**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

**ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)**

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**LIFECYCLES – HILKHOT ISHUT**

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**This shiur is dedicated *le-zekher nishmot* Amelia Ray and Morris Ray   
on the occasion of their tenth *yahrtzeits*   
by their children Patti Ray and Allen Ray**

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**Shiur #11: Laws of the Wedding (2)**

**Customs and Laws of the Week before the Wedding**

**Introduction**

[Last week](http://etzion.org.il/en/laws-wedding-1-setting-date-wedding), we discussed choosing the proper time for a wedding. We discussed the propriety of holding a wedding on Erev Shabbat, as well as the prohibition of performing weddings on Shabbat and Yom Tov. We related to the permissibility of holding a wedding on Rosh Chodesh, Chanuka, and Purim, and to the custom not to perform weddings during part of the *Omer* (the days between Pesach and Shavuot) and during the three weeks between Shiva Asar Be-Tamuz and Tisha Be-Av. Finally, we also mentioned that one should ideally hold the wedding after the bride has immersed in the *mikve*, which can be achieved through proper planning.

This week, we will discuss the laws and customs of the Shabbat and week before the wedding, as well as the customs of the wedding day itself.

**The Shabbat Before the Wedding – The Aufruf**

The Shabbat before the wedding is known as the Shabbat Chatan, or Aufruf. Some trace the uniqueness of this Shabbat to a passage in *Perkei* *De-Rebbe* *Eliezer* (17, cited by Tur, YD 393):

[King] Shlomo knew how great the quality of loving kindness is before the Holy One, blessed be He, and when he built the Temple, he built two gates, one for bridegrooms and one for mourners and the excommunicated. And on Shabbat the people of Israel would go and sit between these two gates. If someone went in the gate of the bridegrooms, they would know that he is a bridegroom, and they would say, “May the One Who dwells in this house gladden you with sons and daughters… From the day the Temple was destroyed, the Sages instituted that bridegrooms and mourners go to the *beit* *knesset* and to the *beit* *midrash*, and the people of that place see the bridegroom and rejoice with him, and they see the mourner and sit with him on the ground, in order that all Israel should fulfill their obligation to do acts of kindness.

The custom of dedicating the Shabbat before the wedding to wedding celebrations appears in the *Rishonim*, including the Rashba (*Mishmeret Ha-Bayit* 7:2) and Maharil (*Hilkhot Shiva Asar Be-Tamuz Ve-Tisha Be-Av*). While the Maharil mentions an evening event, during which “fruit and wine” is served, others mention a daytime celebration.

It is customary for the groom to receive an *aliya la-Torah* on the Shabbat before his wedding (see Magen Avraham 282 and Bi’ur Halakha 136:1). It is customary to sing for the *chatan*, and in some communities it is customary to throw candies on the *chatan* after his *aliya la-Torah*. This custom may originate in a Talmudic passage (*Berakhot* 50b; see also Y. *Ketubot* 2 and Y. *Kiddushin* 1:2) which describes throwing nuts at the bride and groom after their wedding. The Mishna Berura (171:21), however, criticizes those who throw raisins, which are soft and become repulsive.

Sephardic communities do not mark the Shabbat before the wedding, but rather after the wedding. It is customary to call the *chatan* to the Torah and to read the portion “*Ve-Avraham Ba Ba-Yamim*.” This custom, attributed to the *Geonim*, in mentioned by numerous *Rishonim* (Ritva, *Yoma* 70a; Rashbatz 2:39). It is customary to read these verses from a *Chumash*, and not from a *Sefer* *Torah*.

In recent years, it has become common in many circles for the bride to hold Shabbat celebrations as well, known as the *Shabbat* *Kalla*, surrounded by friends and family, filled with singing, *divrei Torah*, and best wishes for her upcoming wedding.

**Seeing Each Other Before the Wedding**

There is a widespread custom among Ashkenzim for the bride and groom not to see each other for seven days before the wedding. Although this custom appears to be without any firm halakhic or even historical basis, a number of sources record the custom and offer possible explanations. Some (see R. Binyomin Forst, *The Laws of* *Nidda*, pp. 458-459) suggest that this custom developed due to a fear that the bride will experience a discharge which would render her a *nidda* before the wedding (*dam chimud*). Others focus on the possible psychological benefits or separation before the wedding. Strictly speaking, there is no *halakha* or established custom that prohibits a bride and groom from seeing each other during the week before the wedding.[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Fasting on the Day of the Wedding**

The Rema (EH 61:1 and OC 573:1) relates that it is customary for the bride and groom to fast on the day of their wedding. The *Acharonim* offer different explanations for this custom.

Some suggest that the bride and groom fast in order to ensure that they are not intoxicated during the wedding (Beit Shmuel 6). This would not only be inappropriate, but would actually invalidate the act of *kiddushin*,as the Magen Avraham (O.C. 573) implies. According to this reason, one who betroths his wife through an agent would not need to fast.

Alternatively, some (Beit Shmuel, ibid.) explain that the wedding day is a day of atonement upon which the sins of the bride and groom are forgiven. Indeed, the Talmud (*Yevamot* 63b; see also Y. *Bikkurim* 3:3) teaches:

R. Chama bar Chanina said: Once a man marries a woman, his iniquities crumble [*mitpakekin*], as it is stated: “Whoever finds a wife finds good, and obtains [*veyafek*] favor of the Lord” (*Mishlei* 18:22).

Since their sins are not forgiven, but rather “crumble” (see Rashi, Arukh), the bride and groom fast and pray for a fresh start and a clean slate.

R. Yisrael of Bruna (d. 1480), known as the Mahari Bruna, suggests that the bride and groom fast in hope and prayer that there should be no disagreements and disputes during their wedding, which were apparently common (Mahari Bruna 93).

The Arukh Ha-Shulchan (EH 61:21) writes, “Since it is a day of forgiveness it is appropriate to fast and to ask for compassion, that he should live a peaceful life with his spouse, and that they should produce a generation of upstanding children in the eyes of man and God.” He adds that if it is difficult for the bride or groom to fast, they should not fast, but they should not eat too much and should not drink intoxicating beverages.

When may the bride and groom end their fast? Some (see Beit Shmuel, ibid.) suggest that this may depend upon the reasons mentioned above. If the fast is for forgiveness, then seemingly they should fast the entire day. However, if the fast is meant to ensure that they are not intoxicated at the wedding, then they should be permitted to eat and drink immediately after the ceremony. Most *Acharonim* (see Rema 562:2, for example) conclude that the bride and groom fast until the wedding, and partake of the wine during the ceremony, even if the ceremony is held during the day.

If the ceremony is held after dark, the practice may again depend upon whether the fast is an expression of *teshuva* or in order to ensure that the couple remains sober. Although many *Acharonim* (see, for example, Chokhmat Adam 115:2, cited by Pitchei Teshuva EH 61:21) maintain that the couple may end their fast after nightfall, the Arukh Ha-Shulchan (EH 61:21) insists that if possible, they should fast until after the wedding. In any case, they should not drink alcoholic beverages.

It is not customary to accept the fast at *Mincha* the day before (Mishna Berura 572:11).

The bride and groom do not fast on Rosh Chodesh (Taz 573:1), Chanuka (Rema O.C. 573), *Isru Chag* (see Magen Avraham 573:1), Tu Be-Av, Tu Be-Shvat (Mishna Berura 573:7), Purim and Shushan Purim, and the 14th and 15th of Adar Rishon (Nisuin Ke-Hilkhata 6:38). The bride and groom should fast, however, during the month of Nisan, on Lag Be-Omer, and on the days between Yom Kippur and Sukkot (ibid.).

If the bride and groom are fasting, they should say the special *Aneinu* prayer, recited on Fast Days, during the *Shema Koleinu* blessing at *Mincha*. It is customary to add *Aneinu* even if they intend to end their fast before nightfall, after the ceremony. If *Mincha* is recited after the wedding, then *Aneinu* is not recited

Although this custom is widespread among Ashkenazic Jews, some Sephardic communities accepted this practice as well. R. Ovadia Yosef (Yabi’a Omer E.H. 3:9), however, argues that Sephardim should not fast on the day of their wedding.

**Special Prayers on the Day of the Wedding**

The bride and groom do not say *Tachanun* on the day of the wedding (Shulchan Arukh, O.C. 131:4). The Mishna Berura adds that that the entire congregation omits *Tachanun* as well. If the wedding will take place in the evening, the congregation says *Tachanun*. If, however, *Mincha* is said immediately before the *chuppa*, *Tachanun* is omitted (see Shulchan Arukh, ibid., similar to *beit ha-chatan*).

Some relate that it is customary to say *Viduy* on the day of one’s wedding (see Pitchei Teshuva, EH 61:9). The long *Viduy* (*Al Chet*) customarily said on Yom Kippur is said at the end of the *Shemoneh Esrei*, before taking three steps backwards. *Viduy* is said even on days when *Tachanun* is not recited. When the ceremony is held before *Mincha*, *Viduy* is said during *Shacharit*.

The Kitzur Shulchan Arukh (146:4) writes:

Before the ceremony, the groom and the bride shall sanctify themselves by repenting their sins, by searching into all their deeds from the day of their birth until this very day, by making a confession of their sins, and by beseeching the Almighty, blessed be He, that He grant them pardon, forgiveness, and atonement. They should forsake their evil deeds with a contrite heart. They should firmly resolve to devote themselves henceforth to worship God truly and sincerely, and to be pure and holy. And when they are under the *chuppa* they shall pray that the Holy One, blessed be He, may cause His Divine Presence to rest between them, as our Rabbis of blessed memory said (*Sota* 17a): “If deserving, the Divine Presence rests between husband and wife.”

Next week, we will begin discussing the actual wedding ceremony.

1. See <https://www.ou.org/torah/machshava/tzarich-iyun/tzarich_iyun_before_the_wedding/> for a more in depth presentation of this topic. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)