csm edition (January 15, 2012), ISBN-13: 978-0761165972

Articles

<https://www.jpost.com/Jewish-World/Jewish-Features/The-story-of-the-kittel>

<https://www.jta.org/2019/06/19/uncategorized/just-because-i-dont-want-kids-doesnt-make-me-a-bad-jew>

https://moderntribe.com/blogs/news/why-do-we-break-a-glass-at-jewish-weddings?gclid=CjwKCAjw3azoBRAXEiwA-_64On5fVeZjCiOknp4WCHNNNCbvUqSEGVXb-vUo29epHiy8GmeJ4Xw6xoCu08QAvD_BwE

<https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-huppah-or-wedding-canopy/amp/>

<https://www.brides.com/story/dispatches-from-a-feminist-bride-wedding-traditions-debunked-part-v>

<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/planning-your-jewish-wedding/>

<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/tenaim-the-conditions-of-marriage/>

<https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-life-and-religion/237078/how-to-have-a-successful-marriage>

<https://reformjudaism.org/blog/2015/08/17/3-jewish-secrets-long-successful-marriage>

<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/marriage-in-judaism>

Text commentaries that reference weddings

<https://reformjudaism.org/learning/torah-study/shoftim/it-takes-two-me-and-you>

<http://www.jtsa.edu/tears-for-the-temples>

<http://www.jtsa.edu/rebeccas-veil-of-independence>

<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/inside-rebecca-and-isaacs-marriage/>

<https://www.keshetonline.org/resources/pesach-sheni-and-gay-marriage-parashat-behaalotcha/>

Shopping links

https://moderntribe.com/collections/jewish-wedding-gifts-supplies_wedding-smash-glasses

<https://www.bestkippah.com/store/pc/home.asp>

This website sells bulk kippot with the names and date for the ceremony embossed at the lowest prices I've seen, BUT they also carry other Judaica. Remember to use the code FREESHIP.

<https://tzitzit.tallit-shop.com/jewish-kittel/>

Unusual versions of Judaica including kippot and low cost kittels.