**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

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

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**LIFECYCLES – HILKHOT ISHUT**

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**Shiur #19: Laws of the Wedding (9)**

**Customs and Laws of the Wedding**

**Introduction**

**Last week, we discussed the *kiddushin* performed under the *chuppa*. We noted that although there are three methods through which one may betroth a woman (*Kiddushin* 2a), it is customary to** perform the *kiddushin* through *kiddushei kesef* (Rambam, *Hilkhot Ishut* 3:21), and more specifically through giving the *kalla* a ring, which “is a constant commemoration on her hand” (*Sefer Ha-Chinukh* 592). We learned that it is customary to use a gold ring for *kiddushin* (*Mordekhai*, *Kiddushin* 488), without a stone or inscription (see *Shulchan Arukh*, EA 31:2). Furthermore, the *mesader kiddushin* asks the witnesses under *chuppa* if the ring is worth a *peruta* (*Rema* 31:2), and should ensure that the *chatan* fully acquires the ring (see *Beit Shmuel* 28:49).

We also noted that numerous *Rishonim* (see *Sefer Ha-Manhig*, *Hilkhot Eirusin*, *Maharam Mintz* 109; see *Shulchan Arukh* and *Rema* 27:1) write that it is customary to say, before giving the ring to the *kalla*, “*harei at mekudeshet li be-taba’at zo ke-dat Moshe ve-Yisrael.*” The *chatan* then takes the ring in his right hand (unless he is left-handed) and places it on the *kalla’s* index finger of her right hand (see *Rokeach* 351), as the right hand symbolizes love (*Tikunei Zohar* 21). Finally, we discussed whether the *kalla* may give the *chatan* a ring under the *chuppa* (see *Iggerot Moshe*, EA 3:25; see also 4:13).

This week, we will discuss the custom of wearing a *tallit* and the possibility of reciting the *Shehechiyanu* blessing under the *chuppa*.

**Spreading a *Tallit* over the *Chatan* and *Kalla***

There is an ancient practice, preserved by some German and Sephardic communities, to use a *tallit* as a *chuppa*. More specifically, the *chatan* covers his wife with his *tallit* during the wedding ceremony. Some trace this practice to the Biblical description of the betrothal of Rivka to Yitzchak:

And Rivka lifted her eyes and saw Isaac, and she let herself down from the camel. And she said to the servant, "Who is that man walking in the field towards us?" And the servant said, "He is my master." And she took the veil and covered herself. (*Bereishit* 24:64-65)

The *Tashbetz* (461; see also *Maharil*, *Hilkhot Nisu’in*, p. 466) explains that the practice of covering the *chatan* and *kalla* during the *birkat eirusin* is derived from the verse, “and she took the veil and covered herself.”

Others point to the laws of the marital designation (*yi’ud*) of a Jewish maidservant (*ama ivriya*):

“*Be-vigdo vah*” means that once her master has spread his garment over her, the father may no longer sell her. (*Kiddushin* 18a)

Numerous *Rishonim*, including the *Orchot Chaim* (vol. 2, pp. 64-65; see also *Kolbo* 75), explain that spreading his garment over the *kalla* constitutes the *chuppa*.

Others refer to Ruth’s statement to Boaz:

“I am Ruth, your handmaid, and you shall spread your skirt over your handmaid, for you are a near kinsman.” (Ruth 3:9; see Rashi ibid.)

The *Rokeach* (353), for example, writes that this is the source of the custom tospread the *tallit* over the *chatan* and *kalla.* This is echoed by other *Rishonim* and *Acharonim* as well (see *Abudraham HaShalem*, p. 357; *Derisha*, EH 61; *Ha’amek Davar*, *Devarim* 23:1).

This practice was observed throughout Ashkenaz, and it appears in recent Sephardic halakhic literature as well (see *Ben Ish Chai*, year 1, *Shoftim*; see also *Sefer Ha-Mifkad*, vol. 1, 2b; *Birkei Yosef*, OC 8:5).

The common custom of holding the wedding ceremony under a canopy consisting of four poles and a *tallit* or other cloth is first mentioned by the *Rema* (EH 55) and contemporary Polish *Acharonim* (see *Taz*, EH 62:7; *Mas’at Binyamin* 90; *Bach* EH 62:1). Nowadays, while some communities still adhere to the custom described above, in most places the wedding is held under a canopy.

**Wearing a *Tallit* and Reciting the *Birkat Shehechiyanu***

R. David ben Shimon (1826-1879), in a book dedicated to the special traditions of the land of Israel, *Sefer Ha-Mifkad* (ibid.), mentions the custom of reciting the *Shehechiyanu* blessing over a new *tallit* during the *chuppa*:

For those who understand and [for] those who fear God in Egypt, they make a new *tallit* for the *chatan*, and during the *chuppa*, when it is held above the head of the *kalla*, he says the *Shehechiyanu* blessing … and he fulfills the *birkat shehechiyanu* blessing, which would be appropriate to say during the *chuppa* over the *mitzva* of *peru u-revu* (be fruitful and multiply).

This custom, which originated in Egypt among “those who understand and those who fear God,” spread to other Sephardic communities, and in recent years to many Ashkenazim as well.

Wearing a new *tallit* under the *chuppa* enables the *chatan* to say the *Birkat Shehechiyanu*, indirectly, over the *mitzva* of *peru u-revu*. This practice raises a fascinating question: Why isn’t the *Shehechiyanu* blessing said on the wedding itself? Indeed, R. Yosef Colon (1420–1480), known as the *Maharik*, remarked that just as we must understand why *Shehechiyanu* is not recited over *bedikat chametz*, “we must reconcile the custom not to say the [*Shehechiyanu*] blessing over the betrothing of a woman or her marriage” (*Maharik* 128).

Similarly, the *Shakh* (YD 25:5) asks why *Shehechiyanu* is not recited over a wedding ceremony. He notes that there are different opinions regarding when the *Shehechiyanu* blessing is recited. *Tosafot* (*Sukka* 46a, s.v. *ha-oseh*) claims that it is only recited upon performing *mitzvot* that entail *simcha*, such as *sukkah* and *lulav*. Rambam (*Hilkhot Berakhot* 11:9) writes that *Shehechiyanu* is recited over a *mitzva* that is performed from time to time or which does not occur often (such as *brit mila* and *pidyon ha-ben*), and over a *mitzva* that one “owns,” such as new *tefillin* and *tzitzit*. The *Ran* (*Sukka* 22a, s.v. *ve-katvu*) limits this blessing to time-related *mitzvot* (and not to a new pair of *tefillin*).

While the *Rema* (YD 28:2) rules in accordance with the Rambam and therefore writes that one who fulfills the *mitzva* of *kisuy ha-dam* for the first time should say the *Shehechiyanu* blessing, as one does at a *brit mila* or *pidyon ha-ben*, the *Shakh* rules like the *Ran* that *Shehechiyanu* is only said over *mitzvot* fulfilled on fixed occasions. Therefore, like the *Maharik*, the *Shakh* writes that the *Shehchiyanu* blessing is not said for a wedding, as it is not related to a specific time.

While the according to the *Ran*, *Shehechiyanu* should not be said at a wedding, it seems that *Tosafot* and *Rambam* would permit the recitation of *Shehechiyanu* at a wedding. Furthermore, just as one says *Shehechiyanu* upon acquiring new clothing or a new house, marriage should certainly justify reciting the *Shehechiyanu* blessing. (See *Rokeach* 371, who raises this question.) Some further question why the *chatan* and *kalla* do not say the *HaTov Ve-HaMeitiv* blessing, and others question why the *kalla* doesn’t say the blessing upon receiving the *kiddushin* ring.

R. Yaakov Emden (cited in *Pitchei Teshuva*, EH 63:6) rules that the *chatan* should indeed say *Shehechiyanu* during the wedding ceremony. Most *Acharonim* disagree, however.

R. Shlomo Eiger (*Gilyon Meharsha*, YD 28:5) explains that the *kiddushin* is only a “*hekhsher mitzva*,” a necessary preparation for the *mitzva* of *peru u-revu*, and a blessing is not recited on a *hekhsher mitzva*. (This answer, of course, demands a thorough analysis of the relationship between *kiddushin* and *nisu’in*, which we discussed in a previous *shiur*.) Alternatively, the *Tevu’at Shor* (28:4) writes that since the *mitzva* of *kiddushin* is dependent upon the action of another person – i.e. whether the woman will accept *kessef kiddushin* – *Birkat Shehechiyanu* us not said over the *kiddushin*, just as a *birkat ha-mitzva* is not said when the *mitzva* is dependent upon others (such as in the case of the *mitzva* of *tzedaka).*

We might offer other answers to this interesting and difficult question. In the context of the laws of *birkat ha-nehenin* and *birkat ha-rei’ach*, we find the principle that it is preferable to say a more specific *berakha* and not a general *berakha*. Regarding *kiddushin*, since the Rabbis already instituted specific blessings formulated especially for *kiddushin*, including the *birkat ha-eirusin* and the *sheva berakhot*, the *shehechiyanu* blessing is superfluous and therefore not to be said. Alternatively, we might argue that the *Shehechiyanu* blessing may only said upon fulfilling and completing a *mitzva*, and *kiddushin* is only the first stage of a larger, ongoing *mitzva*, which includes *nisu’in*, *sheva berakhot*, *peru u-revu*, etc. *Shehechiyanu* cannot possibly be said on the very beginning of the process. (In this view, *kiddushin* is not merely a *hekhsher mitzva*; it is the first stage in the *mitzva*. This view is beyond the scope of the present *shiur.*)

Next week, we will discuss the reading of the *ketuba* and the *sheva berakhot*.