

Preparation and Order of a Wedding Ceremony

By: Rabbi Noah Gradofsky

*This document is designed to help plan a wedding and to use as a checklist to make sure that everything will run smoothly (I will also use it to make a mini-booklet for myself to use during the ceremony). The description of the ceremony includes blank lines for the celebrants to fill in the names of who, if anyone, will be honored with the designated roles in the ceremony. Many of the roles can be combined or performed by the person officiating at the wedding. This document is designed to accommodate those who want to honor as many people as possible during their wedding. However, some thought should be given to the fact that having too many people involved may slow down the ceremony. Coordination in advance will help cut down on this concern. **For each honoree identified, please include how the honoree is related to the couple.***

Wedding Of:

_____ and _____

Cell: _____

Email: _____

Hebrew Names (include parents' Hebrew names. Note if father is a Kohen, Levi (Levite), or Yisrael (Israelite). Transliteration OK.):

Date: _____

Time: _____

Invitation: _____

B'Dekin & Ketubah: _____

Hupah: _____

Rehearsal/Walk Through (if applicable): _____

Location: _____

Dress Code (i.e. Black tie, Casual, etc.): _____

In Advance of the Wedding

1. You must get a marriage license from the proper authorities for the place of the wedding.
 - a. In general, you have to acquire the license at least a few days prior to the wedding. For information on getting a license in New York, visit http://www.health.state.ny.us/vital_records/married.htm.¹ Information on obtaining a marriage license for a wedding in New Jersey can be found at <http://www.nj.gov/health/vital/registration-vital/marriage-licenses/>.² Googling “Marriage license <state>” will probably get the information you need for any other state.
 - b. It is wise to ensure whether the area where the wedding will take place requires the person officiating at the wedding to be registered (for instance, clergy people must register to perform weddings in New York City, but this is rare) and if so, ensure that the person officiating at the wedding is so registered. I am registered in New York City.
2. I require that bride and groom sign a prenuptial agreement stating that should the marriage be dissolved in the future, the bride and groom agree to go to a specific *beth din* (rabbinical court) with regard to the issuance of a *get* (Jewish divorce decree) and be bound by the decisions of the *beth din*. I can supply a form of the agreement that I use. The Rabbinical Counsel of America has its own prenuptial agreement which is fine in this regard and can be found at <http://theprenup.org>.
3. If bride and/or groom have been married in the past, please provide copies of the *get*(s) dissolving each such marriage.
4. A *ketubah* (wedding contract) must be acquired. I recommend the standard “Orthodox” *ketubah* text. The “Lieberman Clause” used by the Conservative movement, while halakhically acceptable, deals with an issue that I believe is better addressed through a prenuptial agreement (see point 2 above). If desired, I have no problem with the *ketubah* identifying the bride and groom using both their father’s and their mother’s names.
5. You will need a wedding ring. This ring must be the property of the groom. If the ring you would like to use was not purchased by the groom, the ring must be given to the groom as a gift or purchased by the groom prior to the wedding ceremony. The ring should be as plain as possible, in order to help the *edim* (witnesses) be certain of its monetary value.

NOTE: The bride may wish to give a ring to give the groom during the ceremony. A suggestion for doing so is found in the section “The Bride Giving a Ring to the Groom in Context of Receiving the Ketubah” on page 14. on p. 14 below. If this suggestion is followed, the ring used should be owned by the bride.

¹ Note that a New York state marriage license may be acquired from any city/town clerk in New York regardless of where in New York the wedding will occur.

² In New Jersey, the marriage license should be acquired from the municipality in which one of the people getting married resides, in which case the license is valid anywhere in New Jersey. If neither of the people reside in New Jersey, then the license should be acquired in the municipality where the wedding will occur and is valid only in that municipality.

6. It is customary, although not required, for the groom to wear a *kittel* (a white robe also generally worn during the High Holidays) at the *hupah* (wedding canopy). The groom can go to a Jewish bookstore and purchase a *kittel* of appropriate size if desired.
7. Many people order personalized yarmulkes and/or booklets for *birkat hamazon* (the grace after meals) for the wedding.
8. Many people print a wedding guide to help people understand what is happening at the wedding. I am happy to help with creating such a document.
9. Prior to the wedding, the bride must go to the *mikvah* (ritual bath). This is an opportunity to enter into marriage with a sense of holiness and purity befitting this auspicious occasion. A local *mikvah* should be contacted to make an appointment. Please tell the *mikvah* that this is in anticipation of a wedding so that the attendant can help guide you along this process.
NOTE: Although not required by Jewish law (*halakhah*), the groom may feel it appropriate to go to the *mikvah* prior to his wedding. The local *mikvah* should be contacted to find out when and how men can gain access to the *mikvah*.
10. Two glasses of wine will be used at the ceremony. Consider whether there are kiddush cups in the family that you would like to use for the ceremony.
11. A pen should be prepared for signing the *ketubah*. This should be a nice pen with ink matching the *ketubah*.

Wedding Day Preparation: At Home

Many people have the custom of fasting on the day of their wedding until after the ceremony. This custom relates to the notion that when a couple marries, they become a new entity, in much the same way that a person who repents on *Yom Kippur* is reborn. This fasting is not required by *halakhah*. If you plan to follow this custom, take special care to ensure that you will have a good opportunity to consume calories and rehydrate prior to and during the wedding celebration.

Remember to bring the following:

- Marriage License
- Ketubah
- Ring(s)
- Kittel (Optional)
- Kiddush Cup(s) (if using your own)
- Pen for signing the ketubah
- Yarmulkes, *birkat hamazon* books, wedding guides, etc. if at home.

Wedding Day Preparation: At the Hall

1. Make arrangements for the ring(s) to be at the *hupah*, probably by placing it in the care of one of the people in the wedding party.
2. The *ketubah* should be in the room where it will be signed. If you are using a decorative *ketubah*, it is a good idea for there to be an easel to display the *ketubah* as well. If the *ketubah* is being signed before the *hupah*³, arrange for someone to move the *ketubah* and easel to the *hupah*.
3. The marriage license should be present to be signed by witnesses.
4. **The following items should be at the *hupah*:**
 - a. A glass or some other item for “the breaking of the glass.” Note that an old blown light bulb can be safer, easier, and less wasteful to use.
 - b. Two glasses/kiddush cups.
 - c. Wine (uncorked). Some prefer red wine, while others prefer the practicality of white wine given the likely color of the bride’s gown.
 - d. The *kittel* (if the groom is wearing one at the *hupah*). Note that sometimes the groom will enter the wedding hall already wearing the *kittel*.
 - e. If being signed prior to the *hupah*, the *ketubah* should be brought to the *hupah* after it is signed.
 - f. Amplification system (if available)
5. Yarmulkes and wedding guides should be set out at the entrance to the facility or to the wedding hall. Sometimes the wedding guides are put on each seat.

³ As is general Ashkenazi custom, but see the option discussed in the section “The Bride Giving a Ring to the Groom in Context of Receiving the Ketubah” on page 13.

The Wedding Day

Prior to the Wedding Ceremony

The key parts of the rituals prior to the wedding ceremony are the signing of the ketubah and the B'dekin, where the groom sees his bride and places the veil on her face. Often there are two separate pre-wedding receptions, one around the groom (the "Hatan's Tisch (Table))" and the ketubah is signed at the Hatan's Tisch and then the groom goes to see be bride and perform the B'dekin. However, these rituals can be done together in the same room and need not be done with all guests present. Also, as discussed below, the signing of the ketubah may be done at the wedding ceremony in accordance with Sephardic practice.

Prior to any festivities, I will ask for guests to turn off/silence their cell phones.

Tenaim (Wedding Conditions) (Optional)

In ancient days, a wedding would be arranged by the family a year in advance of the wedding. When the wedding was agreed upon, the parties would enter *tenaim* committing to the wedding. Today, many people still sign *tenaim* prior to the wedding. The *tenaim* are signed by witnesses. As this is done, there is a custom of breaking an earthen vessel (e.g. a plate). Often this is done by the mothers of the bride and groom. Historically this practice goes back to a time when a vessel would be broken as a symbol of solemnizing a contract.⁴ Other interpretations of this custom include the idea of remembering the destruction of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem even at our greatest moments of joy.

Witnesses for Tenaim⁵: _____
Hebrew name/Father's HN _____
Relationship to Bride/Groom: _____

NB: The witnesses will write their own names on the Ketubah. I recommend finding out their Hebrew names in advance so as to avoid any potential problems at the wedding. If desired, the witnesses may include their mothers' Hebrew names as well.

⁴ I learned this from a presentation made by Professor Daniel Sperber regarding his recent book The Jewish Life Cycle, which examines the historical background and interpretations of Jewish life cycle customs.

⁵ See "note regarding witnesses" below p. 6.

Signing the Ketubah

Note: Below I make a suggestion for the opportunity for the bride to give a ring to the groom during the wedding ceremony as part of the ritual of completing the *ketubah*.⁶ If this suggestion is followed, the signing of the *ketubah* will not be done until the *hupah*.

The rabbi explains the significance of the *ketubah* to the groom (and bride if present). Customarily, when the *ketubah* is made, one letter of the *ketubah* is left unfinished, and this letter is completed at this time. The rabbi performs a *kinyan*, a Jewish act of acquisition with the groom, demonstrating the groom's acquiring the *ketubah* and accepting the obligations stated in the *ketubah*.⁷ Generally, this involves the rabbi handing a pen or a handkerchief or the like to the groom. At this point, the *ketubah* is signed by the witnesses. These witnesses are attesting to the fact that the groom has accepted upon himself the obligations of the *ketubah*.

Note regarding witnesses: There are many sets of witnesses during the ceremony. The same set of witnesses may be used for each purpose, or new sets of witnesses may be chosen for each function. Witnesses must be adult males (i.e. Bar Mitzvah and above) and should be observant of Jewish laws including *Kashruth*, *Shabbat*, etc. The witnesses may not be related to either bride or groom and may not be related to each other (by blood or marriage). If desired, the rabbi performing the wedding can serve as one of the witnesses (unless he is related to the bride or groom) and will likely be able to supply an additional witness if necessary.

Witnesses for Ketubah: _____
Hebrew name/Father's HN _____
Relationship to Bride/Groom: _____

NB: Each witness writes his own name and his father's Hebrew name on the Ketubah. If desired, the witnesses may include their mother's Hebrew name as well. I recommend finding out their Hebrew names in advance so as to avoid any potential problems at the wedding.

If the Ketubah includes an English version, the English version may be signed by other witnesses, including women.

Witnesses for English: _____
Relationship to Bride/Groom: _____

⁶ See "The Bride Giving a Ring to the Groom in Context of Receiving the Ketubah," p. 13, below.

⁷ Note that if the bride will be giving a ring to the groom in exchange for the Ketubah (see below "The Bride Giving a Ring to the Groom in Context of Receiving the Ketubah," p. 13, then her giving of the ring constitutes the *kinyan*.

The Marriage License

Two witnesses (adults, male or female) should sign the marriage license. This may be integrated into the festivities, particularly as a possibility for honoring women. If the marriage license is signed prior to other wedding rituals being completed (for example if the *ketubah* will be done under the *hupah*), it should be held in escrow by the rabbi until after the wedding is complete.

Witnesses for Marriage License: _____

Relationship to bride/groom: _____

The B'dekin

The groom goes to his bride (where the groom and bride have been greeting people in separate rooms, the groom should be escorted to his bride with fanfare and song) and places the veil over her face. The groom's placing the veil on the bride reflects the story where Laban fooled Jacob into marrying Leah, rather than Rachel. Hence, the groom has the opportunity to ensure that he is marrying his intended bride.

Once the veil is placed on the bride, the following blessing is given to the bride. Customs vary as to who pronounces this blessing. It is quite appropriate for the parents of the bride and groom to recite the blessing. The blessing may be said in English, Hebrew, or both. The first sentence of the blessing comes from Genesis 24:60 and is part of the blessing offered by Rachel's family before Rachel left home to marry Isaac. This blessing is followed by the traditional blessings recited by parents for their daughters before *Shabbat* dinner, including the three-fold blessing that the *kohanim* (Priests) were commanded to pronounce upon the people of Israel (Numbers 6:24-26).

The blessing will be recited as follows (*please put information as to who will be reciting this blessing, in what language(s) etc.*): _____

Note: in the Hebrew below the ה in God's name is replaced with an underscore (_) to avoid the need to bury any printout of this text.

| Transliteration | English | Hebrew |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Achotaynu at</i> | Our sister: | אַחֲתֵנוּ אַתְּ |
| <i>Ha-yee l'alfay revavah.</i> | May you grow to thousands of myriads. | הִי לְאַלְפֵי רִבְבָהּ. |
| ----- | | |
| <i>Yeh-seem-aykh E-lohim</i> | May God make you | יְשִׁימָךְ אֱלֹהִים |
| <i>k'Sah-rah, riv-kah, rakhel, v'lay-ah.</i> | as Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah | כְּשָׂרָה רִבְקָה רָחֵל וְלֵאָה. |
| ----- | | |
| <i>Yeh-vah-rekh-khe-kha A-donay veh-yish-m-rekha.</i> | May the LORD bless you and watch over you. | יְבָרְכֶךָ ה' וַיִּשְׁמְרֶךָ. |
| ----- | | |
| <i>Yah-ayr a-donay pah-nav aylekha vee-khoo-neh-kha.</i> | May the LORD shine His face upon you and be gracious to you. | יָאֵר ה' פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיִּחַנֶּךָ. |
| ----- | | |
| <i>Yee-sah a-donay pah-nav aylekha v'yasem lekha shalom.</i> | May the LORD uplift His face toward you and give you peace. | יִשָּׂא ה' פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיִּשֶׁם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם. |

The Wedding Ceremony

Where Will People Stand?

Prior to the wedding, you bride and groom should decide how the bride and groom will be situated during the ceremony and where the person officiating the wedding will stand. At many weddings, the rabbi faces the crowd while the bride and groom face the rabbi. However, many (including myself) prefer if things are set up in such a way so that the guests may see the bride and groom. One way of accomplishing this is for the rabbi to stand in front of the room facing the guests, while the bride and groom stand in front of the rabbi while but facing each other (the guests see a profile view of the bride and groom) (Example 1). Another option is for the bride and groom to face the rabbi, but to rotate the positions by 90 degrees so that the guests see a profile of both the rabbi and the bride and groom (Example 2). A third option is for the bride and groom to face the guests while the rabbi is in front of the bride and groom facing them (perhaps a bit off center as not to block the view of the bride and groom (Example 3). Also, bride and groom must decide where the wedding party will stand.

Example 1

Wedding Party

| | | | |
|----------|-------|--------|----------|
| <i>W</i> | RABBI | | |
| <i>e</i> | | | <i>P</i> |
| <i>d</i> | G | B | <i>a</i> |
| <i>d</i> | R | R | <i>r</i> |
| <i>i</i> | O | I | <i>t</i> |
| <i>n</i> | O | D | <i>y</i> |
| <i>g</i> | M | E | |
| GUESTS | | GUESTS | |

Example 2

Wedding party

| | | | |
|----------|---|--------|----------|
| <i>W</i> | | | |
| <i>e</i> | R | | <i>P</i> |
| <i>d</i> | A | BRIDE | <i>a</i> |
| <i>d</i> | B | & | <i>r</i> |
| <i>i</i> | B | GROOM | <i>t</i> |
| <i>n</i> | I | | <i>y</i> |
| <i>g</i> | | | |
| GUESTS | | GUESTS | |

Example 3

Wedding Party

| | | | | |
|----------|---|---|--|----------|
| <i>W</i> | | | | |
| <i>e</i> | | | | <i>P</i> |
| <i>d</i> | G | B | | <i>a</i> |
| <i>d</i> | R | R | | <i>r</i> |
| <i>i</i> | O | I | | <i>t</i> |
| <i>n</i> | O | D | | <i>y</i> |
| <i>g</i> | M | E | | |

RABBI

GUESTS
GUESTS
GUESTS
GUESTS

GUESTS
GUESTS
GUESTS
GUESTS

The Procession

Prior to the procession, the rabbi (or someone else if the rabbi is walking in the procession) will ask everyone to turn off/silence their cell phones.

In general, the procession begins with the groom's family and friends processing first (if rabbis, cantors, etc. participate in the procession they usually go first. Otherwise, they simply are at the *hupah* prior to the procession beginning). Then, the groom enters with his parents. As the groom arrives at the *hupah*, he puts on the *kittel* (optional; also, sometimes the groom will come in to the wedding hall wearing the *kittel*) and takes his place. The musical accompaniment for the procession pauses (at a musically appropriate time) and the groom is greeted as follows. This greeting is often performed by a person (male or female) of particular musical talent (e.g. a cantor), who should already be at the *hupah*. After this is sung in Hebrew, the rabbi or cantor may care to recite this greeting in English as well.

Blessed is he who has come!

בְּרוּךְ הַבָּא!

The One Who is powerful above all,
the One Who is blessed above all,
the One Who is great above all,
the One Who is supreme over all,
[may] he bless the groom and bride.

מִי אֲדִיר עַל הַכֹּל,
מִי בְרוּךְ עַל הַכֹּל,
מִי גָדוֹל עַל הַכֹּל,
מִי דָגוּל עַל הַכֹּל,
הוּא יְבָרֵךְ אֶת הַחַתָּן וְאֶת הַכֵּלָה.

The groom's greeting will be sung by: _____

The bride's family and friends process. The bride enters with her parents. According to some customs, the groom walks down the aisle to meet his bride (the bride can pause as her parents continue to the *hupah*, or the groom can come and greet the bride and her parents, and then the parents can go up to the *hupah* followed by the bride and groom). As the bride arrives at the *hupah*, it is customary for her to walk around the groom seven times (generally counter-clockwise), a symbolic sphere of protection around the new family. *Consider whether someone will follow the bride to help with her gown or whether she will hold the back of her gown herself, depending how long the train is.* After this, the bride then takes her place for the ceremony. The musical accompaniment for the procession ends (at a musically appropriate time) and the bride is greeted as follows. This greeting is often performed by a person (male or female) of particular musical talent (e.g. a cantor), who should already be at the *hupah*. After this is sung in Hebrew, the rabbi or cantor may recite this greeting in English as well.

Blessed is she who has come!

בְּרוּכָה הַבָּאָה!

The One Who understands the speech
of the rose among the thorns
(Who understands) the love of the
bride, the joy of beloveds
[may] he bless the groom and bride.

מִי בֶן שֵׁים שׁוֹשֵׁן חוֹתִים,
אֶהֱבֵת כָּלָה, מְשׁוֹשׁ דּוֹדִים,
הוּא יְבָרֵךְ אֶת הַקָּתָן וְאֶת הַכָּלָה.

The bride's greeting will be sung by: _____

Erusin – Betrothal (The Wedding Ring)

At this point, the formal wedding ceremony begins. The rabbi, or someone else, may share a few words with the bride and groom. Following this, the *Birkot Erusin* (Betrothal Blessings) are recited by the person who is officially charged with officiating the wedding while holding a glass of wine.

Praised are you
LORD our God
Sovereign of the Universe
Creator of the fruit of the vine.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה
ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.

Praised are you
LORD our God
Sovereign of the Universe
Who sanctified us through His
commandments
and commanded us regarding
forbidden relationships
and prohibited us from the betrothed
and permitted to us those who are
married to us through *hupah* and
kiddushin (sanctification).

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה
ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו,
וְצִוָּנוּ עַל הַעֲרִיּוֹת,
וְאָסַר לָנוּ אֶת הָאֲרוּסוֹת.
וְהִתִּיר לָנוּ אֶת הַנְּשׂוּאוֹת לָנוּ, עַל
יְדֵי חֲפָה וְקִדּוּשֵׁין.

Praised are you LORD,
Who sanctifies his nation Israel
through *hupah* and *kiddushin*.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה',
מְקַדֵּשׁ עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל יְדֵי חֲפָה
וְקִדּוּשֵׁין.

The groom and bride both drink from the glass (the bride's veil may be removed at this point).

At this point, the witnesses for the *erusin* ceremony are called up to the *hupah*.⁸

Witnesses for *erusin*: _____

Relationship to Bride/Groom: _____

⁸ See "note regarding witnesses" above p. 6.

The wedding ring is produced. The witnesses observe as the rabbi asks the groom whether he owns the ring. The witnesses assess the ring to be sure it is an object of value. The groom holds the ring in his right hand (left hand for a lefty) as he prepares to place the ring on the bride's index finger on the hand she intends to wear the ring and says the following (placing the ring on her finger after saying these words. In general, the rabbi will prompt the groom word-for-word as he says this formula. Following the Hebrew declaration, it may be appropriate for the groom to then recite the sentence in English.

Optional: Begin by stating the bride's name.⁹

| | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| <i>Hah-ray</i> | Behold | הָרִי |
| <i>at</i> | You | אַתָּה |
| <i>meh-koo-deh-shet</i> | are betrothed | מְקַדְּשֶׁת |
| <i>lee</i> | to me | לִי |
| <i>b'tah-bah-at zoh</i> | with this ring | בְּטַבְעֵת זוֹ, |
| <i>k'dat</i> | in accordance with the laws of | כְּדַת |
| <i>Moh-sheh</i> | Moses | מֹשֶׁה |
| <i>V'Yis-rah-el</i> | and Israel. | וְיִשְׂרָאֵל. |

The groom places the ring on the bride's index finger. The witnesses for the *erusin* may take their seats (if the bride will be giving the groom a ring, as discussed below, p. 14, the witnesses should probably stay at the *hupah*).

The Reading of the Ketubah

The *Erusin* and *Kiddushin* are separated with the reading of the *ketubah*. The *ketubah* is read in Aramaic with some words of explanation in English as appropriate. If the *ketubah* includes English, that may be read as well, perhaps with a note that the translation is less than literal. The *ketubah* may be read by a man or a woman.

Reading the Ketubah: _____

After the reading of the *ketubah*, the groom takes the *ketubah* and hands it to the bride. The bride raises the *ketubah* as a symbol of acquiring the *ketubah* and the rights that come with

⁹ I found this suggestion in Rabbi Dov Linzer's "Toward a More Balanced Wedding Ceremony," http://www.myjewishlearning.com/life/Life_Events/Weddings/Contemporary_Issues/Egalitarianism/Jewish_Law.sh.tml. Though suggested partially as a partial balance to the bride's silence during the ceremony, Rabbi Linzer also notes the "profound personalizing effect" of adding the bride's name.

it. The *ketubah* is set aside as the wedding continues (the bride may hand the *ketubah* to someone else to put it down, back on an easel, etc.).

*The Bride Giving a Ring to the Groom in Context of Receiving the Ketubah
(Optional)*

The following procedure is a suggestion of Rabbi Dov Linzer.¹⁰ It follows the *Sephardic* custom of having the *ketubah* executed under the *hupah*. It also allows the groom's assumption of the obligations of the *ketubah* to be but into effect by performing a *kinyan* (acquisition) with his wife directly, rather than through the rabbi. Finally, it affords the opportunity for the bride to give the groom a ring in a context that very clearly is not part of the *erusin* ceremony (and thus cannot be misconstrued as the parties "exchanging rings," as the groom is supposed to give the bride a ring in exchange for her agreement to marry him and not in exchange for another ring).

After the *ketubah* is read, the witnesses for the *ketubah* are called to the *hupah*.

Witnesses for Ketubah: _____
Hebrew name/Father's HN _____
Relationship to Bride/Groom: _____

NB: The witnesses will write their own names on the Ketubah. I recommend finding out their Hebrew names in advance so as to avoid any potential problems at the wedding. If desired, the witnesses may include their mothers' Hebrew names as well.

If the *Ketubah* includes an English version, the English version may be signed by other witnesses, including women.

Witnesses for English: _____
Relationship to Bride/Groom: _____

The rabbi explains that the bride will be giving a ring to the groom, in exchange for which the groom will assume his responsibilities under the *ketubah*. The ring is produced. The witnesses observe as the rabbi asks the bride whether she owns the ring. The witnesses assess the ring to be sure it is an object of value. The bride holds the ring in her right hand (left hand for a lefty) as she prepares to place the ring on the groom's index finger on the hand he intends to wear the ring and says the following, placing the ring on his finger after saying these words. In general, the rabbi will prompt the bride word-for-word as she says this formula. Following the Hebrew declaration, it may be appropriate for the bride to then recite the sentence in English.

¹⁰ "Double Ring Ceremonies"
http://www.myjewishlearning.com/life/Life_Events/Weddings/Contemporary_Issues/Egalitarianism/Double_Ring_Ceremonies.shtml.

Optional: Begin by stating the groom's name.

| | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|
| <i>T'kah-bell</i> | Accept | תְּקַבֵּל |
| <i>tah-bah-aht zoh</i> | this ring | טְבַעַת זוֹ |
| <i>v'teet-kha-yayv</i> | and become obligated | וְתַחַיִּיב |
| <i>lee</i> | to me | לִי |
| <i>v'khol</i> | for all | בְּכֹל |
| <i>khee-yoo-vay</i> | the obligations | חַיִּוְבֵי |
| <i>keh-too-vah zoh</i> | of this <i>ketubah</i> . | כְּתוּבָה זוֹ |
| <i>k'dat</i> | in accordance with the laws of | כְּדַת |
| <i>Moh-sheh</i> | Moses | מֹשֶׁה |
| <i>V'Yis-rah-el</i> | and Israel. | וְיִשְׂרָאֵל. |

The bride places the ring on the groom's index finger. The groom accepts the ring and the witnesses sign the *ketubah*, which is handed to the groom. The groom takes the *ketubah* and hands it to the bride. The bride raises the *ketubah* as a symbol of acquiring the *ketubah* and the rights that come with it. The *ketubah* is set aside as the wedding continues (the bride may hand the *ketubah* to someone else to put it down, back on an easel, etc.). The witnesses for the *ketubah* may take their seats.

Kiddushin

The final part of the wedding ceremony is the *kiddushin*, the sanctification of the marriage through reciting the *Sheva Berachot* (Seven Blessing). At many weddings, individual honorees are called up to recite each of these blessings. It is most appropriate for the blessings to be recited in Hebrew and then in English. Although it is subject to some *halakhic* debate, it seems that these blessings should be recited by men at the *hupah*. If desired, women may be invited to recite the translation of each blessing. Each person should hold the glass of wine as he recites the blessing. If desired, all of the blessing may be said by one individual (for instance, the rabbi officiating at the ceremony). If anyone needs to hear how these blessings are traditionally sung, please see <http://www.virtualcantor.com/weddings.htm>.

First blessing: Hebrew: _____ English _____

Relationship to Bride/Groom: _____

| | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| <i>Barukh ah-tah</i> | Praised are you | בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה |
| <i>A-doh-nay E-lo-hay-nu</i> | LORD our God | ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ |
| <i>Melekh ha-oh-lam</i> | Sovereign of the Universe | מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם |
| <i>boray peh-ree ha-gafen.</i> | Creator of the fruit of the vine. | בוֹרֵא פְרֵי הַגָּפֶן. |

Second blessing: Hebrew: _____ English _____

Relationship to Bride/Groom: _____

| | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|
| <i>Barukh ah-tah</i> | Praised are you | בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה |
| <i>A-doh-nay E-lo-hay-nu</i> | LORD our God | ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ |
| <i>Melekh ha-oh-lam</i> | Sovereign of the universe | מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם |
| <i>sheh-hah-kol</i> | that everything | שֶׁהַכֹּל |
| <i>barah</i> | was created | בָּרָא |
| <i>leekh-vo-do.</i> | for His glory. | לְכַבוֹדוֹ. |

Third blessing: Hebrew: _____ English _____
Relationship to Bride/Groom: _____

| | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|
| <i>Barukh ah-tah</i> | Praised are you | בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה |
| <i>A-doh-nay E-lo-hay-nu</i> | LORD our God | ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ |
| <i>Melekh ha-oh-lam</i> | Sovereign of the Universe | מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם |
| <i>yoh-tsayr</i> | creator | יוֹצֵר |
| <i>ha-ah-dam</i> | of Man. | הָאָדָם. |

Fourth blessing: Hebrew: _____ English _____
Relationship to Bride/Groom: _____

| | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Barukh ah-tah</i> | Praised are you | בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה |
| <i>A-doh-nay E-lo-hay-nu</i> | LORD our God | ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ |
| <i>Melekh ha-oh-lam</i> | Sovereign of the Universe | מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם |
| <i>ah-sheer yatzar et ha-a-dam b'tsahl-mo</i> | Who created humanity in His image, | אֲשֶׁר יָצַר אֶת הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ, |
| <i>b'tselem d'moot tav-nee-to v'heet-keen loh mee-meh-noo</i> | in the image of His likeness and who prepared for him (humanity) from Him (God) | בְּצַלְמֵ דְמִוְת פְּבִנְיָתוֹ וְהִתְקִין לוֹ מִמֶּנּוּ |
| <i>been-yan ah-day-ad.</i> | A perpetual structure. | בְּנִין עַדֵי עַד. |
| <i>Barukh ah-tah</i> | Praised are you LORD, | בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', |
| <i>A-doh-nay</i> | creator | יוֹצֵר |
| <i>ha-ah-dam</i> | of Man. | הָאָדָם. |

Fifth blessing: Hebrew: _____ English _____
Relationship to Bride/Groom: _____

*Sohs tah-sees v'tah-gayl
ha-ah-ka-rah,*

May the childless one
(Zion) rejoice and be
glad

שׁוֹשׁ תְּשׁוּיֵשׁ וְתִגַּל
הָעֵקְרָה,

*b'kee-boots bah-nay-hah
l'toh-chah b'sim-chah.*

through the gathering of
her children to within
her with gladness.

בְּקִבּוּץ בְּנֵיהָ לְתוֹכָהּ
בְּשִׂמְחָה.

*Barukh ah-tah
A-doh-nay
meh-sah-may-ach
tzee-yohn
b'vah-neh-hah.*

Praised are you LORD,

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה',

Who gladdens Zion
through [the return of]
her children.

מְשַׂמֵּחַ צִיּוֹן בְּבָנֶיהָ.

Sixth blessing: Hebrew: _____ English _____
Relationship to Bride/Groom: _____

| | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Sah-may-ach t'sah-mach ray-eem ha-ah-hoo-veem keh-sah-may-cha-cha yeh-tseer-cha b'gahn ay-den mee-keh-dem Barukh ah-tah A-doh-nay meh-sah-may-ach chah-tahn v'cha-lah.</i> | Gladden the beloved friends as you gladdened your creations in the Garden of Eden of old. Praised are you LORD, Who gladdens groom and bride. | שְׂמַחַת תְּשֻׂמַח רְעִים הָאֵהוּבִים, כְּשִׂמְחָה יִצְרָה בְּגַן עֵדֶן מִקְדָּם. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', מְשַׂמַּח חַתָּן וְכַלָּה. |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Seventh blessing: Note: Since there are some nice songs associated with this blessing, it may make sense to have the English read before the Hebrew for this blessing.

Hebrew: _____ English _____
Relationship to Bride/Groom: _____

*Barukh ah-tah
A-doh-nay E-lo-hay-nu
Melekh ha-oh-lam*

*Ah-sheh bah-rah
sah-son v'sim-chah*

*chah-than v'chah-lah
gee-lah, ree-nah,
dee-tsah v'ched-vah*

*ah-hah-vah,
v'ach-ah-vah
v'shah-lom v'ray-oot
meh-hay-rah A-doh-nay
E-lo-hay-nu
yee-shah-mah b'ah-ray
ye-hoo-dah
ooh-v'choo-tsoht
yeh-roo-shah-lah-yim
kohl sah-sohn v'kol
seem-chah*

*Kohl chah-than v'kol
kah-lah
kohl meets-hah-loht
chah-tah-neem
may-choo-pah-tam
ooh-n'ah-reem mee-
meesh-tay
n'gee-nah-tam.*

*Barukh ah-tah A-doh-
nay
meh-sah-may-ach
chah-than eem
ha-kah-lah.*

Praised are you
LORD our God
Sovereign of the
Universe
who created joy and
gladness,
groom and bride,
Rejoicing, song, delight,
and pleasure

love, brotherhood,
peace, and friendship.

Speedily, LORD our
God

[Let] be heard in the
cities of Judah and in
the streets of Jerusalem

the sound of joy and
gladness

the sound of groom and
the sound of bride
the sound of grooms
jubilation from their
hupahs
and [the sound of]
youths from their
celebratory feasts.

Praised are you LORD,

Who gladdens the
groom with the bride.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה
ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא שְׂשׂוֹן
וְשִׂמְחָה,
חַתָּן וְכַלָּה,
גִּילָה, רִנָּה, דִּישָׁה,
וְחִדְוָה,
אַהֲבָה, וְאַחֲוָה, וְשָׁלוֹם
וְרַעוּת.

מְהֵרָה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ

יִשְׁמַע בְּעָרֵי יְהוּדָה
וּבְחֻצוֹת יְרוּשָׁלָּיִם

קוֹל שְׂשׂוֹן וְקוֹל
שִׂמְחָה,

קוֹל חַתָּן וְקוֹל כַּלָּה,

קוֹל מְצַהְלוֹת חַתָּנִים
מִחֻפָּתָם,

וּנְעָרִים מִמְּשֻׁתָּה
נְגִינָתָם.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה',

מְשַׂמֵּחַ חַתָּן עִם הַכַּלָּה.

The bride and groom drink from the wine after the 7 blessings have been concluded.

Breaking the Glass

The tradition is that the groom breaks a glass at the end of the wedding ceremony. Historically, this practice goes back to a time where a vessel would be broken as a symbol of solemnizing a contract.¹¹ Other interpretations of this custom include the idea of remembering the destruction of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem even at our greatest moments of joy. Some people prefer to break a light bulb, particularly one that has already been used. This (1) cuts down on waste and (2) presents less of a danger of glass going through the groom's shoe, which has been known to happen on rare occasions.

Prior to the breaking of the glass, the following verses from Psalm 137 are sung or recited (with some explanation from the rabbi).

Recited/sung by: _____

Relationship to Bride/Groom: _____

If I forget the, Jerusalem
may my right hand be forgotten.
Let my lips cleave to my palate
if I do not speak of thee,
if I do not raise
Jerusalem
over all my joys.

אם אֶשְׁכַּח יְרוּשָׁלַם
תִּשְׁכַּח יְמִינִי.
תִּדְבַק לְשׁוֹנֵי לְחֻכֵי
אם לא אֶזְכְּרֶיךָ,
אם לא אֶעֱלֶה
אֶת יְרוּשָׁלַם
עַל רֵאשׁ שְׂמֹחֹתֵי.

Recessional

As the recessional occurs, the bride and groom are escorted to a room reserved for them. Two witnesses inspect the room to make sure no one is in it. They then stand guard outside the room to ensure the privacy of the new couple. The bride and groom share their first moments of privacy together as husband and wife. Some food and drink should be ready for the bride and groom in this room (called the *yichud* room). After a few minutes alone, the bride and groom join the festivities.

Witnesses for *yichud*: _____

Relationship to Bride/Groom: _____

¹¹ See above, p. 2 footnote 4.

At the Reception

The wedding reception is part of the wedding itself. It is considered a *seudat mitzvah* – a meal of *mitzvah*, as we fulfill the *mitvah* of brining joy to the bride and groom.

Reciting blessing on wine: _____

Relationship to Bride/Groom: _____

Reciting *hamotzee*: _____

Relationship to Bride/Groom: _____

The most important part of the wedding reception, from a ritual standpoint, is the reciting of *birkat hamazon* (the grace after meals). A man leads the grace after meals. Six other people may be invited to recite six of the seven *sheva berachot* (the person leading the *birkat hamazon* will make the seventh blessing, which is the blessing on the wine). People may also be assigned to recite the English of the blessings. According to many rabbis (myself included), women are welcome to say these blessings. Often *sheva berachot* during the meal are not assigned in advance and instead are assigned during the recitation of the blessings by passing the wine cup to the next person to say a blessing.

The person leading *birkat hamazon* holds one glass of wine in his hands while he does so. Then a second glass of wine is passed around and held by each person as he or she recites one of the first six of the *sheva berachot*. The order of the *sheva berachot* is the same as at the wedding, except that *borei peri hagefen* (the blessing on wine) is left until last. After the first six blessings, the person leading *birkat hamazon* holds the glass he held during *birkat hamazon* and says *borei peri hagefen*. The he takes the two glasses of wine and pours some wine from each glass into a third (empty) glass, thus mixing the two glasses. He pours some wine back into the first two glasses, resulting in three glasses with a mixture of wine from the two glasses. One glass is given to the bride, another to the groom. The person leading *birkat hamazon* drinks from the third, and others are free to partake as well.