



A Journey Through a Chassidic Wedding

CELEBRATING THE MARRIAGE OF

Esther & Mendel

Two halves becoming one.

Contents

Welcome	4
A Chassidic Wedding	6
Two Halves of One Soul	7
A Sacred Beginning	8
Kabbalat Panim	10
The Groom's Maamar	11
The Badeken	12
The Chuppah	14
The Procession	15
The Chuppah	16
The Chuppah	17
Seven Circles	18
The Rebbe's Letter	19
Kiddushin	20
The Ring	21
The Ketubah	22
Sheva Berachot	23
Breaking the Glass	24
Yichud	25
The Celebration	26
The Celebration •	27
What Makes a Jewish Home?	28
A Blessing for Esther & Mendel	29
A Blessing to Our Family & Friends	30

Welcome

Dear Family and Friends,

There are few moments in life more precious than watching your children stand beneath the chuppah and begin their lives together.

As we celebrate the wedding of our beloved Esther and Mendel, our hearts are overflowing with gratitude, to Hashem for bringing us to this extraordinary day, and to each of you for being here to share it with us.

A simcha becomes truly special because of the people who surround us. Each of you has touched our families in different ways, shared parts of our journey, and holds a special place in our lives. Having you here, celebrating with us, adds immeasurably to the joy and meaning of this day.

A Jewish wedding is filled with beautiful traditions, many thousands of years old, each carrying a profound message about love, marriage, family and the sacred home a bride and groom are beginning to build together.

We created this little guide to share some of that meaning with you, to help you understand not only what you will see today, but some of the beauty and depth behind it.

Most of all, we hope you will celebrate with us wholeheartedly. Pray with us during the sacred moments, sing and dance with us during the joyous ones, and help surround Esther and Mendel with all the love and blessing with which they begin their new life together.

Thank you for being here. Thank you for sharing in our joy. And thank you for helping make this simcha so incredibly special.

*With love and heartfelt gratitude,
Rabbi Shlomo & Tovi Bistritzky
Yankel & Miriam Kagan*



A CHASSIDIC WEDDING

Two Halves of One Soul

A Teaching of the Rebbe

Jewish tradition teaches that husband and wife are not simply two individuals who choose to build a life together.

They are two halves of a single soul.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that G-d desired that, for a portion of its journey on earth, one soul should dwell in two separate bodies.

Each half is born into its own family, grows in its own environment, and travels its own path through life, each fulfilling a unique mission, until the moment comes when G-d brings them together in marriage.

This, the Rebbe explains, is the source of the extraordinary joy of a wedding.

Two halves of one soul, separated from birth, perhaps raised in different homes, different communities, or even different parts of the world, have somehow found one another.

Two halves of one soul are coming home to each other. What greater reason could there be to celebrate?



A Sacred Beginning

Before the celebration comes the prayer.

You may notice that the beginning of a traditional Chassidic wedding has a very different tone from the joyous celebration that follows.

The Kabbalat Panim, Badeken (the veiling) and Chuppah are moments of extraordinary holiness.

Jewish tradition teaches that the wedding day is a personal Yom Kippur for the bride and groom, a day of forgiveness, prayer and new beginnings.

The bride and groom fast. They pray. And their parents and families pray with them.

The focus is not yet on the celebration that is about to begin, but on the life they are about to begin together.

They pray for their marriage, for a home filled with love, peace and holiness, for children and future generations, and for the strength to walk through life's blessings and challenges together.

But remarkably, on a day so completely centered around them, their prayers are not only for themselves.

Throughout the day and beneath the chuppah, the bride and groom use this special time to pray for others, for healing, for children, for a soulmate, for livelihood, for peace, and for whatever blessings family, friends and others may need.

At the very moment they are receiving life's greatest blessings, they are asking G-d to bless others.

Throughout these sacred moments, you may hear the soul stirring melody of the Alter Rebbe's Niggun, composed by the first Chabad Rebbe.

Its wordless notes help set the tone, not one of sadness, but of holiness, reflection and hope.

Soon there will be music. Soon there will be dancing. But first, there is prayer.



Kabbalat Panim

Preparing Two Souls

Before the chuppah, the bride and groom receive their guests separately.

Jewish tradition compares them on their wedding day to a queen and king, and their prayers and blessings on this sacred day carry special significance.

Guests come to wish them Mazel Tov, and many also ask the bride or groom for a blessing.

Did you know?

In Chabad tradition, the bride and groom do not see one another for the seven days preceding the wedding, heightening the joy, excitement and

anticipation of the moment when they see one another again.

Their next encounter will be at the Badeken (Veiling Ceremony), making that reunion especially powerful.



The Groom's Maamar

Beginning Their Life With Torah

During the groom's Kabbalat Panim, he recites a maamar, a Chassidic discourse traditionally beginning with the words Lecha Dodi Likrat Kallah, "Come, my beloved, to greet the bride."

The discourse explores the profound spiritual meaning of marriage and the union of bride and groom.



The Badeken

The Veiling Ceremony

Seeing What Really Matters

After seven days apart, the groom is escorted by family and friends, amid song, to where his bride awaits.

For the first time in a week, the bride and groom see one another. The groom approaches and gently lowers the veil over her face.

This is the Badeken, a custom that recalls our matriarch Rebecca, who covered her face when she encountered Isaac, the man she would marry.

The veil also expresses something deeper about marriage. Physical beauty is precious, but marriage asks us to see beyond what is visible, to recognize the character, goodness and Divine soul within the person we love.

Love may begin with what the eyes see. Marriage is built upon what the soul learns to see.

Following the Badeken comes one of the most beautiful and emotional moments of the wedding.

The parents and grandparents gather around the Kallah and place their hands upon her head to bless her as she prepares to walk to the chuppah.

The generations who came before her surround her with their love and prayers, blessing her as she prepares to begin to build her new life.

One generation blessing the next as a new Jewish home is about to be born.





THE CHUPPAH

The Procession

Generations Walking Together

The groom is escorted to the chuppah first, followed by the bride. Their parents and grandparents accompany them holding lit candles.

In Jewish thought, a candle represents the neshamah, the soul, as King Solomon teaches: “The soul of man is the candle of G-d.”

The flames express the prayer that the couple’s new home be filled with spiritual light.

There is also a beautiful human message in the image. Parents are doing what they have done since their children were born: lighting the way.

Only now, they are leading them toward the moment when they will begin carrying that light together.



The Chuppah

Generations Gather

As the bride and groom arrive beneath the chuppah, Chassidic tradition teaches that something extraordinary is taking place that cannot be seen.

Hashem invites the souls of the bride and groom's departed ancestors, parents, grandparents and great-grandparents, going back at least three generations, to join in the celebration and bestow their blessings upon the bride and groom as they become a new link in the holy chain of the Jewish people.

They are surrounded not only by the family and friends we can see, but by generations of loved ones who came before them.

Past, present and future meet beneath one chuppah.



The Chuppah

The First Home They Build Together

The chuppah is the wedding canopy that symbolizes the new home the bride and groom are beginning to build together.

And there is something unusual about this first home, it has a roof, but no walls.

The chuppah is deliberately open on all four sides, recalling the tent of Abraham and Sarah, the first parents of the Jewish people, whose home was open in every direction so that a traveler approaching from any side would immediately know, You are welcome here.

It expresses the hope that the home being established today will follow their example, a home filled with chesed and hachnasat orchim, proactive kindness and hospitality, a home whose doors are always open to family, friends, community and anyone in need of warmth and love.

Not how large the home will be. Not how beautifully it will be furnished. But what will be felt by the people who enter it.

Did you know?

The chuppah is traditionally held beneath the open sky, recalling G-d's blessing to Avraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars.



Seven Circles

Creating the Boundaries of a Sacred Home

When the bride arrives beneath the chuppah, she circles the groom seven times.

Jewish tradition calls the woman the *akeret habayit*, the foundation of the home. As the bride circles her groom, she symbolically begins establishing the boundaries of the new home they are about to build together.

With each circle, she creates an invisible spiritual wall, a sacred space that belongs uniquely to husband and wife, protecting the intimacy, holiness and integrity of their marriage.

After the seventh circle, she steps inside and stands beside the groom. Now they stand together at the center.

The boundary has been drawn. The foundation has been established. And within that sacred space, they will begin building their home together.



The Rebbe's Letter

A Blessing That Continues

Before the marriage ceremony begins, a letter of blessing from the Rebbe is read.

For many years, the Rebbe would send a personal letter of blessing to brides and grooms upon receiving their wedding invitation. The letter offers prayers that the couple build their home upon the foundations of Torah and mitzvot and that their marriage be blessed with happiness and success, materially and spiritually.

Chabad tradition teaches that the blessing of a tzaddik, a righteous person, is timeless.

And so these words are read again today, not simply as the memory of a blessing once given, but as a blessing that continues.



Kiddushin

Making Love Sacred

The Jewish marriage ceremony unfolds in two stages. The first is Kiddushin (sanctification).

Judaism believes that marriage can transform an ordinary human relationship into something holy.

Love is not diminished by commitment. It is elevated by it.

The ceremony begins over a cup of wine, a Jewish symbol of joy and blessing.

Then comes one of the simplest, and most consequential moments of the entire wedding, the ring.



The Ring

The Beauty of Simplicity

The groom places a simple ring upon the bride's finger and declares: "Behold, you are consecrated to me with this ring according to the law of Moses and Israel."

There are no diamonds required. No elaborate design. Just a simple, complete circle.

The ring represents wholeness and continuity, a bond without beginning or end. Its simplicity also reminds us that the most important gifts we give one another cannot be measured by their price: presence, loyalty, trust, commitment and love.

These are the things from which a marriage is built.

Two designated witnesses observe the giving of the ring, transforming this intimate moment into a binding Jewish marriage.



The Ketubah

Love Becomes Commitment

The Ketubah is the Jewish marriage contract, a tradition dating back more than two thousand years.

Far more than a ceremonial document, it was established by the Jewish Sages to protect the bride and clearly define the groom's responsibilities toward her.

Love is not only what we feel. Love is what we commit ourselves to do.

The Ketubah reminds us that a lasting marriage is built not only on romance, but on responsibility, loyalty, respect and care.

Did you know?

The Ketubah is traditionally written in Aramaic, the common language of Jewish life when its text was formulated. After it is read beneath the chuppah, the Ketubah is given to the bride and remains an important part of their Jewish marriage.



Sheva Berachot

Seven Blessings

Now comes the second stage of the marriage ceremony: Nisuin, the completion of the marriage.

Seven blessings, the Sheva Berachot, are recited over a cup of wine.

These ancient blessings begin with the creation of the world and culminate with the extraordinary joy of bride and groom.

That progression carries a beautiful message. This wedding may feel like the private story of two people. Judaism sees something much larger.

Every loving home continues the work of creation. Every marriage adds something that did not exist before.

Every new family becomes another link in a chain stretching backward through generations, and forward toward generations yet to come.

Their private love becomes part of a much larger story.

The final blessing asks that the voices of joy, love, celebration, bride and groom continue to be heard. And all of us answer: **Amen.**



Breaking the Glass

Remembering Jerusalem, and Praying for a World Made Whole

At the conclusion of the chuppah, the groom breaks a glass beneath his foot.

Even at one of life's happiest moments, Jewish tradition asks us to remember Jerusalem and the destruction of the Holy Temple, the Beit HaMikdash.

It fulfills the ancient words: "If I forget you, O Jerusalem..."

But there is another beautiful dimension to this moment. As they have done throughout this sacred day, the bride and groom once again use the spiritual power of their wedding to pray beyond themselves.

At the very height of their own happiness, they pray for Jerusalem, for our people and for the healing of our world, that all that remains broken be made whole, with the coming of Moshiach.

A broken world is remembered. A world made whole is prayed for.

And with the breaking of the glass, the sacred stillness of the chuppah gives way to an explosion of joy as everyone calls out:

MAZEL TOV!

The celebration begins.



Yichud

Just the Two of Them

Immediately following the chuppah, the bride and groom enter a private room and spend their first few moments alone as husband and wife. This is called Yichud, seclusion.

After the music, the crowd, the emotion and the ceremony, Judaism creates a few quiet minutes just for them.

Life will become busy. There will be careers, children, responsibilities, celebrations and challenges.

Marriage asks two people to remember:

Never become so busy building a life together that you forget to make time for each other.





THE CELEBRATION

The Celebration

Bringing Joy to the Bride & Groom

Now the celebration begins. And in Judaism, celebrating a bride and groom is not simply “a nice thing to do”... It is a mitzvah.

The Talmud describes great sages setting aside their Torah study to dance before a bride and groom, bringing joy to the newly married couple.

That means every guest has a role tonight. You are not merely watching their happiness.

You are helping create it.

So eat. Sing. Dance. Celebrate generously.

Tonight, bringing joy to the bride and groom is itself something holy.



What Makes a Jewish Home?

The chuppah lasts only a few minutes. Building what it represents takes a lifetime.

Love, Choosing one another again and again.

Respect, Protecting one another's dignity, especially when you disagree.

Kindness, Giving not because you have to, but because the other person matters.

Faith, Knowing that there is something larger than the two of you at the center of your home.

Responsibility, A Jewish home is not built only for itself. It is meant to become a source of strength, comfort and light, to its family, its community and the Jewish people.

Forgiveness, Understanding that a good marriage is not one without mistakes, but one in which love is bigger than them.

Joy, Creating reasons to celebrate even when life does not provide them automatically.

Gratitude, Never allowing what is precious to become ordinary simply because it is familiar.

The wedding creates a marriage. These are the things that create a home.



A Blessing for Esther & Mendel

Today, we have witnessed something ancient become new again.

Beneath countless chuppahs, in countless lands, across thousands of years, generations of Jewish brides and grooms have stood as Esther and Mendel stand today.

Two people beneath a simple canopy.

Two families becoming one.

Another link added to an eternal chain.

A new Jewish home beginning.

May their home always be filled with laughter and learning, generosity and faith, friendship and love.

May they have the strength to hold one another through life's difficult moments and the wisdom to fully appreciate its beautiful ones.

May their door always be open. May their table always have room for one more. May their home be filled with the light of Torah, the warmth of family, and the presence of G-d.

And may the love celebrated here today grow deeper with every passing year. **Amen!**



A Blessing to Our Family & Friends

As this beautiful day comes to a close, we want to leave you with something more than our gratitude.

We want to leave you with our blessing.

Throughout this sacred day, Esther and Mendel have prayed not only for themselves, but for so many of the people they love.

Our heartfelt prayer is that every blessing prayed for today, every prayer Esther and Mendel offered for those they love, every prayer you offered for yourself or someone else, and every hope quietly carried within your heart, be answered by Hashem with goodness and revealed blessing.

May you and your families be blessed with health and happiness, love and harmony, abundant nachas, prosperity, peace of mind, and lives filled with meaning and joy.

May those waiting for healing find healing.

May those searching for their soulmate find the person with whom they are meant to build their life.

May those longing for children be blessed with healthy children. May those facing challenges find strength, clarity and unexpected doors of blessing opening before them.

And may each of your homes be filled with the same things we pray for Esther and Mendel today:

Love that grows deeper.

Faith that gives strength.

Family that brings joy.

And a light that continues to shine from one generation to the next.

Most of all, may Hashem bless all of us with many, many years of good health and happiness, so that the love and friendship we share today only deepen with time, and that we continue to come together, again and again, to celebrate one another's simchas for many beautiful years to come.

May we always meet one another in moments of joy.

And may the joy we have shared today bring blessing to all of us, to our families, to the Jewish people, and to the entire world.

Wishing you a happy, healthy, and sweet new year.

With love, gratitude and our heartfelt blessings,

Rabbi Shlomo & Tovi Bistritzky

Yankel & Miriam Kagan