

ב"ה

# A GUIDE TO *Chabad Weddings*





**M**azal Tov! Mazel tov! The simcha and energy are palpable as the *chosson* and *kallah* are given an enthusiastic reception by the guests as they leave the *chuppah* together. They have entered the *chuppah* as two separate beings and have now merged their two half souls into one complete soul as a married couple. This instantaneous, absolute and total soul connection was just achieved by the simple act of the *chosson* placing the ring on his *kallah's* finger. Herein lies the awesome power and might that are concealed in the simple act of *kiddushin* at the wedding. Not only does the connection between the *chosson* and *kallah* occur at the time of the *chuppah*, it is actually created through the *chuppah*. The *chuppah* contains a concealed power and energy that actually bring about and implements the unity of the bride and groom and transform them into a couple.

We certainly want the spiritual accomplishments achieved at a wedding to be implemented to the fullest and be entirely effective. We have been commanded by our sages to perform various customs to bestow upon the physical act of *kiddushin* (placing the ring on a *kallah's* finger) the lofty spiritual dimension of marriage. This enables the two halves to truly unite! Now it is possible for the couple to receive the power of the blessed Infinite One to have an everlasting marriage and to bear children.

The wedding day is considered a personal *Yom Kippur* for the *chosson* and *kallah*, a day when all of their previous sins are forgiven. We express the specialty of this day by fasting and praying, giving extra *tzedaka*, and spending every spare moment reciting extra *tehillim*. Thus, it is self understood that it is most proper at a wedding, this עת רצון (particularly auspicious time) for the *chosson* and *kallah*, that great attention be given to performing all details and customs of the wedding in a most comprehensive manner. Tremendous *brochos* are drawn down for the newly married couple when their wedding is celebrated in a manner of *kedusha*. For this reason, the words "שהשמחה במעונו", that the joy is in Hashem's abode," are added to the *zimun* (introductory call out) of *bentching*. Since their marriage has been established on *yesodei haTorah v'hamitzvah*, the foundations of the Torah and mitzvos, there can be *simcha* in Hashem's dwelling place. This *simcha* then permeates the world and imbues the life of the *chosson* and *kallah* with *simcha*, blessing them with an everlasting and joyous marriage.

In order to fully access this special power and opportunity, here are presented clear guidelines of five important aspects of wedding celebrations. These apply to all Lubavitcher weddings. The emphasis of these directives are on actual *halacha* and not on behaviors that some have come to consider "chassidish" or *hiddur mitzvah*, beautifying the mitzvah by being extra-careful. When individuals are meticulous to carefully follow *halacha* down to the smallest detail, it will positively affect the *kedusha* of the entire community, inspiring and encouraging others to follow suit, drawing down blessings to the newlywed couples, their families, their community and *klal Yisroel*.

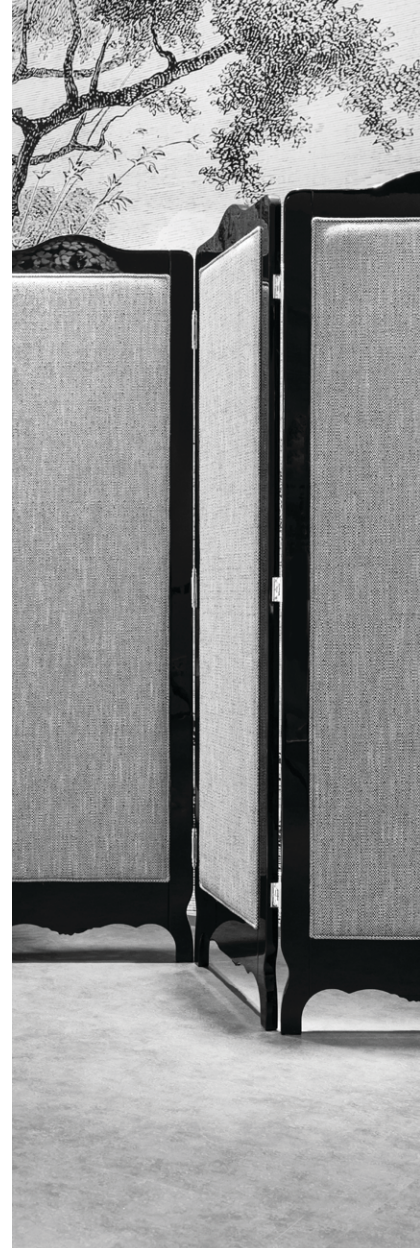
# Mechitza

In the times of the *Beis Hamikdash*, during *Simchas Beis Hashoeva*, a divider in the form of a balcony was put up to preserve *tznius* and to allow people to focus on the festivities.

Participating in a wedding celebrates the great mitzvah of marriage. Having a *mechitza*, a divider, allows this mitzvah to be celebrated in a modest fashion and enables the guests to focus their attention on being *misameach*, bringing joy to the *chosson* and *kallah*. A proper *mechitza* ensures a complete separation of men and women, especially during the dancing. In addition, it ensures that men are unable to view the women dancing. The Rebbe wrote in a letter that in order to truly be able to say *שהשמחה במעונו* and channel down the Torah's blessings that bring joy to the couple for their entire life, one has to conduct the wedding with a proper *mechitza*. (*Igros Kodesh, Volume 9, page 3*)

A proper *mechitza* is necessary regardless of the size of the wedding. Care should be taken that the *mechitza* should stay in the right place throughout the duration of the wedding. When not holding the wedding in an established hall, do not assume that the *mechitza* will be set up properly. A proper *mechitza* does not contain any gaps. Even when entering the hall, men should not be able to see the women dancing.

As Chassidim of the Rebbe, we should ensure that there are two separate head tables, one for the *chosson* and one for the *kallah*, so that men and women do not intermingle.



# Dancing

**D**ancing before the *chosson* and *kallah* is a great mitzvah because it brings them tremendous *simcha*. A wedding causes total and absolute unification of the *chosson* and *kallah*, revealing the highest level of their *neshama*. Thus, dancing at a wedding is a way that we can express the joy felt upon the spiritual unification taking place. The joy we feel is specifically conveyed through dancing since this is the way we are each able to express joy with our entire being. Every aspect of dancing at the wedding should be a manifestation of this deep spiritual joy. That is why we bring to your attention the following points:

Having a *mitzva tantz* is a very holy custom that has been passed down over the generations in Rebbishe and chassidishe families. Although men and women are not permitted to dance together, there are three leniencies that were passed down in this regard. 1. The *kallah* stands on one side holding onto a long *gartel* while relatives are given the honor to dance in front of the *kallah* by holding on to the other end of the *gartel* at a considerable distance from each other. 2. The father dances in front of the *kallah*, either by holding onto a handkerchief together or holding hands. 3. In some instances, the *chosson* and *kallah* hold hands after the *chuppah* in a manner reflecting seriousness and holiness.



The Rebbe made it clear (as noted in *Sefer Nitei Gavriel, Nisuin, vol 1, p.170, se'if 4*), that we do not follow the custom of *mitzva tantz* in any way. The Rebbe said that we can see in actuality what has evolved at weddings as a result of applying these leniencies in our times. The Rebbe makes a point to mention that we find things that were accepted in the olden days in the times of the *Avos* which are not accepted anymore. The stance of the Rebbe on this issue was very clear. We, as Chassidim of the Rebbe, should do our best to be vigilant and not do anything inferior to that.

There should not be any men and women dancing together, for that is against *halacha*. This includes close relatives as will be outlined below.



- ✿ At the onset of the first dance, when the *chosson* and *kallah* enter the hall, the *chosson* should be escorted directly to the men's section. He should not pass under the arches with his *kallah*.
- ✿ Brothers and sisters are not permitted to dance together in public. A circle of brothers and sisters holding hands should never take place at Chabad weddings. This includes the "*mizinka tantz*," otherwise called the broom dance, which is not permitted. This idea was conceived by Russian yiddishists who adapted it from the customs of the non-Jewish Ukrainians. They created music, lyrics and a ceremony of the whole family coming to one side of the *mechitza*, dancing together, and sweeping with a broom to represent, G-d forbid, glee in ridding the home of children. This is contrary to the Torah perspective of the feeling of joy in welcoming a new addition to the family.
- ✿ The *chosson* and *kallah* should not hold hands when they come out of the *yichud* room (or at any other time). This upholds the dignity of the *kallah*.

- ✿ At some weddings, close family or friends prepare a special coordinated dance in honor of the *kallah*. No formal announcement should be made that there will be a special dance in the women's section. This precaution is in order to eliminate having men coming to watch the women dance.
- ✿ Among Chassidim, it is not acceptable to seat the *kallah* next to the *chosson* and have men dance in front of them.
- ✿ If, due to the excitement and joy of the wedding, girls decide to sing, they should be careful to make sure their voices are not heard on the other side of the *mechitza*. This is an *issur of kol isha*, and is absolutely prohibited according to *halacha*.
- ✿ According to *halacha*, it is not considered proper for a woman to drink alcoholic beverages.



# Music

The Rebbe maintained that a wedding is supposed to be suffused with joy. Being that joy breaks through all boundaries and limitations, enabling people to attain the ultimate degree of *simcha*, the Rebbe encouraged live music at weddings.

When hiring a band, families need to instruct the musicians to play in the spirit of a true Jewish wedding.

Bands should not play music with improper words and values, or play songs that have inappropriate beats and styles. This applies also to Israeli music. Although the words are in Hebrew, the themes contained within the songs might not reflect the *kedusha* of the *chassunah* atmosphere. A disc jockey, commonly known as a DJ, is a person who plays prerecorded music. Most DJs engage the audience by mixing different music tracks and manipulating the songs to blend together. Some add various visual and sound effects. DJs tend to create an atmosphere that promotes very *untznius* dancing, feelings, rhythms, and songs and, as such, should be avoided when possible. If, due to financial considerations, one decides to hire a DJ, it is important to spend time before the wedding ensuring that the music, and transitions, will be proper.





# Sheva Brochos

**A**fter bentching, seven blessings, the same ones recited under the *chuppah*, are recited again. These consist mainly of requests for Hashem's blessing for the newlywed couple. Therefore, the *kallah* is brought nearer to the table where the *Sheva Brochos* are being recited, so she may hear them.



- ✿ It is preferable to make *Sheva Brochos* right after the meal, to ensure that all the guests remember to *bentch*.
- ✿ In order to avoid women and men intermingling, the *kallah* should remain on the women's side by the edge of the *mechitza* in close enough range that she can hear the *Sheva Brochos*. Other women can sit behind her on the women's side only.
- ✿ After the *Sheva Brochos*, when the music begins to play again, the *kallah* should return to the women's side and remain there until the conclusion of the wedding; It is not proper for women to stay on the men's side to enjoy the music and singing.
- ✿ Men and women should remain on their side of the *mechitza* for the entire wedding. Once there is a breach, it can undermine the whole concept of a *mechitza*.
- ✿ *Sheva Brochos* meals following the wedding should be planned in a manner that prevents men and women intermingling.









# Photography

The purpose of hiring a photographer for a Jewish wedding is in order to capture the *simcha* of the wedding and to hold onto and preserve the happy memories of the joyous beginning of the couple's life. Each picture should be a reflection of a Jewish wedding, and not *chas v'shalom* an imitation of *goyim*.

The beauty and sanctity of a Jewish marriage lie in the inherent modesty that the couple keep. Their intimate feelings for each other are elevated and held sacred by being kept private. The following are *halachic* guidelines that should be adhered to when hiring a photographer:



-  All poses of the couple should be completely *tznius*. It is not *tzniusdik* for the *chosson* and *kallah* to touch each other in public. Photography is considered public.
-  The strength of a Jewish marriage lies in that which is carefully concealed from public view. Poses that display this private connection actually make it materialistic and diminish from it its true beauty and strength. Allowing a photographer into the private space of the couple contradicts the Torah concept of *tznius*. The notion of such photos being allowed because the photographer is merely involved in his occupation has no basis in *halacha*.
-  It is a mistaken belief that these pictures are allowed if they are kept private. This is because: A. The act of the photographer taking the picture makes it already not private. B. No picture is kept totally private since it will probably be shown to close family and friends. C. These pictures are commonly posted on social media. D. When friends and family view the wedding photos, it has a direct impact on the accepted standards of *tznius*.
-  Since it is common nowadays to hire male photographers (although having women photographers on the women's side is ideal), care should be taken that the male photographers set themselves up on a higher platform. From there, they can capture pictures and videos without having to stand within the actual circle of dancing women.
-  If a male photographer is being used, he should prepare a spot for himself so he can avoid following the *kallah* through the arches that the women prepare for the *kallah's* grand entry into the dance hall.
-  Even when all pictures are taken properly, one should be mindful of which pictures get posted on social media and consider that, as *Yidden*, we should tap into our sensitivity regarding personal pictures shown to the public. *Kol kvuda bas melech pnima*.



Committing ourselves to ensuring that every wedding celebration takes place in a proper manner will indeed serve as a channel for powerful brochos for both the chosson and kallah, and for the community at large. It is our fervent hope that Hashem bless each and every couple with true sholom bayis and help them establish a binyan adei ad al yesodei hatorah v'hamitzvah, an everlasting edifice built on the foundations of Torah and mitzvos. Celebrating each wedding in a manner of kedusha and true simcha will G-d willing bring much chassidische nachas to parents and grandparents marrying off their children, unite family and friends to rejoice, and ultimately bring us to the greatest wedding celebration of all, where we will be reunited b'chutzos Yerushalayim, in the courtyards of Jerusalem, with Moshiach Tzidkeinu.

לזכות  
הרה"ת ר' יצחק  
וזג' מרת רבקה שיחיו  
ובניהם  
ליבא, נתן,  
מנחם מענדל, יוסף  
ושניאור זלמן שיחיו

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