



## THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY

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The following guide provides step-by-step information on the Jewish wedding ceremony.



## 1. THE SIGNING OF THE KETUBAH

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The Ketubah is shown to the groom who is asked to agree to be bound by its provisions in the presence of two religious witnesses. The Ketubah is then signed by the witnesses.

## 2. BEDEKEN The veiling of the bride

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The groom is accompanied to the bridal room to see his bride. With the Rabbi and other officiants present, he places her veil over her face and the Rabbi recites the blessing which was originally given to Rebecca.

When Rebecca met Isaac the Torah says, “she took a veil and covered herself”. This is seen as a sign of modesty that brides observe to this day. Isaac’s marriage to Rebecca marked the beginning of the Jewish people. The bride therefore emulates Rebecca in the hope that she will be equally worthy in her marriage. This is an opportunity for the bride and groom to be blessed by their respective fathers or a close relative.

## 3. THE CHUPPAH The marriage canopy

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The Chuppah represents the couple’s new home, the very foundation of the Jewish family. It is a simple structure reminding us that materialistic possessions do not make the home. Rather, it is the spiritual commitment the couple bring to their home. The groom is accompanied to the Chuppah first, followed soon after by the bridal party.



## 4. THE BRIDAL CIRCUITS

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Some have the custom that the bride walks around her groom either three or seven times; three based on the idea that the groom has three Torah obligations to his bride. The seven circuits representing the seven revolutions that the earth made during the seven days of creation.

Both three and seven are special numbers within the Jewish tradition; there are several other interpretations for the above practice.

## 4. ERUSIN Betrothal

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Marriage originally took place in two distinct stages. The first, Erusin or Kiddushin, "betrothal", joined the couple in a mutual pledge. The bride and groom then returned to their respective families. After sufficient time had elapsed to plan a wedding and acquire a home the bride would be brought under the Chuppah to the groom and they would begin their married life together. This was called Nissu'in and was accompanied by its own blessings.

Nowadays the two ceremonies have been combined into one. Each involves blessings said over a cup of wine, with them being separated by the reading of the Ketubah.

The Rabbi will recite two brachot relating to the betrothal and the bride and groom will drink from the cup of wine.



## 5. THE PLACING OF THE RING

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The groom then takes the wedding ring and says to his bride in Hebrew, in the presence of two religious witnesses, “Be consecrated to me with this ring according to the laws of Moses and Israel”. He places the ring on the index finger of the bride’s right hand with her consent. The couple are now legally married. One of the officiants will now read aloud the Ketubah in Aramaic and in English.

## 6. NISSU’IN & SHEVA BRACHOT Seven Blessings

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The Nissu’in, the second part of the ceremony includes the Sheva Brachot with a blessing over wine followed by blessings relating to God, the creation of man, the Jewish people and for the happiness of the bride and groom. The bridal couple then drink from the second cup of wine. This completes the official proceedings.

## 7. THE BREAKING OF THE GLASS

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The groom will now step on the glass and break it. Whilst this is a most exciting and joyous day for the bride and groom, Rabbinic law requires the couple to remember and recall the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem by the Romans, in the year 70 CE. On hearing the glass break the guests will shout “mazel tov” (good fortune) to the couple. The service is usually concluded with the biblical priestly blessing recited upon them.



## 8. THE CIVIL REGISTER

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At the conclusion of the religious ceremony the bride and groom will sign the Civil Registers and be given both the Ketubah and civil marriage certificate. Normally the religious officiants sign the Ketubah but the couple can designate either family or close friends to witness their civil marriage.

## 9. YICHUD Seclusion

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With the Chuppah ceremony concluded, the newly married couple make their way to a private room for their first moments of privacy as husband and wife symbolising their permission to be secluded together. The couple will re-join the wedding party following this quiet time to celebrate their wedding.

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