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From Our President: Jeremiah's Prophecy

By Carol Kaufman Newman



This is our second *JOFA Journal* devoted to weddings. In the few years since our first issue there have been so many innovations that we felt that the subject deserved another look. For me personally, this comes at an auspicious time since this June my husband and I will celebrate our 40th anniversary.

I would like to take a look back at my own wedding—June, 1963. Two prominent rabbis officiated: one was the leader of a large congregation in Manhattan and the other was a dean at Yeshiva University. Men and women sat together at the ceremony and at the dinner. My *bedeken* was a private affair with just the rabbis and immediate families in attendance (very different from today). Nobody stood as I walked down the aisle. My parents left me before I reached the *chuppah* and my future husband came to meet me as we walked to the *chuppah* together. I circled him three times. He gave me a ring while saying the traditional formula. The two rabbis said the *sheva berachot*. The *ketubah* was read by yet another rabbi. The groom broke the glass and everyone shouted *mazal tov*. We were husband and wife. It was a beautiful ceremony but one in which I played almost no role and in which no other women participated at all.

I have witnessed such incredible changes. About ten years ago, one of my dearest friends, who lives in Jerusalem, called me to say that her name would be in her daughter's *ketubah*. What a moment it was for us both as she turned and smiled at me from under the *chuppah* at the mention of her name along with her husband's. Since then I have seen brides give rings while saying special meaningful verses, and I have seen brides respond to the grooms' giving of the ring. I have watched as brides put a *tallit* or *kittel* on the groom and I have heard women read the *ketubah*. I have had the joy of hearing my own sister (the *shadchanit*/matchmaker) say one of the *sheva berachot* after the dinner at my daughter's wedding. I have also had the privilege of seeing my name in both my daughters' *ketubot*. The Jewish wedding ceremony is becoming a partnership, a blueprint for what we hope the couple's future marriage will be. Women, who in the past played a passive role, are now taking an active role.

When I was growing up we were taught that we should be like Hannah. She was our most significant role model.

"וּחַנָּה הָיָא מְדַבֵּרַת עַל לְבָהּ רַק שְׁפִתֶיהָ נִעוּת וְקוֹלָהּ לֹא יִשְׁמָע..."
(שְׁמוּאֵל א א:יג)

"Now Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved but her voice was not heard." (First Book of Samuel 1:13)

Similarly, in the wedding ceremony, we were taught that there was no need for the bride to be heard, that her silence was sufficient to signal her assent. As I read through the articles in this wedding issue I realized that there is another paradigm we can follow. As women begin to assume a larger role in their marriage ceremonies they come closer to fulfilling the wonderful prophecy of Jeremiah that we recite twice at every Jewish wedding:

"מֵהֲרָה... יִשְׁמָע בְּעֵרֵי יְהוּדָה וּבְחֻצוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַיִם,
קוֹל שְׂשׂוֹן וְקוֹל שְׂמֵחָה, קוֹל חַתָּן וְקוֹל כְּלֵה." (ירמיה לג י-יא)

"Soon... let there be heard in the cities of Judah and the outskirts of Jerusalem, the voice of happiness, the voice of joy, the voice of the groom, the voice of the bride."
(Jeremiah 33:10-11)

Reshut HaKallah: The Symbolism of the Wedding Canopy

By Karen Miller

We know that the Jewish wedding ceremony is laden with meaning, both on a legal and metaphoric level. What then does the *chuppah* represent? Most people intuitively understand the *chuppah* as representing a home that the *chatan* (groom) and *kallah* (bride) will build together. In fact, according to the *halakhic* sources the *chuppah* does represent a home—but the home belongs to the *chatan*—and its role in the ceremony is to mark the transfer of the woman from her father's house to that of her husband. However, the *midrash* provides a different understanding of the *kallah's* entry into the *chuppah*, in which the *chuppah* is symbolic of the

...continued on page 2

beginning of a mutual and equal relationship between the *chatan* and *kallah* poised to establish a home together.

The dominant view in *halakhic* sources is that the *chuppah* is the *reshut*, or domain, of the *chatan*, and this is why he enters it first, and then brings the *kallah* into his home. According to the *Shulkhan Arukh*¹ the *nissuin* has only taken place once the *kallah* has entered his house, which in the *halakhic* sources is the symbolic purpose of the *chuppah*. Other *halakhic* sources are more explicit in their language and clearly refer to the *chuppah* as the “*reshut ha-ba'al*,” the domain of the *chatan*.² This symbolism seems to be further reinforced by the *minhag*, or custom, (which my husband and I followed at our own wedding) for the *chatan* to enter the *chuppah*, and then come back out when the *kallah* arrives, in order to accompany her into the *chuppah*. This *minhag* is widely understood as representing the woman's leaving the *reshut* of her father and entering the *reshut* of her husband. It is as though the *chatan*, being a good host, greets the *kallah* and says, “welcome to my home.”

This interpretation of the *minhag* can be extracted from certain *midrashim* as well. The *midrashim* on *Matan Torah* (the giving of the Torah) compare the arrival of *B'nei Yisrael* at Mt. Sinai, to the arrival of the *kallah* at her *chuppah*. Exodus 19:17 reads “Moshe took the nation out of the camp to meet [likrat] God.” On the words “to meet,” the *midrash* says that Moshe told *B'nei Yisrael* to leave the camp and go to the mountain because God, the *chatan*, is waiting to meet the people, his *kallah*, so that He may accompany them into the *chuppah*.³ This understanding of the word *likrat*, as a meeting between the *chatan* and *kallah* is also expressed in the refrain from *Kabbalat Shabbat* (traditional Friday night service to welcome Shabbat) - *L'cha dodi likrat kallah*, come my beloved to meet the *kallah*. The fact that the *chatan* in these sources comes out to meet the *kallah*, clearly supports the *minhag* of the *chatan* and *kallah* entering the *chuppah* together. However, they do not offer an alternative insight into this *minhag*. Like the *halakhic* sources, they do not portray the meeting at the *chuppah* as a mutual meeting, but rather as the *chatan*'s welcoming the

kallah into his house.

One must look at *Shir Hashirim* (Song of Songs) and the *midrashim* which base themselves upon it, for an alternative perspective on the role of the *kallah* at the *chuppah*. The book is an allegory for the loving relationship between *B'nei Yisrael* and God, and so naturally it is used as a proof text for comparing *B'nei Yisrael* to a bride. Chapter four consists of three songs in which the *dod* (beloved), who is understood to be God, sings to his *kallah*, the people. The word *kallah* appears here six out of the ten times it is used in the whole Bible,⁴ and so it is a useful source in understanding the meaning behind wedding imagery. In the third of these songs the *kallah* is described as a locked garden (4:12), which contains pleasant fruits and fragrant spices. However, the song finishes with the bride singing,

Awake O north wind, and come south; blow [*haphikhi*] upon my garden [*gan*], so that [*the smell*] of the spices may flow out. Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat from its choicest fruit [*pri*]. I have come to my garden, my sister, my bride...

Much of the wedding imagery found in this section is based on the language of *parshat Bereshit* (Genesis 1:1-6:8), since the creation of Adam and Eve is the archetypal marriage, as several of the *sheva berachot* express. The word *gan* of course calls to mind the original *gan*, *Gan Eden* (Garden of Eden). Moreover, the *kallah* says, “Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its choicest fruit [*pri*].”⁵ In *Gan Eden* the fruit grows on trees that are called, “pleasant to the sight and good for food.”⁶ In both sources the fruits are described as select and ripe, and the use of this language is an allusion to fertility, an important aspect of marriage. Furthermore, the *kallah*, in an attempt to entice her beloved to join her in her garden, beseeches the wind to “blow [*haphikhi*] upon my garden, so that [*the smell*] of the spices may flow out.” Similarly, when God blows the breath of life into Adam's nostrils, a word deriving from the same root, “*vayipakh*,” “and he blew,” is used.⁷ The *midrashim* on *Gan Eden* also borrow the imagery of the *gan* as a *chuppah* from *Shir Hashirim* when it

says that God made ten *chuppot* for Adam in *Gan Eden*.⁸

In the *Shir Hashirim* text, the *gan* or *chuppah* is described as a space, which is shared by the *chatan* and *kallah*. The *kallah* refers to the garden first as hers (*my* garden), and then as his (*his* garden). Only in response to the *kallah*'s offer does the beloved accept her overture and call the garden his own.⁹ Moreover, it is the *kallah* who is in the *chuppah* first, awaiting the arrival of her *chatan*.

Based on the verses in *Shir Hashirim*, the *midrash* makes a statement which is radically different from the perspective in the *halakhic* sources on the *chuppah*:

Rabbi Hanina says, the Torah teaches you appropriate behavior [*derekh eretz*], that the *chatan* should not enter the *chuppah* until the *kallah* gives him permission [*reshut*], as it says “Let my beloved come to his garden” (*Shir Hashirim* 4:16) and afterwards it says “I have come to my garden.”¹⁰

If the *midrash* had understood the *chuppah* as representing the relocation of the *kallah* from her father's home to

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D'var Torah

Delivered by
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Wedding of
Zelda Stern and
Stanley Rosenzweig

Photo: Joan Roth



that of her husband, then why is her consent necessary? The need for the permission (*reshut*) of the *kallah*, as it is expressed in the *midrash*, suggests that the *chuppah* need not be viewed exclusively as the *reshut*, or domain, of the *chatan*, but rather as a shared, mutual dwelling for the bride and groom, which they are both about to enter into together for the first time.

Now, based on *Shir Hashirim*, and the *midrash's* understanding of it, one can interpret the *minhag* of the *chatan* meeting the *kallah* and accompanying her into the *chuppah*, in an entirely different way. The concept that the consent of the *kallah* must be granted, before the wedding ceremony in the *chuppah* begins, alters the symbolism of this custom. The *minhag* is no longer about the transfer of the woman from one man's space to another, but rather is representative of the voice of the *kallah*, who is ready to enter into and share a new home with her *chatan*. Instead of representing the striking absence of a role for the *kallah* at the *chuppah*, it symbolizes her noteworthy presence.

There is only one *halakhic* source, to my knowledge, which mentions the concept of needing the consent of the

bride. The *Likutei Maharikh* suggests that the reason the *kallah* enters the *chuppah* after the *chatan* is so that it is clear that she has given her consent to the marriage.¹¹ While this source still views the *chuppah* as the domain of the *chatan*, at least it gives the *kallah* a somewhat active role in the ceremony by requiring her permission before it may begin.

What becomes clear from these sources is that there can be different

interpretations of this *minhag*. From the *halakhic* material, one may derive a more traditional view of the *chuppah*, as symbolic of the *reshut ha-ba'al*. However, for those of us whose natural inclination is to view marriage as a joint endeavor, in which both individuals participate and share responsibilities, the *midrash* and *Shir Hashirim* offer an approach which is more acceptable. Far from representing the woman's transfer from one domain to another, the *chuppah* in these sources signifies a home built on joint consent and mutual involvement. ■

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1 *Even Ha'Ezer* 55:1.

2 *HaGra*, *Even Ha'Ezer* 55:9 and *Arukh Hashulchan*, *Even Ha'Ezer*, 55:18.

3 *Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer*, chapter 41. A similar idea is found in the *Mekhilta deRabbi Ishmael* on Exodus 19:17.

4 *Shir Hashirim Rabbah*, chapter 4.

5 *Shir Hashirim* 4:17.

6 Genesis 2:9.

7 Genesis 2:7.

8 *Bava Batra* 75a, *Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer*, chapter 11.

9 This transition is noted by the *Da'at Mikra* commentary.

10 *Pesikta deRav Kahane*, chapter 1. This phrase is used in several other *midrashim*. They are: *Vayikra Rabbah*, chapter 9, *Benidbar Rabbah*, chapter 13, *Shir Hashirim Rabbah*, chapter 4, *Pesikta Rabbati*, chapter 5, and *Midrash Tanhuma*, parshat Naso, siman 20. In these *midrashim* the statement appears in the names of different rabbis, Rabbi Yochanan, Rabbi Nechunya, and Rabbi Abahu.

11 *Likutei Maharikh* 3:131b.



Kallah's Tisch

Wedding of Zelda Stern
and Stanley Rosenzweig

Photo: Gordon Grant
www.gordonmgrant.com

Ani Li'Dodi vi'Dodi Li: Towards a More Balanced Wedding Ceremony

By Rabbi Dov Linzer

From the *chatan's tisch*, to the *chatan's* giving of the ring, to the *sheva bera-chot*, men play a more prominent role in the traditional wedding ceremony than women. This can be troubling for couples who, while wishing to be respectful of tradition and community, are also looking for ways to have a ceremony that reflects their vision of marriage as an equal partnership.

In this article, I would like to discuss some opportunities that exist within *halakha* for creating a more balanced wedding ceremony. As with any area of *halakha*, there is a range of opinions, and these issues need to be discussed with the couple's officiating rabbi. Beyond *halakha*, tradition plays an important role in linking an individual to his or her community and to previous generations. Couples should work to achieve not only an appropriate balance between the sexes, but also the appropriate balance between tradition and innovation as well.

Tisch and T'naim

In addition to the *chatan's tisch*, the *kallah* can hold a *tisch* of her own. This is now becoming more common at Modern Orthodox weddings. The *kallah's tisch* can be as simple as the *kallah* and her friends and family singing and sharing good wishes. It can also be an opportunity for the *kallah* or a friend to deliver a *d'var Torah*. In addition, some of the wedding documents can be signed at the *kallah's tisch*. The marriage license can be filled out there, although it usually cannot be signed until after the ceremony. More significantly, the *kallah* can sign her part of the prenuptial agreement¹ and have it witnessed and notarized by women friends or relatives. To avoid last minute complications, when I officiate at a wedding, I always require that the couple draft a prenuptial agreement and have it signed and notarized at least a week prior to the wedding. In such a case, there can be a reading of

the prenuptial agreement at the *kallah's tisch*.

The *t'naim* document is a vestige of a time when weddings were arranged by the parents of the bride and the groom. After the match was agreed upon, each father obligated himself to incur financial penalties if his child backed out prior to the marriage, and these obligations were written up in the *t'naim* document. Inasmuch as the *t'naim* document relates equally to the bride and groom, its execution can be transferred to the *kallah's tisch*. The ceremony can also be divided between the two *tisches*, with the signing done at one *tisch* and the breaking of the plate at the other. Finally, there is no reason that the mothers of the bride and groom cannot be the obligating parties in addition to the fathers. The mothers can have their names included in the *t'naim* and together with the fathers can perform the *kinyan* (acceptance of obligation).

Unlike *t'naim*, the *ketubah* is the central document of the marriage and it consists of the husband's obligations to his wife. As such, its *kinyan* and witnessing are traditionally done at the *chatan's tisch*. While these formalities cannot be moved to the *kallah's tisch*, the *ketubah* can be executed prior to the *tisch* or even under the *chuppah* in the presence of the *kallah* (see below, *The Giving of the Ring*). In addition, a rider can be added to the *ketubah* that contains the obligations that the bride makes to the groom (see below, *The Ketubah*). If this is done, then the *kinyan* and witnessing (with kosher, male witnesses) of the rider can be done at the *kallah's tisch* as well.

The Bedeken

The *tisch* is followed by the *chatan* walking amidst dancing and singing to the *kallah*, where he performs the act of *bedeken*, or lowering the veil over the *kallah's* face. Couples who would like to make this ceremony more reciprocal, may choose to incor-

porate a parallel act in which the *kallah* places a new *tallit* on the *chatan*.

The Procession

After the *bedeken*, the *chatan* and *kallah* walk with their parents to the *chuppah*. The couple may wish to adopt the practice where the *chatan* leaves the *chuppah*, greets the *kallah* midway down the aisle, and the two of them then walk together to the *chuppah*.

In many Ashkenazic communities, though not all, the common practice today is for the *kallah* to make seven circuits around the *chatan*. This is not practiced at all in Sephardic communities. A couple can choose to forgo these circuits or add circuits of the *chatan* around the *kallah*. Other variations are possible. Recently, I attended a wedding where the *chatan* and *kallah* separately circled the empty space under the *chuppah*, as a way of consecrating it as their space, and then entered the *chuppah* together.

The Giving of the Ring

The act of *kiddushin* consists of the groom giving a ring to the bride in front of witnesses and saying ...הרי את מקודשת לי... Traditionally, the bride's role is limited to silently accepting the ring. The bride who wishes to play more of an active role may do so in a number of ways:

- The *chatan* may address the *kallah* using her name: רבקה, הרי את מקודשת לי... "Rivka, behold you are betrothed to me..." This can have a profound personalizing effect.

- The *chatan* may ask for the bride's permission to perform the *kiddushin*, indicating her participatory role in the *kiddushin*: רבקה, ברשותך וברצונך, "Rivka, with your permission and desire, behold you are betrothed to me..."

- Provided the groom first makes his requisite statement, the bride can respond by verbally accepting the ring,

with language such as, הרניי מקבלת, טבעת זו ומקודשת לך כדת משה וישראל, "Behold I accept this ring and am betrothed unto you, according to the law of Moses and Israel."²

Beyond these relatively minor adjustments to the *kiddushin*, a growing number of couples would like to have an actual exchange of rings. In response to such a query in 1970, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein zt"l ruled that a bride's giving of a ring to the groom would not invalidate the groom's properly executed *kiddushin*, even if done immediately afterwards (*Iggrot Moshe, Even Ha'Ezer*, 3:18). Nevertheless, he held that it was still impermissible to perform such a ceremony. Rabbi Feinstein's primary concern was that to do so would be misrepresentative and mislead people as to what constitutes *halakhic kiddushin*.

As a result of this ruling, rabbis who agree to perform two ring ceremonies insist that the bride give her ring to the groom in a way that makes it clear that it is not part of the *kiddushin*. Thus, the bride will not be allowed to say any *kiddushin*-like language, such as ווארשתיך לי לעולם, "I have betrothed you to me forever," and in most cases rabbis will insist that the ring be given after *sheva berachot*, well after the *kiddushin* has been completed. Some rabbis will allow the ring to be given immediately after the *kiddushin*, but will make a clear declaration beforehand, along the lines of "Now that the *kiddushin* has been completed, Rivkah will give Yitzchak a ring as a symbol of her love and affection."³

I share R. Moshe Feinstein's concerns, and insist on similar parameters. However, this continues to marginalize the bride's giving of the ring. One solution is for the bride and groom to exchange rings after the *sheva berachot* and make mutual statements of love and commitment, in addition to the ring that the groom gives the bride as the act of *kiddushin*.

A more elegant solution is possible. The practice in Sephardic communities and in Jerusalem is for the groom to assume his *ketubah* obligations under the *chuppah*, immediately following the *kiddushin*. This obligation is assumed through an act of *kinyan*, classically performed by the groom taking an object (often a handkerchief or a pen)

from the officiating rabbi in the presence of witnesses. However, since the groom is obligating himself to the bride, it is actually more appropriate that the bride, and not the rabbi, give him the object.⁴ This object can be a ring.

This is how such a ceremony would look: Immediately after the *kiddushin*, the witnesses are called, and it is explained that they are to witness the bride giving a ring to the *chatan*, upon receipt of which the *chatan* will undertake his *ketubah* obligations to the bride. The bride then gives a ring to the groom, stating תקבל טבעת זו ותתחייב לי בכל חיובי כתובה וישראל, "Accept this ring and obligate yourself to me with all the *ketubah* obligations, according to the law of Moses and Israel." The groom accepts the ring, and the witnesses sign the *ketubah*.

Such a ceremony makes it explicit

that the bride is not doing an act of *kiddushin*, but rather initiating the groom's acceptance of the *ketubah* obligations. It allows for the bride's giving of the ring to take place immediately after the *kiddushin*, to be done with significant ceremony (witnesses and the signing of the *ketubah*) and to play a central *halakhic* role. Inasmuch as the institution of the *ketubah* helped make the wife more of a subject within the marriage (see below, *The Ketubah*), using the *ketubah* to create a two ring ceremony is particularly apt and in keeping with the spirit of the *halakha*.

The Ketubah

The *ketubah* is traditionally read between the giving of the ring and the *sheva berachot*. The purpose of this reading is to separate the two halves of the ceremony: the *kiddushin* (formal betrothal) and the *nissuin* (the *chuppah*,



Ketubah, Rome 1836.

Courtesy of the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary.

Sefer Minhagin,
Amsterdam 1662.
Marriage Scene.

Courtesy of the
Library of the Jewish
Theological Seminary.



symbolizing the couple's shared life together). A woman can be honored with the reading of the *ketubah*,⁵ and this has already been done at a number of Orthodox weddings.

In regards to the *ketubah* text there are more issues. In Ashkenazic communities, the *ketubah* is more of a ritual object than an actual contract, and its text is considered relatively fixed. In Sephardic communities, the *ketubah* is a living document whose text has evolved over the years and is more fluid. While it is important not to overly alter the *ketubah* text, some minor adjustments can be made without difficulty.

- Use of mother's names following father's name (e.g., יעקב בן יצחק (ורבקה)). This is a more precise identification, and is no different than the use of family names.

- דהנעלת לה מבי אבוא, "property that she brings in from her father's house" can be replaced with דהנעלת לה מבי אבוא ואמה (that she brings in from her father's and mother's house), דהנעלת לה מדנפשה (that she brings in of her own), or with דהנעלת לה (that she brings in), as appropriate. This is already the practice in Sephardic *ketubot*.

- בתולתא, "virgin". It is currently the practice to use this description for the woman's first wedding, regardless of her personal status. This description

is not essential and may be either be totally eliminated, or replaced with a generic phrase such as לכלה היקרה (to the dear bride)^{6,7}.

Beyond these minor adjustments, there is the possibility of adding additional stipulations prior to the phrase וכך אמר יעקב בן יצחק חתן דן, as is the practice in Sephardic communities. The groom can insert a statement that he will not take a second wife or divorce his wife against her will, in accordance with the ban of Rabbeinu Gershom, with language such as: עוד התחייב לה שלא ישא ולא יקדש שום אשה אחרת עליה בחייה כחרם רגמ"ה.⁸ This space can also be used to insert phrases of mutual love, support, and commitment. Of course, any new language needs to be carefully reviewed by a competent *halakhic* authority.

For couples who are disturbed by the unequal nature of the financial obligations in the *ketubah*, additional modifications are possible. For its time, the *ketubah* was quite progressive, ensuring that the wife was treated as a person and was provided for during and after the marriage. The Rabbis, through the *ketubah*, obligated the husband to pay specific sums if he divorced (or predeceased) her, thus ensuring that a husband did not treat his wife as property, to be disposed of at will.⁹ The *ketubah* also protected the

wife's interests by requiring the husband to provide her with lodging, clothes and food, in exchange for which he is entitled to her earnings. However, these ongoing obligations may be modified, and a marriage contract that speaks of shared earnings and shared financial responsibilities is indeed possible within *halakha*.

The *halakha* states that since the husband's obligations were instituted for the benefit of the woman, the woman is entitled to waive them.¹⁰ If they are waived, the wife would be entitled to her own earnings, and be financially responsible only to herself, and the same would obtain for the husband. They could both then obligate themselves to share their earnings and to share the financial obligations of the household. These stipulations are currently being implemented in Israel, in the context of an external rider to the *ketubah*, with the approval of recognized *poskim* (religious authorities).¹¹ For the sake of preserving the standard *ketubah* text, especially in regards to its basic financial obligations, these stipulations are not being inserted into the *ketubah* text itself. Couples wishing to use such a rider need to review the issue closely with a competent halakhist.

Sheva Berachot

The issue of women reciting *sheva berachot* under the *chuppah* and at the meal has already been discussed in the literature.¹² Whether the language of the *Shulkhan Arukh* (*Even Ha'Ezer* 62:4-5) allows women to make *sheva berachot* is debated. The primary conceptual question is whether these blessings are the obligation of the groom or of the community. If they are the groom's obligation, it is problematic for a woman, who is never obligated in these blessings, to make them on behalf of the groom.¹³ If it is the community's obligation, a woman may be able to make the blessings. It seems clear that *sheva berachot* during the meal are the community's obligation, and there is a good basis to claim that they can be made by women. Rabbi Yehuda Herzl Henkin rules this way in principle,¹⁴ and a number of Orthodox rabbis have begun to allow women to recite

sheva berachot at the meal.

In contrast, the *sheva berachot* under the *chuppah* have greater *halakhic* significance than those at the meal¹⁵ and there is also more reason to believe that these may be the obligation of the groom. These blessings, then, should be made by men. Women can still participate by calling men and women in pairs for each blessing, with the man reciting the Hebrew text and the woman reciting an English translation.^{16,17}

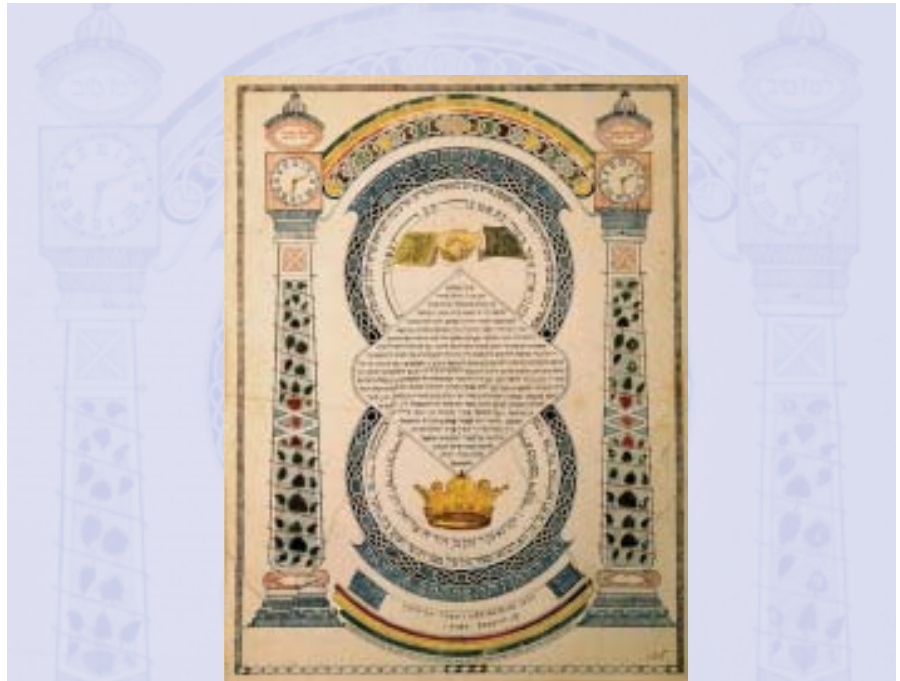
Conclusion

It is my hope that these suggestions will assist couples in creating a wedding ceremony that reflects their view of marriage as an equal partnership. Nevertheless, it is not the intent of this article to suggest that these variations be adopted automatically or that they all be implemented in any one wedding. Each couple should consider any such changes carefully, working with their *msader kiddushin* to address not only the *halakhic* issues, but to determine the proper balance between innovation and tradition as well. ■

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- 1 The prenuptial agreement currently used consists of two parts, the Groom's Obligation and the Binding Arbitration. The Groom's Obligation has to be signed by the groom, and can take place at the *chatan's tisch* or prior to the wedding. The Binding Arbitration has to be signed by both parties. The groom can sign his part prior to the wedding or at the *chatan's tisch*, and the bride can sign her part at her *tisch*. Both documents need to be witnessed and signed, and should be notarized as well.
- 2 See *Kiddushin* 12b, *Shulkhan Arukh, Even Ha'Ezer*, 27:8 and *Otzar Haposkim*, ad. loc. See also הנשואין כהלכתם 7:39, pp. 223-4, where the author indicates that verbal acceptance is preferable to implicit silent acceptance.
- 3 See Joel Wolowlesky, *Women, Jewish Law, and Modernity*, Ktav (New Jersey), 1997, p.68.
- 4 See *Shulkhan Arukh, Hoshen Mishpat*, 195:1.3.
- 5 See Rabbi Yehudah Herzl Henkin, *B'nei Banim*, III:27.
- 6 See the Kolech website, www.kolech.org, for an example of a *ketubah* with the phrase בתולת removed. The Kolech *ketubah* was



Ketubah, New York 1863.

Scribe and artist Zerah Davidsohn.

Courtesy of the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary.

prepared under the direction of Rabbi Eliyahu Knoll.

- 7 It should be noted that the absence of the phrase בתולת may raise questions in the future as to whether this was a first wedding for the bride. This would be a concern if she becomes widowed from this marriage and then wishes to marry a *kohen*. Based on similar considerations, if the woman has been divorced or is a convert, there needs to be some textual indication in the *ketubah* as to her personal status.
- 8 This is already the practice in Sephardic communities and has been integrated into the Kolech *ketubah*.
- 9 See *Ketubot* 11a, and *P'nei Yehoshua* to *Ketubot* 39b. For a full treatment, see Judith Hauptman, *Rereading the Rabbis: A Woman's Voice*, Westview Press (Colorado), 1998, pp. 62-68.
- 10 See *Ketubot* 58b, and *Shulkhan Arukh, Even Ha'Ezer*, 69:4.
- 11 An example of such a rider can be found on the Kolech website, www.kolech.org, where additional clauses are inserted so that it serves also as a prenuptial agreement.
- 12 See Wolowlesky, pp. 66-69 and *B'nei Banim*, III:27.
- 13 It is easier, if not unproblematic, to understand how another man might make a blessing for the groom, since he is at least someone who might become or has already been obligated in its recital (the *halakhic* principles of *mechuyav bedavar* and *misheyatza motzi*). A full discussion of these issues is

beyond the scope of this article.

14 *B'nei Banim* III:27.

15 Based on the principle כלה בלא ברכותיה כנדה אסורה לבעלה כנדה. See, for example, Rashi, *Ketubot* 7b, s.v. *shemiyachal imah*, quoting *Masechet Kallah*, 1:1. See also *Beit Shmuel*, 62:4; Resp. *Noda BiYehuda, Kamna, Even Ha'Ezer* 56; and Resp. *Häichal Yitzchak, Even Ha'Ezer*, 2:28.

16 The English translation would not be considered a *beracha* לבטלה, see *Iggrot Moshe, Orach Hayyim*, II:49.

17 In fact, if a woman recites the Hebrew text and a man the English translation (provided that it is an accurate one), the obligation would still be fulfilled through the man's recitation, as we rule that a blessing made in translation is valid (See *Shulkhan Arukh, Orach Hayyim*, 101:4, 185:1. and 206:3). In this case there still would be a concern that the woman's blessing, if invalid, would be for naught, a *beracha* לבטלה. This, in turn, would hinge on how one understands that *Shulkhan Arukh's* ruling regarding women's qualification to say *sheva berachot*, but there would be fewer issues at stakes.

A Marriage of Equals: In Her Voice

By Deborah Shapira

The traditions of the Jewish wedding ceremony are infused with *halakhic* and symbolic meaning. As my husband, Barry, and I were planning our wedding, we wanted to preserve this meaning, but we were concerned that our personal voices not get lost in the *halakhic* requirements. Because our wedding would be the first moments of our life together, it was essential that the ceremonies mirror the shared values and priorities around which we had agreed to live our life together. Our marriage would be an equal partnership, with close ties to family and community, and we sought ways within *halakhic* bounds to reflect these values in our ceremony.

Finding ways to reflect our commitment to our families was easy. In our *ketubah*, we included our mothers' names in our own Hebrew names. At our *bedeken*, we surrounded ourselves with our family members, and were blessed by all four of our parents, as well as my two grandparents. Barry's uncle officiated at the wedding while his brother chanted the *sheva berachot*, and our seven sets of aunts and uncles read translations of each of the seven blessings.

“The greatest challenge was finding ways to reflect our commitment to equality in our relationship.”

Demonstrating our commitment to our community was a bit more challenging. We took advantage of the many ways to include and honor our male friends by asking them to be witnesses for the *ketubah*, *kiddushin*, and for *yichud*. We had to be more creative, however, in finding ways to honor and include our female friends. We asked one to give a *d'var Torah* under our *chuppah*, and others to sign civil documents that do not require male witnesses. We also asked two women to join our *shomrei yichud*; although the women served no *halakhic* role, we felt that they served an important symbolic one.

The greatest challenge was finding ways to reflect our commitment to equality in our relationship. While the *chatan* has an active role in the rituals of the traditional Jewish wedding, that of the *kallah* is a silent, passive one. Since Barry and I were committed to developing a relationship based on equality and reciprocity, we could not imagine beginning our marriage with a ceremony that was fundamentally unequal. We deviated from tradition in order to be both consistent with *halakha* and to allow our more equal participation in the religious and spiritual aspects of the ceremony.

The day began with both a *kallah's* and a *chatan's tisch*, at which we each gave a *d'var Torah*. The *ketubah* was signed at Barry's *tisch* while our civil wedding contract was brought to both of our *tisches* to be signed. Also at this time, we signed a pre-nuptial agreement indicating that in the event that our marriage dissolves, we each agree to arbitration in a *bet din*

(religious court of three rabbis). While we obviously hope we will never use this document, we believe that all couples should sign it to prevent women from becoming *agunot* ("chained women" whose husbands will not give them a divorce).

At the close of my *tisch*, friends and family escorted first me, then Barry, to a central space for the *bedeken*. We had struggled with traditional interpretations of the reason for a *bedeken*, and so chose to attach new symbolism to this tradition. We used the imagery of "wrapping" as a symbol of the shelter and protection we would give one another, and so after Barry placed the veil over me, I in turn placed a new *tallit* over his shoulders.

Perhaps the part of the wedding with which we struggled the most was *kiddushin*. The wedding ring, which is used to effectuate the marriage, also continues after the wedding to be a powerful symbol of commitment, and we both planned to wear one. Therefore, it felt fundamentally untrue to our beliefs and intentions to have a ceremony in which only one ring was given. Other couples have found creative ways for the *kallah* to give the *chatan* a ring after the *chuppah*, or after the wedding altogether, but because the rings are an ongoing symbol of the marriage, it was important to us to find a way to exchange rings at the same time. Through our research, we learned that *kiddushin* can be accomplished with any object of value, and if we used something other than a ring for *kiddushin*, we would be able to exchange rings afterwards. That exchange of rings was *halakhically* meaningless, but it allowed us to use this powerful symbol in a way that reflected our values.

For *kiddushin*, we chose as our "object of value" a copy of *Masechet Kiddushin*, which symbolized our mutual commitment to Torah learning. Barry's declaration as he handed me the book was a slight variation on the traditional formula: "*Hareh at mekudeshet li b'sefer zeh k'dat Moshe v'Yisrael*" (Behold, you are consecrated to me with this book, according to the law of Moses and Israel). I became a more active partner in the exchange by declaring, "*Hareni mekudeshet lecha b'sefer zeh k'dat Moshe v'Yisrael*" (Behold, I am consecrated to you with this book, according to the law of Moses and Israel). Again, my statement itself did not carry any *halakhic* weight, as my silent acceptance of the book would have been enough to indicate my willing entry into the marriage. Yet, as with other choices we made, we felt that it was an important symbol of our intentions for our relationship and our marriage. By seeking out such compromises, we were able to design a personal wedding ceremony that not only fit the confines of *halakha*, but also reflected who we are as a couple. ■

Deborah Shapira, who was until recently, a teacher at Beit Rabban in New York City, is a full-time mom to a six month old daughter. Barry Stern is a clinical psychologist in private practice in Manhattan and serves on the faculty of the Weill Medical College of Cornell University.

A Marriage of Equals: In His Voice

By Bruce Goldberger

My wife (I'm still getting used to saying that—we got married just two weeks ago!) and I were married in Jerusalem, where Esther's family lives. In the warren of offices at the *Rabbanut*, a world quite different from our own, we suddenly realized that the wedding was not going to completely reflect us—either as individuals or as a couple—and that frankly that was OK. As an architect, Esther had already come to terms with the nonexistence of the simple white room with beautiful views of Jerusalem in which she had dreamed of holding our wedding. Now we were choosing to accept that the *ketubah* provided by the *Rabbanut* followed a certain formula that worked for its ritual purpose, even if we would have worded it differently. We viewed the *ketubah* much like a government-issued marriage license—a necessary document, but not in itself something to which we would draw attention, so we chose not to create an illuminated one.

We held our *aufruf* in New York City, at our longtime congregation, *Kehilat Orach Eliezer* (KOE). For about 18 months, KOE had been studying the issue of having women and men read from a single Torah. Following this intensive process, the community decided to authorize such a "mixed *kriya*" (mixed reading) in a room separate from the main sanctuary, in connection with the celebration of a *simcha*. Esther and I were the first *simcha* celebrants following that decision, and we knew right away that we wanted to have a mixed *kriya*. The *aufruf* was great fun. We both had *aliyot* (honors of "going up" to the Torah), as did my father. Our friends, men and women alike, read the sections of the Torah portion, from different sides of the *mehitzah*, from a Torah that my mother had carried in from the ark in the main sanctuary. I chanted the *Haftarah*. After we rejoined the rest of the congregation, Esther delivered a *d'var Torah* to the entire *shul*.

As the day of our wedding drew nearer, I learned that my preoccupations

with certain elements of weddings made Esther uncomfortable, and we both knew that the wedding was primarily about bringing us joy. Esther's reasoned dislike of various traditional elements of the ceremony was more persuasive than my sentimental attachments to them. Esther did not want to sit on a throne-like chair or be raised on a platform for her *bedeken*. Indeed, she sat for just a few moments before I was danced in from my *tisch*. Esther thought that such a chair would render her passive, whereas she wanted to move around and mix with our guests.

*"The mitzvah of
a wedding is to bring
joy to the
bride and groom."*

Regarding the veil, Esther did not want to wear one, but I wanted her to—not for any particular reason, except perhaps too many movies. In the spirit of compromise, Esther chose to wear a veil that extended slightly below her chin—but only at the *bedeken* (i.e., not for more than 10 minutes) and not while walking down the aisle. We twinned my veiling of Esther with her dressing me in my *kittel* at the *bedeken*, and those two interventions in each other's wedding garments seemed an appropriately mutual way to reflect the uniqueness of the day.

Another traditional element that I wanted included was to be circled by Esther seven times (could it have stemmed from a desire to stand in one place and have the world revolve around me?), but Esther preferred otherwise. We learned that this circling is not *halakhically* necessary and that an alternative *minhag* (custom) was to circle three times instead of seven. To

demonstrate our interdependence, Esther circled me three times flanked by our mothers, and then I did the same to her with our fathers on each arm. The symbolism worked; in marrying, we were synthesizing our lives, which were most fundamentally the result of our parents' unions.

After I broke the glass, Esther presented me with a ring, which Esther's father, who was *misader kiddushin*, underscored was a gift from wife to husband, as we were already married. My new father-in-law noted that the gift from her to me under the *chuppah* was made simply out of affection and did not constitute a *kinyan* (act of acquisition). But we clearly had not thought of my presentation to Esther of her ring during the ceremony as an "acquisition" either, and Esther demonstrated that by verbally accepting the ring when I presented it to her. We were not concerned that I would be unilaterally "acquiring" Esther through marriage—that is simply not who we are—in much the same way that we know women and men are equals despite various distinctions between us in Jewish ritual life.

I think we had such a good time on our wedding day because we kept in mind that the mitzvah of a wedding is to bring joy to the bride and groom, and that there was no bride and groom to whom we wanted to bring joy more than each other. ■

Bruce N. Goldberger is an attorney in Manhattan. He is a member of the New Generations Steering Committee of the New Israel Fund and a member of the Board of the Judaism and Democracy Action Alliance of North America, Inc. Esther Sperber is an architect with DZO Architectures of Brooklyn.

Separation Anxiety: *Mechitzot* at Weddings

By Leebie Mallin

While the discussion of *mechitzot* (partitions between men and women) in the context of synagogues is familiar, a less frequently discussed question is whether a *mechitzah* is necessary at a wedding, specifically during the ceremony and reception.¹

The talmudic origins of *mechitzah* are found in Tractates *Middot* and *Sukkah*. These sources explain that a balcony was constructed in the Temple during *simchat beit hasho'evah*, the water drawing ceremony, held during the interim days of *Sukkot*. The purpose of the *mechitzah* was to prevent mixing between men and women and frivolity.² The gemara in *Sukkah* explains that despite the prohibition against changing the structure of the Temple, there is a source in Prophets (*Zechariah*, 12:12) for the addition of the balcony. In *Zechariah's* portrayal of mourning at the end of days, the men and women mourn separately. The gemara turns this verse into a source for *mechitzah*, by interpreting it as follows: "If in the future when they will be engaged in mourning and the evil inclination will have no power over them, the Torah nevertheless says, men separately and women separately, how much more so now when they are engaged in rejoicing and the evil inclination has sway over them."

Many rabbinic authorities debate the legal status of *mechitzah*, in general. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, for example, argues it is a Torah law³ while Rabbi Yehuda Henkin says it is a rabbinic enactment.⁴ There is also a difference of opinion over the scope of the law of *mechitzah*. Where is a *mechitzah* required? Only in the Temple? In the synagogue? At all public events? This discussion of the scope of *mechitzah* is most relevant to the question of *mechitzot* at weddings.⁵

According to Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, a *mechitzah* is required at synagogues as well as at mandatory public gatherings. Rabbi Feinstein bolsters this claim by pointing out that the proof text in the Talmud for *mechitzah* comes from a description of eulogizing during a time of mourning, which he considers a mandatory public occasion. In contrast, Rabbi Feinstein categorizes the wedding as an optional public assembly

and does not think a *mechitzah* is necessary. Since he does not distinguish between the ceremony and the reception, one can presume that he equates them and holds that a *mechitzah* is not required at either. Rabbi Feinstein finds talmudic support for mixed seating in the common practice of families eating the *Korban Pesach* (Passover Sacrifice) together in order to minimize leftovers, which would have to be burned. He assumes there was no *mechitzah* at these meals since the Passover sacrifice had to be eaten as a group, and a *mechitzah* would constitute a barrier between people in a single group.⁶

Rabbi Yehudah Henkin argues that the *mechitzah* requirement is confined to prayer. Therefore, it would seem that a *mechitzah* would not be necessary during a wedding ceremony or reception.⁷ Likewise, Rabbi Moshe Sofer, the *Chatam Sofer*, points out that *mechitzah* is only required during communication with God that requires intent, such as prayer or eulogizing at a funeral.⁸ Based on this definition it seems no *mechitzah* is necessary at a wedding reception or even at the ceremony, an event that requires intent only for those directly involved—the bride, the groom, the officiant and those reciting the seven blessings—but not those in the audience. A *mechitzah* under the *chuppah* between the bride and the groom would clearly interfere with the ceremony, so would not be necessary.

On the other hand, there is an argument to be made that a *mechitzah* is required at a wedding. The concern in Tractate *Sukkah* is to prevent frivolity at a joyous celebration. It seems that a wedding reception is just such an occasion. Rashi comments that weddings involve drunkenness and frivolity.⁹ Based on a similar understanding of weddings, Rabbi Judah HaChasid in *Sefer Chasidim* argues that one should not recite the special wedding blessing *shehasimchah bi-m'ono* (that there is joy in His abode) if men and women are sitting together.¹⁰ Based on *Sefer Chasidim*, many later authorities, including Rabbi Joel Sirkes (the *Bach*), say if men and women are sitting together the above blessing is omitted.¹¹

Rabbi Mordechai Jaffee (the *Levush*), however, qualifies this prohibition of mixed seating. He explains that in his time the special wedding blessing was recited when men and women were seated together, since men were accustomed to seeing women, and thus no sinful thoughts should occur in such a situation.¹² This reasoning seems to be equally relevant in the modern Orthodox Jewish world, where interaction between men and women is commonplace.

Since the talmudic source for *mechitzah* is the festive occasion of the water drawing ceremony, there is ample reason to rely on those who distinguish between the requirement at this particular occasion and other occasions such as weddings. Along these same lines, mixed seating should also be allowed. This is an especially compelling point in light of the many social inhibitions that arise from the Orthodox community's value of modesty. ■

Leebie Mallin is in her second year of Drisha's Scholars Circle. She holds a B.A. in Political Science from Stern College, an M.A. in Political Science from Columbia and an M.A. in Jewish History from Yeshiva University's Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies.

1 The distinction between *mechitzah*, a divider separating men and women, and separation, men on one side and women on another without a divider, is significant. For instance one could foresee an opinion requiring separation between the sexes without a *mechitzah*. Many of the sources explored in this article are ambiguous in terms of this distinction. Therefore, it cannot be definitively stated how one commenting on *mechitzah* views the issue of separation.

2 Mishna *Middot* 2:5; Mishna *Sukkah* 5:2; Babylonian Talmud *Sukkah* 51b-52a.

3 *Iggrot Moshe, Orah Hayyim*, 39 and 41.

4 *B'nei Banim*, 1, 3 and 4.

5 For a comprehensive discussion of the specific topic of mixed seating at weddings see Rabbi Eli D. Clark, "Mixed Seating At Weddings," *Journal of Halacha and Contemporary Society*, Number XXXV Spring 1998/Pesach 5758; pp. 28-61.

6 *Iggrot Moshe, Orah Hayyim*, 39 and 41.

7 *B'nei Banim*, 1, 3, and 4.

8 *Chatam Sofer*, 1:190.

9 *Sukkah* 25b.

10 *Sefer Chasidim*, no. 393.

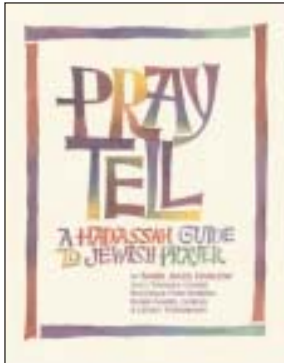
11 *Bach, Even Ha'Ezer* 62.

12 *Levush ha-Chur, Minhagim*, no. 36.

BookCorner

Pray Tell: A Hadassah Guide to Jewish Prayer

By Rabbi Jules Harlow with Tamara Cohen, Rochelle Furstenberg,
Rabbi Daniel Gordis and Leora Tanenbaum
Jewish Lights Publishing 2003 Quality Paperback Original \$29.95

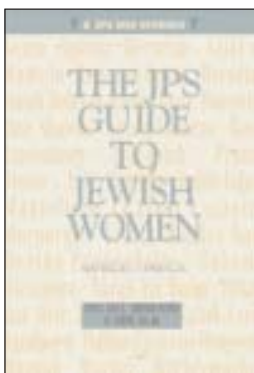


This book is a rich resource on Jewish prayer using traditional and contemporary perspectives. It contains insightful analyses of the meaning of prayer services with fascinating commentaries on individual prayers. Particularly relevant are a wide-ranging chapter on Women's Spiritual Alternatives and another on Orthodox Women's Private Prayers that covers traditional *tehines*, contemporary prayers of

Orthodox women and songs of Sephardic women in Ladino. A chapter by Rochelle Furstenberg approaches Israeli poetry as prayer. The discussion on recent developments includes mention of services at Drisha in New York and Shira Chadasha in Jerusalem.

The J.P.S. Guide to Jewish Women 600 B.C.E-1900 C.E.

By Emily Taitz, Sondra Henry and Cheryl Tallen
Jewish Publication Society 2003 paperback \$25



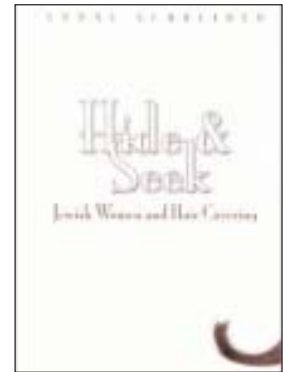
Orthodox Jewish feminists of today are enriched by knowledge of our foremothers. There is much new research that is a window into the lives of women of the past. This volume is a wonderful introduction and source book covering many historical periods from the Ancient Near East until 1900. It both gives biographic entries of individual women and describes women's interests and activities in each period. It is an easy to use one

volume reference book with a host of fascinating detail and illustrations with extracts from primary documents like letters, wills, diaries and eulogies, as well as extensive notes and bibliography for further reading.

Hide and Seek: Jewish Women and Hair Covering

Edited by Lynne Schreiber
Urim Publications 2003 \$24.95

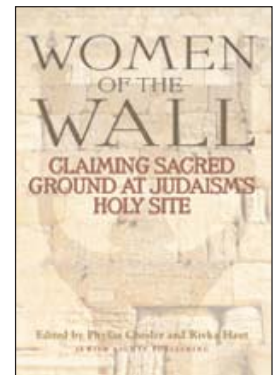
This collection of essays about Jewish women and head-covering ranges from *Halakhic* essays to personal reflections from women who find genuine spiritual and emotional rewards in covering their hair and from those who explain their difficulties in doing so. There is discussion of the different ways of covering hair, and contributions by women who are divorced and widowed. A piece by Erica Brown on Orthodox women who choose not to cover their hair, explores the relationships of head covering to issues not only of *Halakha* and modesty but of politics and social identity.



Women of the Wall: Claiming Sacred Ground at Judaism's Holy Site

Edited by Phyllis Chesler and Rivka Haut
Jewish Lights Publishing, Woodstock, Vermont, 2003 \$34.95

A recent ruling of the Israeli Supreme Court found that the Women of the Wall could not pray collectively at the *Kotel* (Western Wall). A panel of the Court had ruled in 2000 that they could pray together and read from the Torah at this historic site but the permission was reversed when the full court reconsidered this matter. This is the latest episode in the controversial drama that began in 1988 when a group of women from different Jewish backgrounds chose to pray communally at the *Kotel*. This volume is a collection of articles by women involved in this issue, with personal accounts and *Halakhic*, legal and political interpretations. Included are pieces by JOFA veterans Rivka Haut (co-editor of the book), Norma Baumel Joseph and Susan Aranoff. As the introduction says this volume is "our way of presenting ourselves to the world as we really are."



Reading the *Ketubah* By Ilana Blumberg

In our wedding photographs, Ori is wearing a top hat precisely like the one his grandfather wore at his wedding in the early thirties and my veil is as thick and heavy as any old fashioned one. Our *chuppah* is a *tallit*. Some of the images, especially those in black and white, are impossible to date and even to place: Eastern Europe? This century? Last? A wedding is as ancient a ceremony as we have and even the more modern accouterments, like the white dress (that became popular after Queen Victoria wore one), already appear to us as elements of longstanding tradition. Yet our wedding photographs also record a break with tradition, or at least, a serious reconfiguration: next to the rabbi, a woman stands reading the *ketubah*.

In one of my favorite pictures, the photographer's lens catches the rabbi looking over the shoulder of Dr. Devora Steinmetz as she reads the tra-

ditional text of the *ketubah* in its complicated Aramaic rhythms and rhymes; its insertions of particulars within the ready script, "*B'shishah l'Tamuz*," "*ha-chatan Ori Hanan, ha-kallah Ilana Miryam*;" the odd interruption of English words and sounds, "*Kan B'New York, m'dinat America*"; and the final, exquisitely simple, three crowning words, "*Ha-kol sharir v'kayam*," "everything is fit and established"...through the testimony of our witnesses, the names of friends we have chosen to honor, who honor us with their participation. Devora reads the *ketubah* flawlessly, and I find it extraordinary that this ancient formula now applies to me, to Ori, and to our marriage. When I look later at the photos, and particularly the one where the rabbi is "overseeing" the reading, I notice what I barely was aware of at the time. My niece, Jessica, my brother's four-year-old daughter, is holding my hand and look-

ing up at Devora and the rabbi. It strikes me now that I had asked Devora to read our *ketubah* because of the work we did together at Beit Rabban and Drisha, the opportunity she gave me to begin teaching young children texts that they would grow with over the years, so long as their interest could be sustained by a rigorous and compelling enough approach. I remember how she taught herself the *trop*, the melodies of the public reading of the Torah, so that when she began to study *B'rashit* with the second-graders, she could also teach them to sing it, since everyone knows that what children learn by heart, they carry with them in an entirely different way throughout their lives. Now I teach in a variety of places but I learned a great deal of what I know from watching Devora teach and talk to students, from listening to her spoken and unspoken advice, and from reading her own book on Genesis.

This photo that includes me, Ori, Jessica, the rabbi (who permitted a woman to read the *ketubah*, but was nonetheless a bit unsure of the newness of it all when the moment actually came), and Devora reading the *ketubah* surrounded by our families under the *chuppah*, is one that I return to often. None of my grandparents was able to be at my wedding on the Lower East Side, a neighborhood that each of them moved through at one point. I like to think of the features that would have been so familiar to them, as well as what would have been unfamiliar, but may yet, among my niece's generation, grow to be less so. ■



Wedding of
Ilana Blumberg and
Ori Weisberg.

Photo: Jamie Watts.

Dr. Ilana Blumberg is a visiting assistant professor of English at the University of Michigan. In the fall, she will be teaching a course on "Women and the Bible" for the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies at U of M. Dr. Devora Steinmetz is the founder of the Beit Rabban Center for Research and Education and Assistant Professor of Talmud and Rabbinics at the Jewish Theological Seminary.

Wedding Glossary

Aufruf: *Yiddish.* Traditional ceremony where the groom is called up to the Torah in synagogue on the Shabbat before the wedding. It is becoming increasingly common for the bride to have an *aufruf* as well, in a women's tefillah group.

Bedeken: *Yiddish.* Ceremony where the groom lowers the bride's veil over her face.

Tisch: *Yiddish.* Literally means table. Traditionally, a *Chatan's Tisch* is where guests are invited to sing and rejoice with the groom. It is here that the *ketubah* (marriage contract) is formally completed and signed by two *eidim* (witnesses). In the last few years, a *Kallah's Tisch* has become a more common addition, where songs are sung to the bride, words of Torah are spoken and civil documents are signed.

T'naim: Literally means conditions. In actuality, it is a contract that delineates the obligations of each side regarding the wedding and when it will take place. This tradition dates back to the time when marriages were pre-arranged, often many years before the actual wedding. Now it is usually signed immediately before the wedding ceremony.

Chuppah: Wedding canopy.

M'sader Kiddushin: Officiating Rabbi of the wedding ceremony.

Kiddushin: The first part of the ceremony. It consists of the first two blessings that are recited under the *chuppah* and the act of betrothal.

Nissuin: The second part of the ceremony consisting of the seven nuptial blessings, or *sheva berachot*.

Sheva Berachot: Seven nuptial blessings recited under the *chuppah* and at the end of the wedding meal, as well as during the first week of marriage.

Yichud: Privacy. Following the ceremony, the bride and groom retire to a room to share the intimacy of the first moments of their married life together. Two witnesses, or *shomrim*, who stand guard at the door, ensure this privacy.

New & Noteworthy

Please submit information for this column by mail:
Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance 15 East 26th Street, Suite 915, New York NY 10010,
Fax 212-679-7428, or email jofa@rcn.com

ISRAEL

Kolech Conference

The third international conference of Kolech—the Religious Women's Forum in Israel—will take place in Jerusalem on Tuesday and Wednesday, July 1-2, 2003 at *Binyanei Ha'ooma*. The subject of the conference is "To Be a Jewish Woman." While the official language of the conference is Hebrew, plenary sessions and some parallel sessions will have simultaneous translation into English. Carol Newman, President of JOFA and another JOFA member will share a discussion panel with two Israeli members of Kolech. For further information and registration check the Kolech web site, www.kolech.org or contact adi@gonen-ganani.co.il. ■

A Significant Appointment

In December 2002, Sharon Shenhav was elected by the

Israeli Bar Association to be one of its two representatives to the government Commission on Appointment of Dayanim. Sharon's election was preceded by a major lobbying effort by a coalition of 25 Women's Organizations in Israel committed to solving the problem of *agunot*, known as ICAR (International Coalition for Agunah Rights). Sharon is the only woman on the 10 person commission, and her election was an important precedent for the empowerment of women to influence the appointment of *dayanim* in Israel. ■

NEW YORK, NY

JOFA is presenting a film festival in conjunction with the JCC of the Upper West Side on November 6, 2003. The movie is the acclaimed Israeli film "Tehorah," by director Anat Zuria. The film, which focuses on the subject of *Mikvah* and family purity through the experiences of three very different women, will be shown at the JCC and will be followed by a panel discussion. ■

Mission Statement of the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance

The Alliance's mission is to expand the spiritual, ritual, intellectual, and political opportunities for women within the framework of *halakha*. We advocate meaningful participation and equality for women in family life, synagogues, houses of learning, and Jewish communal organizations to the full extent possible within *halakha*. Our commitment is rooted in the belief that fulfilling this mission will enrich and uplift individual and communal life for all Jews.

Yes! I want to support JOFA's work in expanding the spiritual, ritual, intellectual and communal opportunities for Orthodox women within the framework of *halakha*.

Enclosed is my gift of: \$1,000 \$500 \$100 \$50 Other \$ _____

\$360 or more includes Life Membership \$36 or more includes Annual Membership

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