



Community Synagogue of Rye Wedding Guide

Planning Your Wedding

Mazal tov and congratulations on your upcoming marriage. Knowing that the happy task of preparing for a wedding brings with it a host of questions and uncertainties, we have created this outline of Community Synagogue of Rye wedding practices for your assistance. Please keep in mind, the rabbis and cantor are always available if you have any questions as you read this.

Role of the Clergy

- The clergy at Community Synagogue of Rye do not officiate at weddings without first having a personal meeting with the couple. As you are considering the date for your ceremony, you should contact the rabbis or cantor. A series of meetings with the officiating clergy will help you prepare for your ceremony, as well as for your married life together.
- The role of clergy in the wedding ceremony is traditionally described as *m'sader kiddushin*, the one who "arranges" or "orders" the ceremony of *kiddushin*. *Kiddushin* is the Jewish term for marriage, and contains within it the idea of *kadosh*, or holiness (that is, the presence of God in our lives). You, as a couple, actually perform the marriage ceremony yourselves by proclaiming your vows of *kiddushin* and your intentions to be *kadosh* (holy) to each other. This means you will love, respect, and honor one another within the sacred relationship of marriage.
- If you would like the participation of clergy from outside our synagogue in your wedding ceremony, you should discuss this with the rabbis or cantor. Clergy protocol requires that an invitation be extended from us (or to us, if you're asking clergy to join you elsewhere) before clergy from different synagogues may co-officiate at a wedding ceremony.
- The rabbis and cantor do not accept fees for the performance of pastoral or personal services for members of our congregation. We suggest that, instead, a contribution be made to the Rabbis Discretionary Funds and/or the Music Fund at Community Synagogue of Rye. These funds support worthy projects in our synagogue, Jewish community, and wider community.
- Aside from the possible role of *m'sader kiddushin*, the cantor may chant the opening passages of the ceremony, the *Sheva Berachot* (Seven Blessings, which will be explained later), and join with the rabbi(s) in blessing the newly-married couple during the conclusion of the ceremony. If you like, the cantor may add to the beauty of the ceremony by singing a Jewish text and melody appropriate to the occasion at some point during your ceremony.

The Ketubah

- Thirty minutes prior to your ceremony, the couple, two witnesses, plus significant family and/or friends gather together to read and sign a *ketubah*.

- Literally, “a written document,” the *ketubah* is, in traditional Judaism, the marriage agreement handed to the bride by the groom, and describes in legal language the various provisions required by biblical and rabbinic law.
- In your ceremony, we will use a modern *ketubah*. Unlike the traditional *ketubah*, in which the groom “acquires” the bride, the modern *ketubah* reflects the perception of marriage as a partnership. In it, the couple promises to honor and respect each other, and to work for your mutual sustenance.
- There are many opportunities for obtaining a *ketubah*. You may choose to have one designed by an artist skilled in calligraphy and manuscript illumination, or choose from a selection of *ketubah* lithographs requiring only the services of a calligrapher to complete the document. You may shop for your *ketubah* online. Two useful sites are www.ketubahstudio.com or www.ketubah.com. If you use www.ketubahstudio.com, they will make a *tzedakah* donation to Community Synagogue of Rye in your honor. And if your budget is tight, www.ketubah4less.com may be able to help.
- Your clergy encourage you to choose a *ketubah* as an exquisite and meaningful record of your joyous celebration. After the ceremony, it may be framed and placed in your new home.

The Veil

- In ancient Middle Eastern custom, all women wore veils, including brides. In Jewish custom through the ages, just prior to the ceremony, the groom would lift the bride’s veil to make certain he was marrying the right person. This ceremony, called *bedeken* (from the Hebrew, “to examine”), draws upon the *Torah* story of Jacob, Leah, and Rachel (Genesis 29) as its source.
- Today, however, we connect the custom to the *Torah* story of Isaac and Rebekkah (Genesis 24). When Rebekkah saw Isaac from afar, she knew they were destined to marry, and she placed a veil upon her face as a sign of modesty, romance, and the wonder of human love.
- If you choose to cover your face with a blusher, *bedeken* is an option for you. When requested, it occurs just after the signing of the *ketubah*.

The Processional

- Many couples like to begin their ceremony with a procession to the *chuppah* (wedding canopy). Jewish tradition leaves you the freedom to arrange this any way you choose, with the participation of anyone you choose.
- The only requirement is that when the processional concludes, the couple should be standing beneath the *chuppah*, with the bride to the groom’s right (as you face the clergy).
- Also, your clergy will enter the ceremony space just prior to the beginning of your processional. When he/she lights the candles, your music and processional should begin.

Your Music

- In addition to any chanting by the cantor, a variety of musical possibilities exist for the processional, the recessional, and if desired, during the ceremony itself.
- Your clergy encourages you to select music from the repertoire of Jewish wedding melodies only. If you like, they can tell you about your many choices.
- Please note: Wagner’s Wedding March is not considered appropriate for a Jewish ceremony.

- Our cantor is available and should be consulting on your selections of melodies, accompanists and vocalists. Please make an appointment to discuss this important component of your wedding ceremony.

The Chuppah

- The *chuppah* is the wedding canopy beneath which you stand during the ceremony. It is usually made of fabric, or a *tallit* (traditional prayer shawl), and is supported by four poles.
- The *chuppah* symbolizes the new home you are establishing under the sheltering presence of God.
- There are several options available to you for your *chuppah*.
- Community Synagogue of Rye has a hand-held *chuppah* consisting of four 8-foot poles (to eliminate the physical difficulty of being a *chuppah*-holder, since the poles rest directly on the ground) and either a deep-blue canopy, a traditional black-and-white *tallit*, or some other designed fabric of your choice, which is attached (by “mitten-clips”) to the *chuppah*.
- You may arrange with your florist for some other arrangement. Please advise the officiating clergy of your decision.
- If you wish to use any of our synagogue’s *chuppah* components, reserve them through our synagogue office.

Beneath the Chuppah

- Under your *chuppah*, there needs to be A SMALL TABLE (which will be used by the clergy during your ceremony). It is placed just between the clergy and the wedding couple.
- The ideal dimensions for this table are: 3 feet high, 2 feet wide, and 2 feet deep. If narrower or shallower, the table may not provide the needed surface space. If wider or deeper, the table may take up too much room beneath your *chuppah*. If shorter, it may become awkward to make use of it. And if taller, it may create a visual obstacle between the clergy and the couple. While dimensions may be adjusted as needed, please keep these details in mind.
- Your clergy will ask you to bring 2 *KIDDUSH* CUPS to place on this table. If at all possible, the cups should belong to you at the conclusion of the ceremony so that, through the years ahead, you will use this same *Kiddush* cup at significant Jewish holidays and life-cycle moments. Note: Your *Kiddush* cup can be made of metal, ceramics, glass, wood, or any other material. Don’t forget to arrange for A JEWISH WINE (either red or white is fine) to be poured into the cup just prior to the beginning of your ceremony.
- You will also be asked to bring *CANDLESTICKS AND CANDLES* to place on this table. These represent the light and warmth of your new Jewish home. As with your *Kiddush* cup, the candlesticks should belong to you at the conclusion of the ceremony. Note: Don’t forget to arrange for *MATCHES* to be placed on the table, as well.

Sheva Berachot (the Seven Blessings)

- The *Sheva Berachot* are recited in Hebrew and English during the wedding ceremony.
- The first of these blessings is the blessing over the wine (one of two times you will sip from your *Kiddush* cup). Three blessings follow which thank God for the beauty of Creation, especially of humankind, and for the Divine spark of goodness and *kedushah* (holiness) implanted within each of

us. The final three blessings express the joy of Jewish continuity, reaching back to the Garden of Eden, and our age-old wish that joy, love, and companionship should fill the entire world.

- If the cantor is present, these blessings will be chanted.

Your Wedding Rings

- Jewish tradition requires that an object of value be exchanged between the couple. Since earliest times, rings have served this function.
- Traditionally, only the brides received a ring. But in keeping with the contemporary practice of equal partnership, your clergy encourages a double-ring ceremony.
- The circular form of the ring suggests the continuing cycle of life which marriage affirms, as well as the unending nature of family love.
- Jewish tradition prescribes a simple, gold band. But since it is preferred that the ring used in the ceremony be the one you actually wear, a ring with gems or cuts is also acceptable. Modesty is your guideline here; if possible, gems should be flush-inset.
- During the ceremony, the groom would place the bride's ring on her right index finger, to be followed by the traditional vows in Hebrew and English. The bride will then do the same. Tradition explains that the purpose of this ring placement is to make it easier for witnesses to see that the bride has received the ring, as well as the ancient belief that the index finger is directly connected by a special artery to the heart. After the ceremony, you may move the ring to the more conventional "ring" finger.

The Tallitot

- There is an old Sephardic Jewish custom where, just before the conclusion of the ceremony, the couple is wrapped together in a *tallit* (a Jewish prayer shawl). It creates an intimate *chuppah*-beneath-the-*chuppah*, and represents the warmth and closeness of your relationship, and of God's sheltering presence in your lives.
- If you think this would be a meaningful addition to your ceremony, you may bring A *TALLIT* (perhaps your own, one that's been in your family, one newly purchased, or even borrowed from the clergy) and place it on the table before the ceremony.

Breaking of the Glass

- No Jewish wedding seems complete without the breaking of the glass, but the origins of this practice is still a matter of disagreement among scholars.
- To some it symbolizes the destruction of the synagogue in Jerusalem in the year 70 CE. Others believe it is a reminder that the world about us is broken and it is our responsibility to help repair it.
- If you choose to take part in this tradition, and your ceremony is taking place outside the synagogue, you should make arrangements for the glass to be present.
- Some simply wrap the glass in a piece of cloth, while others sew it inside a "*mazal* bag." This allows you to easily carry the pieces home with you as a wedding memory.

Aufruf (Pre-Wedding Blessing)

- On the *Shabbat* just prior to the wedding (or earlier, if desired), it is customary at Community Synagogue of Rye for the couple to attend worship services together and receive a blessing from the congregation. This is called an *aufruf* (from the Yiddish, meaning “going up,” similar to the word *Aliyah*).
- You may, in honor of your wedding, recite *Torah* blessings, read *Torah*, or simply stand together before the open Ark while the rabbi (s) and/or cantor offer you the congregation’s blessing and good wishes.
- This is an especially lovely ceremony to hold at your family’s congregation in the town where the wedding is not taking place. In this way, your parents’ synagogue community will be able to share in the *simcha* even though it is taking place elsewhere.

Videotaping and Photography

- Videotaping and photographing of your wedding ceremony are permitted, but with limitations for the purpose of safeguarding the sanctity and religious nature of the occasion. Your cooperation is appreciated.
- Videotaping may occur with the following guidelines:
 - The camera operator may stand behind the last row of occupied seats, camera mounted on a tripod and stationary.
 - A second camera may operate (by remote control only, no operator visible) from a stationary position behind the officiating clergy.
- Photography is limited to the beginning and the end of your ceremony, specifically:
 - Your Processional.
 - Your initial arrival to the *chuppah* (once the clergy begins speaking, your photographer must withdraw).
 - The breaking of the glass.
 - The kiss.
 - Your Recessional.
 - Please advise your ushers to quietly and gently inform guests who may bring cameras not to use them during your ceremony.
 - Both your photographer and videographer are encouraged to be present for the *ketubah* signing.

The Civil Marriage License

- In New York State, a marriage license may be obtained from any town or city clerk and is valid for sixty days. It may only be used within New York State. Please note: There is a 24-hour waiting period, so don’t leave this to the last minute.
- Both of you must sign the license in-person.
- No premarital examination or blood test is required.
- If there has been a previous marriage, be prepared to present official documentation.
- Before you go for your license, be sure you have decided beforehand about any changes in last names.
- For a ceremony in New York City, the officiating clergy need not be a resident of New York State but must be registered with the City of New York.

- Present your marriage license to the officiating clergy at your *ketubah* signing. This is important because it will be impossible to officiate beneath the *chuppah* without it.
- For additional information, visit **New York State's Consumer Information website**. For New York City information, visit **New York City's Office of the City Clerk website**.

Tay-Sachs Disease

- Tay-Sachs Disease is an always-fatal illness that appears at a higher than average rate among Jewish children of Ashkenazic-Jewish descent, but only if both parents are carriers. Currently, there is no cure for this disease. If both parents are carriers, there is a twenty-five percent chance that pregnancy will produce a child with Tay-Sachs Disease.
- Tay-Sachs screening, a simple blood test, will determine whether you are a carrier. This can be arranged with your personal physician or area hospital.
- The results of Tay-Sachs screening may or may not affect future plans concerning the bearing of children. Nevertheless, it is so important that screening be done for Tay-Sachs Disease as the clergy cannot in good conscience officiate at a wedding where the test has not been given.
- For your information: Three other diseases appear at higher than average rate among Jewish children of Ashkenazic-Jewish descent. Gaucher Disease occurs as frequently as Tay-Sachs Disease, but is not fatal. FD disease, Neimann-Pick Disease and Sandhoff Disease are fatal, but occur much less frequently.
- For important additional information, visit the National Tay-Sachs and Allied Diseases Association at www.ntsad.org.

Hebrew Names

- On the day that you begin your new family, the bonds to your families of birth take on special significance. Jewish tradition acknowledges and honors this bond by using your Hebrew (or Yiddish) name during the wedding ceremony.
- Please present accurate information regarding your full Jewish name (that is, including your parent's Jewish names) to the rabbi(s) or cantor.
- You need to do the same for your two *ketubah* witnesses. This information will be used during the signing of the *ketubah*.
- Please make sure that you and your witnesses know how to write their Jewish names in Hebrew letters. The rabbi(s) or cantor will assist you in preparing this.

Tzedakah

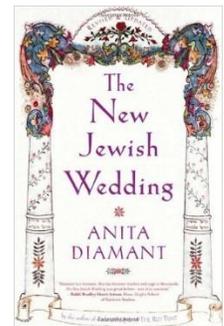
- Jewish tradition deeply values acts of giving and caring. In this spirit, many Jewish weddings through history have seen a table for the poor set out during the reception for the purpose of feeding the needy and offering them a share of our celebration. In recent times, it has become a cherished *mitzvah* (religious act) to make a gift of *tzedakah* (a righteous act) in honor of one's wedding.
- Community Synagogue of Rye encourages you to select several recipients that are highly meaningful to you.
- We also recommend, particularly for those paying the bills connected to your celebration, a remarkable organization called *Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger*. *Mazon* is the Hebrew word for

“food.” The organization *Mazon* responds to cries of hunger worldwide, collecting our dollars and disbursing it to the most effective food programs they can find.

- *Mazon* recommends we voluntarily add a three-percent surcharge to the cost of our celebrations, sending those dollars to feed hungry people. This modest gesture can greatly enhance the joy of the day’s events by augmenting the good food, good music and good friends ... with goodwill.
- If you like, small place cards are available for your reception to let others know about the existence of *Mazon*, your participation in this particular *mitzvah*, and to encourage others to do the same. Speak with the rabbi(s) or cantor.
- Contact *Mazon* directly at www.mazon.org.

For Additional Information

- Be sure to purchase, and read from cover to cover, Anita Diamant’s *The New Jewish Wedding*. There is no better publication available to you for planning a Jewish wedding ceremony.
- At your request, we will be happy to provide you with titles of additional books which may be helpful to you in learning about and planning, your wedding ceremony, as well as your married life together. Just ask.
- You can order *The New Jewish Wedding* from amazon.com via the following link. Just click [here](#) to order.



Once again, *mazal tov!* And please remember: if you have any questions whatsoever, now or in the future, our doors are always open.

In friendship and *shalom*,

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