



קול ששון וקול שמחה קול חתן וקול כלה

*Planning
Your
Wedding
at
Beth El
Synagogue*

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סמן טוב ומזל טוב!
Mazal Tov on your engagement!

We are honored that you have selected our rabbis, cantor and Beth El Synagogue to help celebrate your wedding. As you anticipate your wedding day, you will be planning the ceremony that will sanctify your love for each other, as well as festivities which will celebrate your marriage.

We at Beth El would like to help you with your wedding plans. This guide will answer many questions that you have about planning your wedding at Beth El. Please read it carefully and feel free to call the synagogue office and speak to our scheduling/catering coordinator, if you have any questions.

The choices you make and the unique customs and traditions of Judaism will shape your wedding day into a truly memorable and personal experience. You are entering one of the most exciting times in your lives. Just keep reminding yourselves that there is life after the engagement.

We have designed this Wedding Guide to answer many of the questions frequently asked by engaged couples and to present the standards and traditions observed by the synagogue and clergy.

We wish you much health, happiness and fulfillment as you begin to plan for your married life together!

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Reflections on Marriage in the Jewish Tradition

The importance of marriage in the Jewish tradition is summed up in the Talmudic statement that when one marries, one becomes a complete person. Marriage is regarded the ideal state as God tells Adam in the first book of the Bible, "it is not good to be alone."

A Jewish marriage celebrates more than just the union of two individuals. Your upcoming wedding is understood to be the beginning of a new world. This is what the *Zohar*, a book of Jewish mysticism, means when it teaches: "God is constantly creating new worlds by causing marriages to take place." Your marriage also marks the creation of a new Jewish family. For this reason, your wedding is a cause for celebration for the entire Jewish people.

Your wedding day will likely be one of the most significant occasions in your life. It is a consecration, a sanctification of life itself. Indeed, the Hebrew word for marriage is *kiddushin*—"holiness." It is derived from the Hebrew word *kadosh*, which means to be holy, separate and distinct. When you enter the bonds of *kiddushin*, you enter a relationship that says to you and to the world that you are now set apart from everyone else. Your lives are now inextricably bound together by a holy bond. The *Ba'al Shem Tov*, founder of *Hassidism*, said it well: "From every human being there arises a light that reaches to heaven. When two souls are destined to find each other, their streams of light flow together, and a single bright light goes forth from their united being."

Planning Your Wedding

Planning a wedding requires much attention to details. The following section offers general guidelines, as well as specific standards of Beth El Synagogue and the Conservative movement to assist you in this task.

Marriage Eligibility and the Standards of Conservative Judaism

The rabbis and cantor of Beth El will officiate at the wedding of any couple who are either the children of Jewish mothers or who have been converted to Judaism according to the process designated by Jewish Law.

Any questions regarding the Jewish status of the bride or groom should be addressed to the officiating rabbi when booking the wedding. Divorced individuals from a Jewish marriage must have secured a *get*, or Jewish divorce, before remarriage. The rabbi will request to see the *get* during a premarital meeting.

Selecting a Date

While the selection of your wedding date will reflect your personal priorities, you will also need to take into account the Jewish calendar as well as schedules and prior commitments of the clergy, as well as your family and special friends.

Jewish tradition does place some limitations on the choice of a wedding date. Weddings are not held on the Sabbath, major Jewish holidays or *Hol Ha-Moed* so that we do not mix- and consequently dilute- each joyous occasion. Days commemorating tragic events in Jewish history are also not appropriate times for a marriage celebration (e.g. from the end of *Pesah* until *Rosh Hodesh Iyar*, the three weeks prior to *Tisha B'av* from 17 *Tammuz* to 9 *Av* and on minor Fast Days). Conservative practice does permit weddings to be held during the *S'fira* period from *Rosh Hodesh Iyar* to *Shavuot*. On Saturday nights, a wedding (including *bedeken* and *ketubah* signing) is to begin no earlier than **one hour and twenty minutes after the conclusion of Shabbat**. (Saturday night weddings during Daylight Savings Time are virtually impossible to arrange. We discourage these because of the lateness of sundown.)

Scheduling Your Wedding

All reservations for wedding dates are made through the rabbis' assistant. Upon requesting a date, you will receive a wedding application form to complete and return. When applicable, copies of conversion and/or *get* (divorce) documents must be attached. The rabbis' assistant will then process your request by checking the availability of the rabbis and cantor, the synagogue, and the Jewish calendar. When the date is confirmed, you will receive a packet of material including important Beth El policies, wedding information and room reservation forms. Arrangements for your wedding rehearsals and the use of all Beth El facilities are made through the scheduling/catering coordinator. Arrangements for the *aufruf* are made with the ritual coordinator.

Wedding Location

There is no finer way to highlight the spiritual nature of your wedding than to hold the ceremony in the synagogue, a setting that provides an aura of sanctity and spirituality. Some families hold weddings at their home in an atmosphere of warmth and intimacy. **Wedding ceremonies are not conducted in hotels or at country clubs, even if the food being served is kosher.** This is the policy of the Minnesota Rabbinical Association. We encourage you to hold your reception at the synagogue, at home or another location where *kashrut* will be observed. Please see the enclosed list of kosher facilities (Appendix A).

Because a Jewish wedding is considered a religious as well as a social occasion, the meal served at the celebration is an integral part of the ritual. This ritually prescribed feast is known as a *Se'udat Mitzvah* and should, therefore, be a kosher meat meal or an all dairy meal (including fish or pasta). Often couples feel that it is inconsistent to plan a kosher reception if they are not kosher in their home. But the contrary is true. Just as you are planning a religious ritual in accordance with Jewish law and communal standards, so too should your meal conform to traditional communal Jewish standards even if you have not accepted it as a personal commitment. **Please be advised that the rabbis, cantor and ritual director will only attend receptions that are certified kosher or all dairy (including fish or pasta).**

Our scheduling coordinator can assist you in making your plans for the use of synagogue. The Spiegel Sanctuary seats 640 people and the Fiterman Chapel 165.

Wedding Officiants

The rabbis and cantor of Beth El synagogue shall officiate at every wedding held at Beth El. In the event you wish rabbis or cantors from another synagogue to co-officiate, you need to discuss this with a Beth El rabbi and cantor as soon as possible. A proper invitation will be extended to the other clergy by the Beth El counterpart.

Meeting with the Rabbi and Cantor

It is necessary that you arrange to meet with the officiating rabbi(s) as soon as possible after securing a wedding date. The rabbis usually meet with couples at least two separate times to review the nature of the Jewish wedding ceremony, requirements for the *ketubah* and rings, and the values and traditions which sustain and nurture a marriage. The couple will also have the opportunity to share their personal history, hopes for the future, and ask questions of the rabbi.

The cantor will chant portions of the wedding ceremony. It is important to meet with the cantor at least four months prior to your wedding to discuss the wedding music and the engagement of appropriate musicians.

Premarital Workshop

In addition to the meetings you will have with the rabbi(s) and cantor, Beth El offers a premarital workshop program in conjunction with Jewish Family & Children's Service entitled *Hatan V'Kallah* (groom and bride). This program is taught by Beth El rabbis and a professional counselor from the Jewish Family and Children's Service. The program is scheduled each year for four sessions. We encourage all engaged couples to participate in this very popular and helpful program.

The Wedding Ring

The giving and accepting of an item of value in the presence of witnesses is the most important part of the Jewish wedding ceremony. It has become almost universal Jewish practice to use a ring as the token of the marriage bond. Just as the ring has no beginning and no end, it is the wish of every bride and groom that their love be unending. Wedding bands with Hebrew inscriptions such as the Biblical verse, "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine," (אני לדודי ודודי לי *ani l'dodi v'dodi li*) add a special touch to your wedding.

Jewish law has three requirements concerning a ring :

1. The groom must own the ring.
2. The ring must be solid metal, usually gold.
3. The ring cannot have precious gems.

If the groom plans to use a family heirloom, it must either first be given to the groom as a gift or purchased by him. In keeping with the egalitarian spirit of our congregation, most weddings now have a "double ring" ceremony in which groom and bride exchange rings.

The Ketubah

The *ketubah* is a Jewish legal document confirming the religious bond of your marriage. It does not replace the standard civil marriage license which the officiating rabbi will need in order to perform the ceremony. The civil license should be obtained from a Hennepin County Service Center 5 days to 6 months prior to the wedding. Please remember to bring the civil marriage license to the *ketubah* signing.

The *ketubah* has been used by Jews for more than two thousand years, and was instituted originally to protect the rights of a Jewish wife. While Judaism appreciates the romantic aspects of a marriage, our tradition wisely recognizes that love grows best within the context of a legal commitment.

You have several options for securing a *ketubah*. If you choose, Beth El will provide you with a printed *ketubah*. In a meeting with the officiating rabbi, you can view a sample copy. However, the *ketubah* can be a beautiful work of art. You may choose to have one prepared by a calligrapher/artist.

If you are commissioning an artist to prepare your *ketubah*, be sure to contact that individual well in advance; 6-9 months is not too early. (Refer to Appendix A for a list of some calligraphers.) Once you have selected the artist, please inform the rabbis' assistant and have

your artist/calligrapher contact the officiating rabbi immediately so that he can provide the information that the artist needs as well as explain any *halakhic* requirements for the *ketubah* itself.

The *ketubah* text used at Beth El is the traditional text written either in Aramaic or in Hebrew. In addition to the standard text, the Conservative Movement has instituted an important innovation. Traditionally, Jewish law only permitted a husband to initiate proceedings for a Jewish divorce. The Conservative Movement has sought to rectify this inequity by inserting a clause (known as the Leiberman clause) which allows **either** husband or wife to invoke the authority of the Conservative Rabbinical Assembly to arrange for a religious divorce. We pray that this clause will not be necessary for your marriage and while it has not traditionally been required by Jewish law, we strongly urge its inclusion in the text of your *ketubah*.

Your *ketubah* will be witnessed and signed before the wedding ceremony begins. Because the *ketubah* is a legal document, it must be signed in Hebrew by "*kosher eidim*" (witnesses). Such *eidim* must be knowledgeable and observant Jews and related neither to the bride, the groom nor to each other. When requested, the rabbi(s) and cantor are pleased to serve as *eidim*. When space is provided by the calligrapher, the bride and groom may also sign the *ketubah*.

Music

Our tradition contains a rich heritage of music. There is a full repertoire of Jewish love songs that draw their inspiration from our sacred literature. Classical Jewish wedding songs and contemporary Israeli and American Jewish pieces have been incorporated. Instrumental presentation and accompaniment are welcome enhancements to your ceremony. To create a Jewish wedding "tone" at your ceremony, please observe the following:

1. Because a wedding is a religious ceremony and takes place in a *makom kadosh*, a holy place, all music from the processional to the recessional (including any music during the ceremony) must be Jewish and approved by the cantor. Specifically, the "Wedding March" of Richard Wagner ("Here Comes the Bride") is not appropriate for use at a Jewish wedding. The cantor will be happy to recommend and illustrate the variety of possible options for Jewish processional and recessional music.
2. Pre-processional music may include classical or popular secular music, although you are again encouraged to include Jewish music at this time.
3. You may also request that the cantor sing an appropriate song at the beginning of the ceremony as an enhancement. This is an option that you may chose after meeting with the cantor.
4. Please contact the scheduling coordinator to make arrangements for your musical equipment and setup needs (i.e. ensuring that a piano, microphone, etc. are available).

The playing of Jewish music at your wedding reception will also add a dimension of joy. We recommend that you consult with your musicians about the Jewish music that they can play at your *simha* (see Appendix B).

Dress Guidelines

The bride must be veiled during the wedding procession. The shoulders of the bride and the women in the her wedding party should be covered and the décolletage reflect modesty. All men in the wedding party and in the congregation must wear a *kippah* (*yarmulka*). Women are invited to do the same.

Flowers

Flowers can enhance the beauty of the ceremony, but please use moderation. The *huppah* poles may be decorated with greens, ribbons, or flowers by first covering them with plastic wrap. Please check with the synagogue office regarding flower delivery. **No flowers or floral preparations may be delivered or arranged during Shabbat.**

Photography and Videography

Photographs and videos ensure a lifetime of memories (see Appendix A for a list of photographers and videographers). Please note the following Synagogue regulations regarding these two important items:

1. Photos may be taken during the processional and the recessional, but only from the very back of the Spiegel Sanctuary or Fiterman Chapel.
2. Flashes may be used for these photos but not once the ceremony begins. Once the ceremony begins, videotaping and photography equipment must remain stationary.
3. The equipment may be placed only 1) in the back of the Sanctuary/Chapel, 2) attached to the rear *huppah* pole (operated by remote control), and/or in the choir loft.
4. If your wedding is on Saturday evening, please note that set-ups for either videography, photography or flowers may not take place until after Shabbat (roughly one hour after sunset). Call the office or consult the Beth El calendar for exact times.

Invitations

A number of customs may enhance the beauty and significance of your wedding invitation. Some couples choose to print their invitations in English and Hebrew. Others use all English, but include the Hebrew date and the name of the Shabbat Torah portion. Using Hebrew or incorporating the Hebrew date is a way to connect your event to eternal values and to your people's history.

Programs

Many people hand out programs to guests as they arrive. If you plan on including explanations of the ceremony in your program, please show it to the rabbi at one of your pre-wedding meetings. Contact the rabbis' assistant for sample programs.

Wedding Traditions

In the myriad of details of planning a wedding, it is easy to lose the spiritual dimension of marriage. There are a few traditions which will help you focus your attention to the religious aspects of your ceremony.

Aufruf

On a Shabbat preceding your wedding ceremony, you and your families are invited to attend Shabbat services for the *aufruf*. *Aufruf* is derived from German and means "calling up." The bride and groom are called together for an *aliyah*. Following your *aliyah*, one of the rabbis will recite a *mi shebeirakh*, expressing the community's prayers that you establish a Jewish home filled with love and companionship. Following the *mi shebeirakh*, the congregation will throw candy at you, symbolizing the sweetness that we hope you will experience together.

To schedule your *aufruf*, please call the scheduling coordinator six weeks prior to your wedding day. You will need to give your full Hebrew names when you call. The synagogue will provide all the candy used for your *aufruf*. There is a \$25.00 charge for the candy.

If you would like to co-sponsor the *Kiddush*, contact the scheduling coordinator.

Traditionally, the bride purchases a new *tallit* for her future husband (maybe the Bar Mitzvah *tallit* no longer fits). This new *tallit* is then worn for the first time at the *aufruf* and may be worn again during the wedding (see the section on the *sheva berakhot*). As an egalitarian synagogue, we also encourage that a new *tallit* be purchased for the bride by the groom.

Mikveh

One timeless tradition is immersion in a *mikveh*, or ritual bath. Ritual immersion is a *mitzvah* that is understood to symbolize your transition to a new stage in life. Immersion in water, with its powers to refresh and renew, can help turn your attention to the sacred threshold of marriage that you will soon cross. Both men and women are encouraged to use the *mikveh*. The *mikveh* is adjacent to Keneseth Israel, 4330 W. 28th Street, St. Louis Park. The actual immersion takes only a few minutes. Women use the *mikveh* on a night preceding their wedding; men use it on a morning preceding their wedding. Both men and women should schedule an appointment to use the *mikveh* by calling 952-926-3829. There is a fee.

Fasting

Another practice meant to recapture the significance of your marriage is fasting. Our tradition encourages bride and groom to fast from the morning of their ceremony until they sip the wine under the *huppah*. There are several reasons given for fasting. In some ways, your wedding day is like your own personal *Yom Kippur*. Just as on *Yom Kippur* we wipe our slate of life clean and begin the year fresh, so too does marriage begin a new chapter in our lives. And just as fasting on *Yom Kippur* helps us get in touch with our spiritual life by refraining from the material (food),

so too is fasting on the wedding day meant to sensitize us to the holiness of the state of marriage. It is customary to break that fast during *yihud* following the ceremony.

Finally, it is a *minhag* (custom) for the *hatan* and *kallah* not to see each other the day before and the day of the wedding. This practice will add an element of suspense and excitement to your special day, but it requires careful planning and forethought.

Wedding Rehearsal

Some couples choose to schedule a rehearsal for the ceremony the week before the wedding, but this is not required. This should be booked with the scheduling coordinator in the synagogue office. During the rehearsal, please remember not to move/touch the podiums, microphones, or *Torah* scrolls.

The Wedding Ceremony

The Jewish wedding ceremony is actually an offspring of two separate wedding rites. Originally, the bride and groom were engaged in two ceremonies. The first was called *erusin*. This engagement lasted for a year during which time the bride lived with her parents. At the conclusion of the year, the couple was married in a ceremony called *nisu'in*. Today's ceremony combines the blessings of *erusin* and *nisu'in* and separates them only with the reading of the *ketubah*. *Birkhot erusin* and *nisu'in* are each recited over separate cups of wine. In the pre-ceremony, the *ketubah* and marriage licenses are signed and the *bedeken* (veiling) is performed.

Signing the marriage license & ketubah

About thirty minutes before the formal wedding ceremony, you, your families and your wedding party will gather in the Max Shapiro Library or the Fiterman Chapel for the signing of wedding documents. The officiating rabbi will fill out the marriage license, and you will provide two witnesses of your choosing to sign the civil license.

Then the officiating rabbi will proceed to the signing of the *ketubah*. The groom and the bride will be asked to take possession of a small object, like a handkerchief or pen, and raise it, symbolically accepting the terms of your *ketubah*. The *ketubah* will then be signed by the *kosher eidim*.

Veiling the Bride (Bedeken)

After the signing of the *ketubah*, a short ceremony called *bedeken* takes place. *Bedeken* means "checking" the bride. It is customary to have your family and friends present for the *bedeken*.

The act of veiling the bride has several interpretations. One explanation dates back to the first encounter between our Biblical ancestors, Isaac and Rebekkah. When Rebekkah first saw her husband-to-be, Isaac, she placed a veil over her face as a sign of modesty. One of the characteristics that has distinguished Jewish families is the modesty and decency, ritualized in this practice, that husband and wife are expected to display toward one another.

The *bedeken* ceremony is an opportunity to express our feelings of joy and our deepest wishes through the words of a blessing. The *hatan* and *kallah* are invited to offer blessings to each other. Then, as the groom lowers the veil upon the bride, the rabbi or the couples' parents will recite a prayer and a blessing (see Appendix C for examples). The words of the *shehecheyanu* are chanted by all those present. The bride must be veiled for the ceremony.

After the *bedeken* is completed, you will form your processional and your wedding ceremony will soon begin!

The Processional

The wedding party may enter in any order, either alone or in pairs, and stand in any formation. Non-Jews may be in your processional and stand on the *bimah*. Having a wedding coordinator who will assist you in planning the processional of your wedding ceremony can be helpful. They can help during your rehearsal and at the time of your wedding.

Although there is no order fixed by Jewish law, traditional practice is that *hatan* and *kallah* (groom and bride) are each escorted by their parents, the groom preceding the bride. Customarily, the bride and groom enter the *huppah* together. Under the *huppah*, the bride stands at the groom's right as they face the rabbis and cantor. The parents stand at the side of the *huppah* nearest their child, symbolizing the formation of an extended family.

In the case of a separation, divorce and/or remarriage of parents, you will have to be creative in developing your own procession. These situations require special sensitivity. The general principle that it is better to include rather than exclude is helpful to keep in mind.

The Huppah

As you walk down the aisle, you will immediately see the *huppah* (canopy). The *huppah* represents the Jewish home that you will establish. Its simplicity reminds us that religious values are ultimately more important than material acquisitions.

Circling

Upon reaching the *huppah*, it is customary for the bride to circle the groom seven times. Circling symbolizes the exclusivity of this new relationship and seven is considered a perfect number that represents the fullness of creation. There are many alternate versions of this practice which are equally beautiful and meaningful. Some *kallot* circle their *hatan* three times corresponding to the prophet Hosea's threefold repetition of the word *betroth*: "I will betroth you to Me forever. I will betroth you with righteousness, with justice, with love, and with compassion. I will betroth you to Me with faithfulness." Other couples choose to have the *kallah* circle the *hatan* three times followed by the *hatan's* circling of the *kallah* three times. By circling each other one additional time, the couple completes the cycle of seven circles.

Welcome--B'rukhim Ha-baim

Once you are under the *huppah*, the cantor will chant a prayer of welcome for you and your guests. The rabbi will translate.

Betrothal Blessings--Erusin

The *erusin* blessing praises God for sanctifying the people of Israel by means of moral commandments that guide us in marriage. It is introduced with the blessing over wine, the *borei p'ri ha-gafen*. You will each drink from the first cup of wine symbolizing that you now drink together from the same "cup of life." An attendant or parent should assist the bride by lifting the veil in order to drink. The veil is then lowered again until after the *sheva berakhot*.

Ring Ceremony

The giving or exchanging of rings is an essential highlight of the wedding ceremony. In ancient times, one of the legal ways to affect a marriage was by the groom giving his bride a ring. Today as well, through this act the bride and groom commit themselves to each other.

The *hatan* (groom) places a ring on the right forefinger of the *kallah* (bride). As the ring is given, the *hatan* recites:

הָרִי אֶת מְקֻדְּשֶׁת לִי בְּטַבְעֶת זוֹ כְּדַת מֹשֶׁה וְיִשְׂרָאֵל
(*Harei at m'kudeshet li b'taba'at zo k'dat Moshe v'Yisrael*)

"By this ring you are consecrated to me as my wife in accordance with the laws of Moses and the people Israel."

If the *kallah* chooses to give her groom a ring, she then recites:

הָרִי אֶתָּה מְקֻדָּשׁ לִי בְּטַבְעֶת זוֹ (Harei atah m'kudash li b'taba'at zo)

"By this ring you are consecrated to me as my husband."

Reading the Ketubah

After the ring ceremony, a portion of the *ketubah* is then read.

Nisu'in: The Seven Wedding Blessings (Sheva B'rakhot)

After the reading of the *ketubah*, the *sheva b'rakhot* (Seven Blessings) are chanted over the second cup of wine. These blessings enlarge your private joy by connecting it to the entire Jewish community and all humanity. Some themes of the *sheva b'rakhot* include the hope for bride and groom to find loving companionship together and thanksgiving to God for the creation of gladness, love, harmony, peace and companionship.

1. Praised are You, *Adonai* our God, Ruler of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.
2. Praised are You, *Adonai* our God, Ruler of the Universe, who created all things for your glory.
3. Praised are You, *Adonai* our God, Ruler of the Universe, Creator of humankind.

4. Praised are You, *Adonai* our God, Ruler of the Universe, who created man and woman in your image, fashioning them as mates, that together they might perpetuate life. Praised are You, *Adonai*, Creator of humankind.
5. May Zion rejoice as her children are restored to her in joy. Praised are You, *Adonai*, who causes Zion to rejoice at her children's return.
6. Grant perfect joy to these loving companions, as You did to the first man and woman in the Garden of Eden. Praised are You, *Adonai*, who grants the joy of bride and groom.
7. Praised are You, *Adonai* our God, Ruler of the Universe, who created joy and gladness, bride and groom, mirth, song, delight and rejoicing, love and harmony, peace and companionship. *Adonai* our God, may there ever be heard in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem voices of those joined in marriage under the bridal canopy, the voices of young people feasting and singing. Praised are You, *Adonai*, who causes the groom to rejoice with the bride.

At the conclusion of the *sheva b'rakhot*, you will again each drink from the second cup of wine, symbolizing that you will share all that life brings. The bride's attendant aids the bride in lifting her veil. The veil then remains up for the remainder of the ceremony.

An additional custom that you may consider is to have parents wrap a large *tallit* around the shoulders of both the *hatan* and *kallah* while the *sheva b'rakhot* are chanted. For parents, this act symbolizes the union of their children. The *tallit* used may be the one customarily given to the groom by the bride.

The Wedding Talk

At some point in the ceremony, the rabbi may offer some brief personal remarks about your relationship, and the meaning of a Jewish wedding ceremony. After the *sheva b'rakhot*, the rabbi and cantor will lead the congregation in the *shehecheyanu* and will offer the priestly benediction (*birkat kohanim*) invoking God's blessings upon your marriage.

Breaking the Glass

The last ritual performed at a Jewish wedding ceremony is the breaking of a glass by the *hatan*. Some interpret this as a reminder of shattering events in our history such as the destruction of both Temples and, in our own time, the Holocaust. This act is a reminder that a couple, even at the height of their private joy, is not free to ignore the needs of the community and the Jewish people. A contemporary interpretation understands the breaking of the glass as a symbol of the fragility of human relationships and the need for the bride and groom to care and preserve their marriage. Some couples hire an artist to make a *mezuzah* out of the broken glass. Shouts of "Mazel Tov!" and clapping often accompany the breaking of the glass because it signals the end of ceremony and the beginning of the party.

Yihud: A Few Minutes Alone

Following the ceremony, it is customary for the bride and groom to spend a few minutes together, without family or guests. At Beth El, *yihud* often takes place in the Brides Room or library. Take the time to enjoy these few moments together, for afterwards you will be busy being greeted by your family and friends. If you have been fasting, you may now eat during *yihud*.

The Celebration

The wedding meal and reception are considered to be an extension of the ceremony. At this meal, family and friends will joyfully welcome you into the Jewish community as a new Jewish family.

Se'udat Mitzvah (The Festive Meal)

Just as the wedding meal begins with a blessing (the *motzi*), so too does it end with blessings (*birkat hamazon* and *sheva b'rakhot*). These blessings thank God for more than just the food. By concluding the Grace after Meals with *sheva b'rakhot*, we acknowledge God as the Creator of joy, the One who unites husband and wife through marriage. While the rabbi or cantor may be called upon to lead these prayers, family members or close friends are encouraged to recite one or several of the *sheva b'rakhot* in Hebrew or in English. Beth El has *bentschers* (booklets containing the Grace after Meals and *sheva b'rakhot*) that may be borrowed.

Having a kosher or dairy meal allows you to maintain the spiritual tone of your ceremony. Again, please be advised that the rabbi, cantor and ritual director will only attend receptions that are certified kosher or are all dairy meals (including pasta or fish).

Shtick

It is a *mitzvah* for friends and family to entertain the bride and groom with props during the dancing and singing. This is called *shtick*. Guests are encouraged to wear funny hats, display signs and banners or perform wild dances in order to honor the bride and groom and bring a smile to their faces. If the party really gets swinging, you may even see Beth El rabbis jumping rope!

Tzedakah

We encourage you to share your joy with others by making a donation to *Mazon*: The Jewish Response To Hunger. A voluntary contribution of 3% of the cost of your meal adds a rich dimension of community awareness and service to your celebration. To donate to *Mazon* and support local food shelves, send a check made out to "Beth El Feed the Hungry Program."

Additional Resources

Your Jewish Wedding

To further help you plan, understand and appreciate your wedding we encourage you to make time for additional reading. The following is a partial list of the many resources that are now available:

The New Jewish Wedding by Anita Diamant
The Jewish Way in Love and Marriage by Maurice Lamm
Mazel Tov! Music for a Jewish Wedding by Velvel Pasternak

Creating Your Jewish Home

Important as the wedding is, it is merely the prelude to your new life as a married couple. What kind of Jewish home will you have? To help you design a pattern of Jewish living, we suggest that you acquire the ritual and ceremonial objects listed below which will help you celebrate Judaism in your home. All these objects are beautiful, visual reminders of the cycle of Jewish life. You may wish to register for the following as part of your wedding registry:

Mezuzah
Sabbath and Festival Candle Sticks
Kiddush Cup
A *Hallah* Plate and Cover
Havdalah Set (Candle Holder, *Kiddush* Cup and Spice Box)
A Passover Seder Plate and Cup of *Elijah*
A *Hanukkah Menorah*

We hope as well that your home will have Jewish books. Here are some suggestions:

Tanakh (Hebrew Bible)
Siddur (Prayer book)
Shabbat Bentschers (Shabbat Ritual and Song Books)
Passover Haggadot
The How-To Handbooks by Kerry Olitzky and Ron Isaacs
The Jewish Holidays: A Guide and Commentary by Michael Strassfeld
To Life! By Rabbi Harold Kushner
Jewish Literacy by Joseph Telushkin
Jewish Wisdom by Joseph Telushkin
Teach Your Children About God by Rabbi David Wolpe
Conservative Judaism: The New Century by Rabbi Neil Gillman
Shabbat Seder by Ron Wolfson

A Final Word...

We trust that as a member of Beth El you will soon identify with the larger Jewish community. Beth El offers a one year's free membership as an affirmation that participation in synagogue life serves as an important element in the establishment of your Jewish home.

The ideal Jewish home is one in which there is *Sh'lom Bayit*, an atmosphere of peace and harmony. It is a home in which virtues are taught more by example than by precept and where the joy of living is found in shared tasks and responsibilities. We hope this will be your home, and we wish you every happiness in your new life.

MAZAL TOV! **מזל טוב!**

Bride and Groom Checklist

The office will contact you regarding a preliminary meeting with the rabbi(s). It is also a good idea to schedule an appointment with the cantor before you engage musicians to play for the ceremony.

Immediately Following Engagement

- _____ Set date and time of wedding with rabbis' assistant.
- _____ Place engagement announcement in newspaper.
- _____ Book reception.

6-9 Months Before the Wedding

- _____ Fill out information forms and submit to scheduling coordinator.
- _____ *Ketubah*: If you are having a calligrapher prepare one, meet with him/her.
- _____ Order bridal and attendants' gowns.
- _____ Hire a florist.
- _____ Engage a caterer and discuss menus.
- _____ Book musicians for ceremony and for dinner reception.
- _____ Register at department store bridal registry, Beth El Gift Shop and Twin-Cities Judaica stores.
- _____ Order invitations and thank-you notes.
- _____ Hire a photographer and/or videographer (if desired).
- _____ Meet with cantor and musicians regarding music for ceremony.
- _____ Make arrangements for prenuptial events (if desired).
- _____ If a guest rabbi or cantor is to be invited to co-officiate, please check with the officiating rabbi and cantor who will then extend the invitation.

3-6 Months Before the Wedding

- _____ Schedule *Aufruf* for a *Shabbat* morning service.
- _____ Book synagogue for rehearsal (optional).
- _____ Choose rings.
- _____ Make arrangements for groom's and groomsmen's attire.
- _____ Submit room reservations forms to scheduling coordinator.

2 Months Before the Wedding

- _____ Purchase *tallit* and *kipah* for groom by bride and vice versa.
- _____ Make housing arrangements for out-of-town guests.
- _____ Purchase gifts for bridesmaids and groomsmen.
- _____ Stuff and address invitations.

4-6 weeks Before the Wedding

- _____ Meet with the rabbi for final meeting (contact rabbis' assistant).
- _____ Review final facility use and set-up arrangements with scheduling coordinator.
- _____ Mail invitations.
- _____ Make final arrangements with the caterer, florist, photographer.
- _____ Make appointment for the *mikveh* (952-920_2183).
- _____ Get marriage license from local county courthouse.

Week of Wedding

- _____ *Mikveh*
- _____ Pick up key and make arrangements for use of bridal/groom changing rooms.

Appendix A

The following represents only a partial list of vendors in the Twin Cities. All have had experience working with Jewish weddings and with Beth El in particular.

Calligraphy/ketubot

Pearl Berdass/Calligraphy by Pearl.....	(952) 544-5561
Gloria Cooper/Gloria Cooper Calligraphy.....	(952) 822-5709
Judy Freeman (ketubot).....	(952) 941-5074
Roni Halpern (ketubot).....	(612) 825-0099
Sharon Stillman (ketubot).....	(952) 470-7888
Carol Zuckman (ketubot).....	(952) 922-3137

Approved Kosher Caterers

Beth El Catering/Perrie Meltzer.....	(952) 920-3512 ext.133
Leeann Chin/ Joleen Rudeen.....	(651) 673-0789
Catering by Chef Sam/Sam Rotenberg.....	(763) 391-0670
D'Amico Catering/Linda Mellang.....	(763) 593-2440
Ruth's Catering/Ruth Abzug.....	(952) 545-2672
The Deco Catering/Soile Anderson.....	(651) 482-8876
Tastefully Yours/Tiki Kelner.....	(952) 932-9799
Beyond Flavor Custom Catering/Lara Weinstein.....	(612) 801-1242
Newkirk Catering/John Newkirk.....	(763) 427-9220

Invitations

Annette Paletz, Invitations, Etc.....	(952) 544-8476
Susan Gray/Give My Regards To.....	(952) 929-9699
Leslee Kollins/Print Out Inc.....	(763) 544-8555

Videographers

Sandra/Family Ties.....	(952) 929-6484
Mac McGoon.....	(651) 437-2000
Allen & Sandy Harris/Picture Perfect Video.....	(763) 553-9561
Carl & Sarah Anderson/Princess Bride.....	(612) 210-8904
Videon Productions/Ken & Terri Kurita.....	(952) 474-8598
On Location Video/Alan & Donna Block.....	(763) 550-9797

Photographers

Bette Goodman.....	(763) 254-5878
Ted Middleton/Middleton Photography.....	(952) 926-2869
Mark Anderson/Photos by Beth.....	(612) 781-0029
Leah Campbell/Wedding Photography.....	(612) 872-1102
Harvey Shafer Photography.....	(763) 315-0005
Alan Scott Photography.....	(952) 920-3537

Miscellaneous

Chris Ann Prince (hallah covers).....	(612) 377-3306
Greg Brandt (bridal gown cleaning & restoration).....	(612) 721-0010
Debbie Wolk (hallah & matzah covers, broken glass containers, etc.).....	(612) 822-5839
Cassandra Miller/Celebration Creations.....	(952) 417-9900
Nancy Goodman (weaver/tallit).....	(651) 699-1450

Appendix B

Wedding Ceremony Musicians:

Instrumental music can enhance your ceremony, not only for the processional and recessional of the bridal party but as an accompaniment to the liturgy chanted by the cantor. Listed below are instrumentalists representing a variety of styles and sounds who have participated in previous Beth El weddings or who come highly recommended:

Harp

Andrea Stern..... (612) 722-9790

Piano (both acoustic and digital/electric)

Dawn Baker..... (612) 824-4755

Lynette Eastwold..... (651) 645-6644

Jane Karayusuf..... (952) 377-6168

Trios, Quartets and Klezmerim

Allard Ensembles (Bruce Allard)..... (952) 926-4097

Crocus Hill Trio (Anne Strasser)..... (651) 454-0680

Lake String Quartet (Nanette Goldman)..... (952) 924-0141

Marquis Trio (Mark Bloom)..... (763) 553-2679

Prairie Heym Klezmerim (Marty Dworkin)..... (651) 645-4198 or (612) 624-5634

Regency Trio (Barbara Lamb or David Eagle)..... (952) 941-0266 or 2195

Mark Stillman's Klezmer Band..... (612) 823-8801

Sim Shalom Klezmer (David Haberman)..... (952) 938-2004

Some may wish to engage a vocalist or even a vocal ensemble to enrich the ceremony by singing prior to or during the processional (Reminder: Processional music must be Jewish, while pre-ceremonial music may be Jewish, classical, secular or any combination thereof.) You may consult with the instrumentalists or with the cantor for recommendations.

When a family has a connection with cantors outside of Beth El synagogue or would like our cantorial soloist to participate in the ceremony itself, we are pleased to have colleagues co-officiate. Please direct such requests to the cantor so that an invitation may be extended.

Appendix C

Bedeken Ceremony (Bride)

I am about to enter into marriage with _____ whom I love. We have committed ourselves to one another with joy and hope. May I be worthy of my husband's trust; may we be faithful friends, each a help and support to the other in all that befalls us. May we be blessed with children, a new generation which will grow in health and beauty of spirit.

O God, give us your blessing! Let us each come to understand the other, and gain insight into our own hearts. Keep us loyal to the ideals with which we begin our lives together, and help us to honor and sustain one another. Teach us to give and receive love with open hearts. Bless us always as you have in these moments. Amen

Bedeken Ceremony (Groom)

I am about to enter marriage with _____ whom I love. We have committed ourselves to one another with joy and hope. May I be worthy of my beloved's trust; may we be faithful friends, each a help and support to the other in all that befalls us. May we be blessed with children, a new generation which will grow in health and beauty of spirit.

Even as I place this veil over _____'s face, so may my loving care encompass her in devotion and faithfulness. And give us, Lord, wisdom to look beyond ourselves, to see that we are part of the greater family of the people Israel, a people bound to your service. Amen

Parental Blessing

I thank You, *Adonai*, for this precious moment. How sweet it is to see these loving companions brought together in marriage. As I rejoice in seeing them wed, I ask that You grant them fulfillment and good health. May they be a source of blessing and joy for all those whose lives they touch.

For bride:

(Bride's name), may you be fruitful and prosper. May *Adonai* bless you as *Adonai* blessed Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah.

For groom:

(Groom's name) May *Adonai* bless you as *Adonai* blessed Ephraim and Menashe.

For both continue:

May *Adonai* bless you and protect you.

May *Adonai* show you favor and be gracious to you.

May *Adonai* show you kindness and grant you peace.