**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

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

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**LIFECYCLES – HILKHOT ISHUT**

**Rav David Brofsky**

**Introduction to Hilkhot Ishut, year 2:**

**Laws of the Wedding**

**Customs and Laws of the Wedding**

**Introduction**

 **Last year, we studied the laws of *ishut*. At first, our *shiurim* focused on two topics, which can be found at the attached hyperlinks, marriage and prohibited sexual relations (**[marriage1](http://etzion.org.il/en/marriage-and-prohibited-sexual-relations)**), and the components of a halakhic marriage (**[marriage 2](http://etzion.org.il/en/components-halakhic-marriage)**). Afterwards, we dedicated a number of *shiurim* to the practical halakhot of the marriage ceremony. This week, we will review the topics discussed last semester, including the proper time for a wedding, the Shabbat before the wedding, fasting and special prayers said on the day of the wedding, the *ketuba*, the *badeken*, and the preparations leading up to the ceremony itself, such as choosing the *mesader kiddushin*, the wedding procession, circling the *chatan* and standing under the *chuppa*. Next week, we will begin our study of the act of *kiddushin*.**

**The Proper Time for a Wedding**

In the times of the Mishna and Talmud, the kiddushin and nisu’in were performed separately, often very far apart ([*Ketubot* 7b](https://www.sefaria.org/Ketubot.7b?lang=he-en), 57a etc.). Since at least the Middle Ages, it has been customary to perform both ceremonies on the same day (Tur, [EH 62](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh%2C_Even_HaEzer.62?lang=he-en); Beit Yosef and Darkhei Moshe, [EH 34:5](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh%2C_Even_HaEzer.34.5?lang=he-en)). Some early Acharonim record communal takanot mandating this practice (Tashbetz 1:133; Radbaz 1:382, etc.), and even discuss whether kiddushin performed separately from nisu’in should be deemed invalid.

There are certain days upon which it is prohibited or improper to perform a wedding.

The Rishonim discuss whether it is improper to hold a wedding on Erev Shabbat or Erev Yom Tov, lest the wedding preparations and festivities lead to chillul Shabbat. While some discourage this practice (see [Rambam, *Hilkhot Ishut* 10:14](https://www.sefaria.org/Mishneh_Torah%2C_Marriage.10.14?lang=he-en)), others permit performing a wedding on Friday. Indeed, it was apparently common in many communities to hold weddings on Friday afternoons and to merge the Friday night meal with the wedding meal (see Shulchan Arukh, [EH 64:3](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh%2C_Even_HaEzer.64.3?lang=he-en)). This was very helpful for those who were unable to afford a separate wedding meal (see Ra’avia cited in Hagahot Maimoniot, Hilkhot Ishut 10:40; Darkhei Moshe [EH 64:4](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh%2C_Even_HaEzer.64.4?lang=he-en)). Later authorities discouraged holding weddings on Friday, and certainly on Friday afternoon, to prevent chillul Shabbat (see [*Mishna Berura* 339:19](https://www.sefaria.org/Mishnah_Berurah.339.19?lang=he-en) and Arukh Ha-Shulchan, [EH 64:11](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh%2C_Even_HaEzer.64.11?lang=he-en)). This concern would seem to apply on Motzaei Shabbat as well (see Arukh Ha-Shulchan, [EH 64:11](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh%2C_Even_HaEzer.64.11?lang=he-en)).

The Talmud prohibits performing kiddushin on Shabbat ([*Beitza* 36b](https://www.sefaria.org/Beitzah.36b?lang=he-en); see also Shulchan Arukh, OC 339:4, 524:1, [EH 64:5](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh%2C_Even_HaEzer.64.5?lang=he-en); [*Magen Avraham* 339:4](https://www.sefaria.org/Magen_Avraham.339.4?lang=he-en).). Interestingly, R. Moshe Isserlis discusses possible exceptions to this law and relates how he personally officiated at such a ceremony (Shu”t Rema125; Rema, OC 339:4; see also Taz 64:1).

The Talmud ([*Moed Katan* 8b](https://www.sefaria.org/Moed_Katan.8b?lang=he-en)) prohibits performing weddings during Chol Ha-Moed. The Talmud mentions a number of reasons for this prohibition:

R. Yehuda said that Shmuel said, and R. Elazar said that R. Oshaya said, and some say that R. Elazar said that R. Chanina said: The reason that one may not get married on the intermediate days of a Festival is because one may not mix one joy with another joy (ein me’arvin simcha be-simcha).

Rabba bar R. Huna said: The reason is because he forsakes the rejoicing of the Festival and occupies himself with rejoicing with his wife. Abaye said to R. Yosef: This statement of Rabba bar R. Huna is actually a statement of Rav, as R. Daniel bar Ketina said that Rav said: From where is it derived that one may not marry a woman on the intermediate days of a Festival? As it is stated: “And you shall rejoice in your Festival” ([*Devarim* 16:14](https://www.sefaria.org/Deuteronomy.16.14?lang=he-en)). This verse emphasizes that you must rejoice in your Festival and not in your wife.

Ulla said: The reason one may not marry on the intermediate days of a Festival is due to the excessive exertion [that the wedding preparations demand, which is prohibited during the Festival].

R. Yitzchak Napcha said: The reason is due to the neglect of the mitzva to be fruitful and multiply. [If it were permissible to get married during the intermediate days of a Festival, people would delay getting married until then in order to save money by avoiding the necessity of preparing separate feasts for the Festival and for the wedding. In the meantime they would neglect the mitzva of procreation.]

Regarding the reason of ein me’arvin simcha be-simcha, the Talmud teaches:

With regard to the principle that one may not mix one joy with another joy, from where do we derive it? As it is written [with regard to the dedication of the Temple]: “So Solomon held the feast at that time, and all Israel with him, a great congregation, from the entrance of Chamat to the Brook of Egypt, before the Lord our God, seven days and seven days, fourteen days” (Melakhim I 8:65). And if it is so that one may in fact mix one joy with another joy, he should have waited until the festival [of Sukkot], and made a feast of seven days for this and for that [i.e., for the dedication of the Temple and for the festival of Sukkot together].

The Shulchan Arukh (OC 546:1 and [EH 64:6](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh%2C_Even_HaEzer.64.6?lang=he-en)) rules accordingly.

However, one may hold a wedding on other festive days, such as Rosh Chodesh (Rema OC 573:1), Chanuka (ibid.), and Purim (Shulchan Arukh 696:8; see [*Magen Avraham* 18](https://www.sefaria.org/Magen_Avraham.18?lang=he-en)), and on the day after Pesach, Shavuot, or Sukkot, known as issru chag ([*Mishna Berura* 573:7](https://www.sefaria.org/Mishnah_Berurah.573.7?lang=he-en)).

Weddings are not performed during part of the period of the Omer. The Geonim (Sha’arei Teshuva 278) cite an ancient custom of observing certain mourning customs during the period of the Omer:

You should know that this does not stem from a prohibition, but from a mourning custom, for so said our Sages: R. Akiva had 12,000 pairs of disciples and they all died between Pesach and Atzeret [Shavuot] because they did not treat each other with respect; and they further taught: And they all died a cruel death from diphtheria ([*Yevamot* 62b](https://www.sefaria.org/Yevamot.62b?lang=he-en)). And from that time forward, the early Sages had the custom not to marry during these days, but he who “jumps forward” and marries, we do not punish him by punishment or lashes, but if he comes to ask before the fact, we do not instruct him to marry.

In the Middle Ages, the Rishonim attributed other reasons to these mourning practices. Some ascribe the mourning practices to the precarious state of the Jewish People during this period, as they pray that God judges the world favorably (see Avudraham; Rabbeinu Yerucham, Toledot Adam Ve-Chava 1:5). Thus, these practices are intended to arouse teshuva, and not necessarily as an expression of mourning. Others relate these minhagei aveilut to the destruction of the flourishing Jewish communities of France and Germany during the Crusades (11th and 12th centuries). The Sefer Assufot (13th century Germany), for example, records that “people do not marry between Pesach and Atzeret; this is because of the pain of the decrees, that communities were killed in this entire kingdom.” The Taz (493:2) and the Arukh Ha-Shulchan (493) cite this reason as well. Similarly, R. Yaakov Emden (1697-1776) writes in his Siddur Beit Yaakov: “R. Akiva's students died and, due to our many sins, a number of communities were destroyed at the same time of year during the Crusades in Ashkenaz and in 5408 in Poland." The latter refers to the Chmielnicki massacres, which took place in the spring of 1648.

There are different customs regarding when to observe the mourning practices and when weddings are not held. We will mention the most common customs.

Some observe the mourning practices for the entire period of the Omer. The Sha’arei Teshuva (493:8) reports that the Ari z”l would not take a haircut for the entire period of the Omer, until Erev Shavuot. This custom is based on the simple understanding of the Talmud’s description of the death of the students of R. Akiva, “from Pesach until Atzeret.” Similarly, the [*Mishna Berura* (15)](https://www.sefaria.org/Mishnah_Berurah.15?lang=he-en) relates that some observe these minhagei aveilut for the entire period of the Omer, excluding Rosh Chodesh Iyar, Lag Ba-Omer, and from Rosh Chodesh Sivan until Shavuot.

Others observe the mourning practices from Pesach until Lag Ba-Omer. There are, however, different variations of this practice. Sephardic practice is generally to refrain from performing weddings until the 34th day of the Omer, while Ashkenazic practice is to end the mourning practices on the morning of the 33rd day, Lag Ba-Omer itself (Shulchan Arukh, OC 493:1-2).

Regarding the night of Lag Ba-Omer, Eliya Rabba (493:7) writes that although one may act leniently regarding haircuts on the night of Lag Ba-Omer, he has not seen that people permit holding a wedding on the evening of Lag Ba-Omer. He concludes that on Erev Shabbat, in extenuating circumstances, one would be permitted to be married at night of Lag Ba-Omer (i.e. Thursday night). R. Moshe Feinstein (Iggerot Moshe, [*Orach Chaim* 1:159](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh%2C_Orach_Chayim.1.159?lang=he-en)) argues the opposite: while one should be stringent and not apply the principle of miktzat ha-yom ke-kulo at night regarding shaving, one may apply it for marriage, as marriage is a mitzva. Some Acharonim endorse relying upon this view. Furthermore, the Shulchan Arukh Ha-Rav (493:5) claims that those who do not recite tachanun at Mincha before Lag Ba-Omer clearly believe that the entire day of Lag Ba-Omer is celebratory, and therefore one may get married at night without invoking the principle of miktzat ha-yom kekulo!

Some communities, especially German communities, observe mourning practices during the “second half” of the Omer, as the Crusades occurred during the months of Iyar and Sivan. Some observe them from the second day of Rosh Chodesh Iyar until Erev Shavuot. Others begin from the first day of Rosh Chodesh (the 30th of Nisan) and observe until the 3rd of Sivan, leaving out the three days before Shavuot, known as the “shaloshet yemei hagbala.”

May one who observes the second part of the Omer, from Rosh Chodesh until Shavuot (excluding Lag Ba-Omer), attend a wedding held by one who observes the first part of the Omer? Although the Chatam Sofer ([*Orach Chaim* 142](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh%2C_Orach_Chayim.142?lang=he-en)) prohibits this, as by participating one has not fully observed either part of the Omer, R. Moshe Feinstein (Iggerot Moshe, [*Orach Chaim* 1:159](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh%2C_Orach_Chayim.1.159?lang=he-en)) and R. Soloveitchik (see Nefesh Ha-Rav, p. 192) permit it.

Marriages are also not held during the days of mourning for the Beit Ha-Mikdash. The Talmud ([*Yevamot* 43a](https://www.sefaria.org/Yevamot.43a?lang=he-en)) teaches:

We learned: During the week in which the Ninth of Av occurs, it is forbidden to cut the hair and to wash clothes… And [in connection with this mishna] it was taught: Before this time, the public must restrict their activities in commerce, building, and plantings, but it is permissible to betroth, although not to marry, nor may any betrothal feast be held. That was taught in respect to the period before that time…

According to this gemara, it is prohibited to marry during the “period before that time,” that is, during the entire period of the Nine Days beginning with Rosh Chodesh Av, and not just during the week within which Tisha Be-Av falls. R. Yosef Karo (Shulchan Arukh 561:2) cites this gemara, and Sephardi Jews are therefore accustomed not to hold weddings during the Nine Days.

R. Isaac Tyrnau (14th–15th century, Austria), in his Sefer Ha-Minhagim, records the Medieval Ashkenazic custom to refrain from marrying during the entire Three Weeks. The Rema (ibid.) cites this custom, and Ashkenazim follow this ruling. Some permit holding the wedding on the night before the seventeenth of Tamuz, since the fast only begins in the morning, while others assume that the three week period of mourning begins at night of Shiva Asar Be-Tamuz (see Iggerot Moshe, OC 1:168).

Another important consideration in planning the wedding date is ensuring that the bride will have already been to the mikve. It is not ideal to hold a wedding when the kalla is menstruating or before she immerses in the mikve, both for halakhic concerns (as the Rishonim question the validity of a chuppat nida), and personal reasons (it is disappointing for a couple to be married yet be unable to touch). Therefore, the wedding should take place at least seven days after the conclusion of her menses, allowing a full seven days for the shiva neki’im, after which she immerses in the mikve. This can be achieved either through precise planning, if the bride has a predictable cycle, and/or through the use of hormones which will prevent the onset of her menstrual cycle until after the wedding. Of course, this should only be done with the guidance of a doctor.

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

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

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

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

It is customary for the groom to receive an aliya la-Torah on the Shabbat before his wedding (see [Magen Avraham 282](https://www.sefaria.org/Magen_Avraham.282?lang=he-en) and Bi’ur Halakha 136:1). It is also customary to sing for the chatan, and in some communities, to throw candies on the chatan after his aliya la-Torah. This custom may originate in a Talmudic passage ([*Berakhot* 50b](https://www.sefaria.org/Berakhot.50b?lang=he-en); see also Y. [*Ketubot* 2](https://www.sefaria.org/Ketubot.2a?lang=he-en) and Y. [*Kiddushin* 1:2](https://www.sefaria.org/Mishnah_Kiddushin.1.2?lang=he-en)) which describes throwing nuts at the bride and groom after their wedding. The [Mishna Berura (171:21)](https://www.sefaria.org/Mishnah_Berurah.171.21?lang=he-en), however, criticizes those who throw raisins, which are soft and become repulsive.

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

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

**Seeing Each Other Before the Wedding**

There is a widespread custom among Ashkenazim for the bride and groom not to see each other for seven days before the wedding. Although this custom appears to be without any firm halakhic or even historical basis, some sources record the custom and offer possible explanations. Some (see R. Binyomin Forst, The Laws of Nidda, pp. 458-459) suggest that this custom developed due to the fear that the bride will experience a discharge which would render her a nidda before the wedding (dam chimud). Others focus on the possible psychological benefits or separation before the wedding. Strictly speaking, there is no halakha or established custom that prohibits a bride and groom from seeing each other during the week before the wedding. (See <https://www.ou.org/torah/machshava/tzarich-iyun/tzarich_iyun_before_the_wedding/> for a more in-depth presentation of this topic.)

**Fasting on the Day of the Wedding**

The Rema ([EH 61:1](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh%2C_Even_HaEzer.61.1?lang=he-en) and OC 573:1) relates that it is customary for the bride and groom to fast on the day of their wedding. The Acharonim offer different explanations for this custom.

Some suggest that the bride and groom fast to ensure that they are not intoxicated during the wedding ([Beit Shmuel 6](https://www.sefaria.org/Beit_Shmuel.6?lang=he-en)). This would not only be inappropriate but might even invalidate the act of kiddushin, as the Magen Avraham (O.C. 573) implies. According to this reason, one who betroths his wife through an agent would not need to fast.

Alternatively, some (Beit Shmuel, ibid.) explain that the wedding day is a day of atonement upon which the sins of the bride and groom are forgiven. Indeed, the Talmud ([*Yevamot* 63b](https://www.sefaria.org/Yevamot.63b?lang=he-en); see also Y. Bikkurim 3:3) teaches:

R. Chama bar Chanina said: Once a man marries a woman, his iniquities crumble [mitpakekin], as it is stated: “Whoever finds a wife finds good and obtains [veyafek] favor of the Lord” ([*Mishlei* 18:22](https://www.sefaria.org/Proverbs.18.22?lang=he-en)).

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

R. Yisrael of Bruna (d. 1480), known as the Mahari Bruna, suggests that the bride and groom fast in hope and prayer that there should be no disagreements and disputes during their wedding, which were apparently common ([Mahari Bruna 93](https://www.sefaria.org/Mahari_Bruna.93?lang=he-en)).

The Arukh Ha-Shulchan ([EH 61:21](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh%2C_Even_HaEzer.61.21?lang=he-en)) writes, “Since it is a day of forgiveness it is appropriate to fast and to ask for compassion, that he should live a peaceful life with his spouse, and that they should produce a generation of upstanding children in the eyes of man and God.” He adds that if it is difficult for the bride or groom to fast, they should not fast, but they should not eat too much and should not drink intoxicating beverages.

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

Do the bride and groom fast even if the ceremony is held after dark? This may depend uponthe reasons mentioned above. Although many Acharonim (see, for example, Chokhmat Adam 115:2, cited by Pitchei Teshuva [EH 61:21](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh%2C_Even_HaEzer.61.21?lang=he-en)) maintain that the couple may end their fast after nightfall, the Arukh Ha-Shulchan ([EH 61:21](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh%2C_Even_HaEzer.61.21?lang=he-en)) insists that if possible, they should fast until after the wedding. In any case, they should not drink alcoholic beverages.

It is not customary to accept the fast at Mincha the day before ([Mishna Berura 572:11](https://www.sefaria.org/Mishnah_Berurah.572.11?lang=he-en)).

The bride and groom do not fast on Rosh Chodesh (Taz 573:1), Chanuka (Rema O.C. 573), Isru Chag (see [Magen Avraham 573:1](https://www.sefaria.org/Magen_Avraham.573.1?lang=he-en)), Tu Be-Av, Tu Be-Shvat ([Mishna Berura 573:7](https://www.sefaria.org/Mishnah_Berurah.573.7?lang=he-en)), Purim and Shushan Purim, and the 14th and 15th of Adar Rishon (Nisuin Ke-Hilkhata 6:38). The bride and groom should fast, however, during the month of Nisan, on Lag Be-Omer, and on the days between Yom Kippur and Sukkot (ibid.).

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

Although this custom is widespread among Ashkenazic Jews, some Sephardic communities accepted this practice as well. R. Ovadia Yosef (Yabi’a Omer [E.H. 3:9](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh%2C_Even_HaEzer.3.9?lang=he-en)), however, argues that Sephardim should not fast on the day of their wedding.

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

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

Some relate that it is customary to say Viduy on the day of one’s wedding (see Pitchei Teshuva, [EH 61:9](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh%2C_Even_HaEzer.61.9?lang=he-en)). The bride and groom say the lhe long Viduy (Al Chet) customarily said on Yom Kippur at the end of the Shemoneh Esrei, before taking three steps backward. Viduy is said even on days when Tachanun is not recited. When the ceremony is held before Mincha, Viduy is said during Shacharit.

The Kitzur Shulchan Arukh (146:4) writes:

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

**Writing and Signing the Ketuba**

In most communities, it is customary to write the ketuba before the wedding, and to perform the kinyan and have the witnesses sign on the day of the wedding ceremony. Some had the custom of leaving a word or two unfinished, such as “ve-kanina(n),” until after the kinyan, so that the witnesses can testify that they saw the writing and kinyan of the ketuba. Although some do finish writing the word “kanina” in the presence of the *eideim*, it is customary to write the entire ketuba, including the names, dates, and place, before the wedding, and the witnesses’ sign their names immediately after the kinyan.

It is customary in most communities to write and sign the ketuba before even beginning the wedding ceremony. The *ketuba* is often signed at what is often called the “chatan’s tisch.” Some, especially in Jerusalem, sign the ketuba after the eirusin (the birkat ha-eirusin and the giving of the ring), but before the sheva berakhot, inder the *chuppa*.

In addition to the standard text of the ketuba, there are a number of insertions made for each wedding. The scribe or rabbi write the date and place of the wedding, as well as the names of the bride and groom and the amount of the ketuba and the tosefet (additional amount); the witnesses add their signatures.

One should write the actual date of the wedding on the ketuba. If the ketuba was written and dated before the day of the wedding ceremony, and the kinyan and signing of the ketuba happen at a later date, the ketuba is considered to be a shtar mukdam, which is invalid (see [*Gittin* 18a](https://www.sefaria.org/Gittin.18a?lang=he-en); Shulchan Arukh, CM 43:7). If the ketuba was written and the groom was engaged in wedding matters (asukin be-oto ha-inyan) and the kinyan and signing of the ketuba did not happen until evening, some Acharonim validate the ketuba bedieved (see Shulchan Arukh, CM 43:16, and Ha-Nisu’in Ke-Hilkhata 11:28).

What if the kinyan and signing were performed before dark and the wedding ceremony was held immediately after dark? This is a very common scenario, especially during the summer months, when the ceremony is often held during bein ha-shemashot or slightly after nightfall. Some suggest that as long as the groom performed the kinyan before sunset, the ketuba is valid (see Shulchan Arukh, CM 43:16). This practice, however, raises a number of questions.

First, is it possible to for the groom to accept upon himself the obligations of the ketuba before the wedding? Seemingly, just as a borrower may write a shtar halva’ah, which includes a lien (shi’abud) on the borrower’s property, before actually borrowing the money (see Rif, [*Bava Metzia* 6a](https://www.sefaria.org/Bava_Metzia.6a?lang=he-en)), the groom may similarly accept upon himself the conditions and financial obligations of the ketuba with a kinyan before the actual wedding. However, R. Moshe Feinstein (Iggerot Moshe, [EH 4:100](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh%2C_Even_HaEzer.4.100?lang=he-en)) strongly objects to relying on this leniency, rejecting the comparison between the ketuba and a shtar halva’ah. Most authorities appear to reject R. Feinstein’s objection.

Second, some object to the witnesses signing the ketuba, which states that they “witnessed” the wedding ceremony, when in fact they didn’t. The Rishonim discuss this question (see Mordekhai, Gittin 342). Due to this reason, R. Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (Minchat Shlomo 2:128) rules that it is preferable to perform the kinyan and the signing of the ketuba during the wedding ceremony itself. This is indeed the common custom of Jerusalem (minhag Yerushalayim). R. Asher Weiss (Techumin 36) disagrees with this assertion and upholds the common practice of performing the kinyan before nightfall and the ceremony after dark.

Alternatively, some suggest writing the date of the ceremony on the ketuba, and performing the kinyan and signing the ketuba the day before. Although the *ketuba* would be considered a “shtar me’uchar,” this may be preferable, according to some, to other options.

**The Kinyan on the Ketuba**

The groom performs a “kinyan” on the ketuba. He lifts the *sudar*, i.e. the pen or kerchief of the officiating rabbi or the witness, through which he accepts upon himself the obligations of the ketuba. The Rishonim question why the groom performs a kinyan on the ketuba at all, as the ketuba contains all of the standard marital obligations that are enforced by a beit din.

Some authorities, in fact, did not require a kinyan. R. Hai Gaon (cited by the Tur, [EH 66](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh%2C_Even_HaEzer.66?lang=he-en), and Shulchan Arukh, [EH 66:8](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh%2C_Even_HaEzer.66.8?lang=he-en)) and the Ritva ([*Ketubot* 54b](https://www.sefaria.org/Ketubot.54b?lang=he-en)) maintain that there is no need to perform a formal kinyan. Other Rishonim suggest other reasons to perform the kinyan. Some explain that the kinyan ketuba obligates the chatan in the tosefet ketuba (Tosafot, [*Gittin* 18b](https://www.sefaria.org/Gittin.18b?lang=he-en), s.v. ketuba), or it may activate the lien on the groom's property, or relate to other marital obligations mentioned in the ketuba (see Rema, ibid.).

In theory, the groom performs the kinyan and commits directly to the bride. As the bride is not usually present at the kinyan ketuba, the rabbi serves as her agent and gives the groom a sudar (a handkerchief or pen), which the groom lifts, thereby accepting upon himself the content of the ketuba. The witnesses view this kinyan, and then sign the ketuba. The witnesses must be eidim kesherim – i.e., male, Torah observant Jews.

In some communities, the groom later hands the bride the ketuba, and even says “harei zu ketubateikh.” Some suggest that this may make the ketuba fully binding (Tashbetz 3:301), while others explain that this act is actually a form of kiddushei shetar; in case the kiddushei kesef was invalid for some reason, the couple is certainly married through giving the ketuba with the intent of marriage. In most communities, especially outside of Israel, the ketuba is simply entrusted with the bride’s family or the bride herself, without being formally given to the bride under the chuppa.

**Replacing a Ketuba**

The ketuba is a central and even defining component of the wedding ceremony. A man is obligated to write a ketuba for his wife, and it is prohibited to engage in marital relations without a ketuba (Rambam, Introduction to Hilkhot Ishut).

Furthermore, the Talmud ([*Ketubot* 56b](https://www.sefaria.org/Ketubot.56b?lang=he-en)) concludes that according to R. Meir – who rules that “anyone who reduces the amount of the marriage contract to less than two hundred dinars for a virgin or one hundred dinars for a widow, this marital relationship amounts to licentious sexual relations” – it is prohibited to live with one’s wife without a ketuba, even if it is lost. The Rambam (Hilkhot Ishut 10:9-10) and the Shulchan Arukh ([EH 66:3](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh%2C_Even_HaEzer.66.3?lang=he-en)) rule accordingly. The Shulchan Arukh cites a debate whether the couple must refrain from marital relations (Rema), or whether they are even prohibited to live together (Mechaber).

If a couple loses their ketuba or if it is destroyed, they should replace their ketuba with a special text, known as a “ketuba de-irkasa.” However, there is a debate regarding whether nowadays it is urgent and imperative for the wife to receive a new ketuba.

Some Acharonim are lenient, for numerous reasons. First, some suggest that since the Enactment of Rabbeinu Gershom, which prohibits divorcing a woman against her will, there may be no need for a ketuba nowadays (see Rema, [EH 66:3](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh%2C_Even_HaEzer.66.3?lang=he-en)). Although the Rema maintains that one should write a ketuba, one might rely upon this view in extenuating circumstances. Second, in Israel, it is customary to write a second copy of the ketuba (ha’etek), which is entrusted with the local Religious Council. This is similar to an earlier practice, instituted in Egypt in 1892 (see Nehar Mitzraym, Hilkhot Ketuba 2), of writing a second ketuba in case the first ketuba is lost. Others disagree with this leniency (see Teshuvot Ve-Hanhagot 1:760 and Ketuba Ke-Hilkhata, Teshuvot 7). Others rely upon the kinyan, the fact that witnesses viewed the groom accept upon himself the obligations of the ketuba (see also Tzitz Eliezer 11:67 and 19:39).

A simple, temporary solution might be to give the bride a valuable object, or even a check, which matches the value of the basic ketuba obligation. In any case, as mentioned, a replacement ketuba, known as a ketuba de-irkasa, should be written as soon as possible.

**Badeken**

It is customary to cover the bride’s face before the formal ceremony under the wedding canopy begins. Ashkenazim refer to this custom by its Yiddish name, the badeken. In some communities, the *badeken* was performed on the morning of the wedding; in most communities, it is performed immediately before the ceremony. The chatan approaches and lowers the veil over the face of the kalla.

This custom is very ancient. Some trace its origins to the mishna ([*Ketubot* 2:1](https://www.sefaria.org/Mishnah_Ketubot.2.1?lang=he-en)), which rules that if there are witnesses who describe the bride being wed with a hinuma (veil, see [*Ketubot* 17b](https://www.sefaria.org/Ketubot.17b?lang=he-en)) then she is considered to have been married as a betula (virgin).

There are two approaches to understanding this practice.

Some explain that covering the face of the bride with the wedding veil (hinuma) is the halakhic act of nisu’in. As we discussed previosly, the Talmud teaches that only after the “chuppa” is the couple considered to be fully married. At that point, a husband may annul his wife’s vows, he inherits her estate, and if he is a Kohen, he must become impure for his wife’s burial ([Kiddushin10a](https://www.sefaria.org/Kiddushin.10a?lang=he-en)). The Talmud does not define the term “chuppa” or explain how it affects the couple’s marital status. Some Rishonim maintain that an act or situation that reflects the most intimate aspect of marriage – sexual relations – initiates the nisu’in (see, for example, Rambam Hilkhot Ishut 10:1). This is most likely based upon the verse “when a man takes a wife and is intimate with her” ([Devarim 24:1](https://www.sefaria.org/Deuteronomy.24.1?lang=he-en)). Others suggest that a formal act which reflects their marital relationship creates the state of nisu’in. Ran, ([Ketubot 2a](https://www.sefaria.org/Ketubot.1a?lang=he-en), s.v. oh), for example, cites a view that describes nisu’in as the bride entering the husbands “domain.” In this context, some Rishonim (see Tosafot, [Yoma 3b](https://www.sefaria.org/Yoma.3b?lang=he-en), s.v. le-chada) maintain that the bride going out with her special head covering (hinuma) marks the start of the nisu’in. This view is somewhat perplexing, as according to our custom, the nisu’in would thus be performed at the badeken (when the chatan lowers the veil over the bride’s face), before the kiddushin.

Others do not view the badeken is not an integral part of the wedding ceremony, instead attributing other reasons to this ancient custom. Some (Maharil64b) trace this custom to the Torah, as the Bible relates that Rivka “took a veil and covered herself” ([*Bereishit* 24:65](https://www.sefaria.org/Genesis.24.65?lang=he-en); see also [*Rut* 3:9](https://www.sefaria.org/Ruth.3.9?lang=he-en)). This source may imply that covering the bride’s face is a sign of modesty, or an attempt to lessen the emphasis upon physical beauty. Others write that the bride is not meant to be able to discern the value of the ring used for the kiddushin (see Rema, [EH 31:2](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh%2C_Even_HaEzer.31.2?lang=he-en)).

As for the final halakhic ruling, the Shulchan Arukh ([EH 55:1](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh%2C_Even_HaEzer.55.1?lang=he-en)) cites a number of views regarding the definition of nisu’in/chuppa:

This seclusion (yichud) is known as entering into the chuppa, and it is called marriage in all places.

R. Moshe Isserles (Rema) adds:

There are those who say that the chuppa is not considered seclusion. Rather, the groom must bring her into his house for marriage (Ran at the beginning of Ketubot).

And there are those who say that the chuppa is when they spread a cloth over her head at the time of the blessing, and there are those who say that a virgin's chuppa is when she goes out in a headdress, and for a widow when they become secluded.

The Rema concludes:

The simple custom nowadays is to call the chuppa a place where they place a cloth on poles and bring the groom and bride underneath in public, and he betroths her there and they say the blessings of betrothal and marriage, and then they walk them to their house and they eat together in a secluded place. This is how the chuppa is done now.

As the Rema apparently believes that our practice is to be concerned with all of the opinions cited above, some Acharonim insist that that badeken is indeed a possible component of the marriage ceremony. Therefore, for example, R. Yoel Sirkis (Bach, [EH 61](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh%2C_Even_HaEzer.61?lang=he-en)) records that it is customary for the chatan to be escorted to the kalla and to cover her before the ceremony. This report is confirmed by later authorities, including R. Yechezkel Landau (Dagul Me-Revava, YD 342) and R. Yechiel Mikhel Epstein (Arukh Ha-Shulchan, [EH 55:15](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh%2C_Even_HaEzer.55.15?lang=he-en)). The Derisha ([EH 65:1](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh%2C_Even_HaEzer.65.1?lang=he-en); see also YD 342:1) explains that the badeken is indeed part of the chuppa, and therefore the birkat ha-erusin concludes, “He who sanctifies the people of Israel through the chuppa and kiddushin,” as the chuppa precedes the kiddushin. Other Acharonim, such as the Taz ([EH 65:1](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh%2C_Even_HaEzer.65.1?lang=he-en) and YD 342) and Kitzur Shulchan Arukh(147:3), disagree and rule that the chatan himself does not perform the act of covering the kalla.

A possible practice outcome of viewing the badeken as the chuppa is that according to those opinions that require witnesses for the chuppa, the eidim should witness the badeken as well. Some Acharonim (see Teshuvot Ve-Hanhagot, [EH 4:286](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh%2C_Even_HaEzer.4.286?lang=he-en):7, and Shevivei Eish, Hilkhot Chuppa Ve-Sheva [*Berakhot* 1](https://www.sefaria.org/Berakhot.1a?lang=he-en)) mention this stringency and insist that the eidim view the badeken. However, it is generally accepted that be-di’avad, we do not view the badeken as a component of the marriage ceremony.

It is customary to bless the kalla following the badeken. Some bless her with the blessing given to Rivka (see Kitzur Shulchan Arukh 147:3):

Our sister, may you become thousands of myriads. May your descendants inherit the gates of your foes. ([*Bereishit* 24:60](https://www.sefaria.org/Genesis.24.60?lang=he-en))

Others add (or only say) the blessing given to one’s daughters on the Sabbath eve: “May God make you like Sarah, Rivka, Rachel and Leah.”

**The Mesader Kiddushin**

The rabbi who officiates at the wedding is often known as the “mesader kiddushin.” There are numerous reports from Medieval Jewish communities of communal enactments restricting siddur kiddushin to local rabbinic leadership (see Teshuvot Ha-Rambam 348; see also, Rivash 268 and [*Mahari Weil* 151](https://www.sefaria.org/Mahari_Weil.151?lang=he-en), etc.).

The Talmud ([*Kiddushin* 6a](https://www.sefaria.org/Kiddushin.6a?lang=he-en)) teaches that “anyone who does not know the nature of gittin (bills of divorce) and kiddushin (betrothals) should have no dealings in them.” Based on this passage and the explanations of the Rishonim, the Shulchan Arukh (EA 49:3) rules that one who is not an expert in these matters “should not rule (le-horot) regarding them.”

R. Yaakov Reischer (Bechofen) (1661-1733), in his Shevut Yaakov (3:121), rules that only an expert in these laws should officiate at Jewish weddings. In fact, the Rambam (Teshuvot Ha-Rambam 348) records an ancient enactment by the rabbis of Egypt requiring that only halakhic experts officiate at weddings. Indeed, the mesader kiddushin is responsible for numerous matters, some ritual and some halakhic. For example, the mesader kiddushin must ensure that the chatan and kalla are halakhically permitted to be wed, that the ketuba is filled out and executed properly. He must also verify that the ring indeed belongs to the groom ([*Beit* *Shmuel* 28:49](https://www.sefaria.org/Beit_Shmuel.28.49?lang=he-en)), is worth the value of a peruta (Maharil, Hilkhot Nisu’in), and he must supervise the proper performance of the giving of the kesef kiddushin, etc. Some Acharonim (Taz, ibid. 1, and Beit Shmuel, ibid. 4) explain that while one who is not an expert should not offer halakhic rulings in these matters, those who are not experts may officiate at weddings.

The Acharonim discuss whether the chatan or kalla has the right to choose the mesader kiddushin. Some suggest that since it is now customary for the mesader kiddushin to recite the birkat ha-eirusin – which, according to some, is the blessing that the chatan is meant to say before performing the kiddushin – it is the chatan who may choose the mesader kiddushin (see Chelkat Yaakov 2:115). However, if the local custom dictates that the kalla chooses the mesader kiddushin, then the custom should be followed (Nissu’in KeHilkhata 12:6). This issue should not be a point of contention between the chatan and kalla, or between their families.

**The Wedding Procession**

The Rema (YD 391:3) records that it is customary in Ashkenazic communities for two people to accompany the chatan to the chuppa. Others records to the kalla is also escorted to the chuppa (Kitzur Shulchan Arukh 147:5). R. Moshe ben Avraham (Meth) of Pryzemyśl, in his Mateh Moshe (published 1591, Krakow), describes how these two people, known as the shoshvinin, walk the chatan to the chuppa, one on his right, the other on his left. He relates this custom to a midrash that teaches that Michael and Gavriel were the shoshvinin of Adam Ha-Rishon. He further cites the Tashbetz (465), who explains that since the chatan is compared to a “king” (see [*Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer* 16](https://www.sefaria.org/Pirkei_DeRabbi_Eliezer.16?lang=he-en)), just as a king is always accompanied by his soldiers, so too the chatan is surrounded by escorts.

In most communities, immediately following the badeken, the chatan and kalla are led to the chuppa with song and praise. (In some communities, the badeken is performed during the processional, before the bride ascends to the chuppa.) There are different customs regarding the manner in which the chatan and kalla are accompanied to the chuppa.

In some communities, the fathers of the bride and groom escort the chatan and their mothers accompany the kalla. In other communities, the chatan and kalla are walked to the chuppa by their parents. Others may also serve as the shoshvinin. In some circles, especially when the chatan and kalla are older, they walk together to the chuppa.

The Acharonim record that the shoshvinin often hold candles on their way to the chuppa. The Maharil (Hilkhot Nisuin; see also Teshuvot Maharam Mintz 109) writes that the torches represent orah ve-simcha, “light and happiness.” Similarly, the Tashbetz (467) relates this custom to Matan Torah, where the Torah was given with “kolot u-verakim” (sounds and light). In addition, the Mateh Moshe writes that the numerical equivalent (gematria) of (two) nerot (torches) is equal to “peru u-revu” (the commandment to be “fruitful and multiply”) and to the sum total of the limbs of both the chatan and kalla (500; see [*Bekhorot* 45a](https://www.sefaria.org/Bekhorot.45a?lang=he-en)). Finally, some note that the Hebrew words for man (ish) and woman (isha) are almost identical, except for the letters yod and heh, which spell a name of God. Without the presence of God in their relationship, their relationship will be disharmonious and contentious, like “esh” – fire.

**Circling the Chatan**

Among many Ashkenazim, it is customary for the kalla to circle the chatan before the ceremony begins.

Some mention a custom of circling three times, corresponding to the three times the Torah says “ki yikach isha” ([*Devarim* 22:13](https://www.sefaria.org/Deuteronomy.22.13?lang=he-en), 24:1, 24:5; see Tashbetz 467, Mateh Moshe, Hakhnasat Kalla 4). Others suggest that the three circles correspond to the three legal obligations of the husband – “food, clothing and marital relations” – and others relate this custom to the three times God accepted upon himself the obligations of the marital relationship: “I will betroth me to you to me forever, I will betroth you to me with fairness, justice, love and compassion, I will betroth you to Me with faith, and you shall know God” ([*Hoshea* 2:21-22](https://www.sefaria.org/Hosea.2.21-22?lang=he-en)).

The more accepted custom is to walk seven times around the chatan. The commentators offer different interpretations for the number seven, as well as for the custom itself. Some view this practice as reflecting a mystical tradition, according to which circling the husband demonstrates that the marriage is performed for the sake of heaven, and the seven circles correspond to the seven layers of heaven (reki’in).

Early sources (see, for example, the commentary of R. Dosa Ha-Yevani, 15th century) trace this practice to the verse “God has created a new thing on earth; a women will go around a man” ([*Yirmiyahu* 31:21](https://www.sefaria.org/Jeremiah.31.21?lang=he-en)). Some interpret this act as an expression of commitment, subservience, or even to build a wall around the chatan, protecting him from inappropriate thoughts and actions (based upon [*Yevamot* 62b](https://www.sefaria.org/Yevamot.62b?lang=he-en)). Others offer more “positive” interpretations, viewing the circles as the kalla’s courting of the chatan, or that similar to the seven times Yericho was circled until its walls were breached, the kalla breaks down her soon to be husband’s personal “walls” in order that they may build a house together.

While the kalla is circling the chatan, some have the custom of singing a piyut based upon the midrash (Shir Ha-Shirim Rabba 2): “Mi bon siach shoshan chokhim, ahavat kalla, mesos dodim, hu yivarekh et he-chatan ve-et ha-kalla” (He who understands the babble of the rose among thorns, the love of a bride, the joy of her beloved ones, may He bless the groom and bride). In other communities, no song or piyut is said while the kalla walks around the chatan.

**The Position of the Chatan and Kalla under the Chuppa**

During the wedding ceremony, the kalla stands to the right of the chatan. The Maharil (Hilkhot Nisu’in) relates this to the verse, “a queen shall stand at your right side” ([*Tehillim* 45:10](https://www.sefaria.org/Psalms.45.10?lang=he-en)). The last letter of each word, “nitzavaH shegaL liminCha” spell the word “kalla.”

**The Chatan’s Kittel**

In some communities, the chatan wears a kittel, the traditional white robe used as a burial shroud for Jewish men, which is also often worn on Yom Kippur, for the Pesach seder, and other occasions (Kitzur Shulchan Arukh 147:4). Different reasons are given for this custom, which seem to reflect different views of the nature of the wedding day.

Some (see Mateh Moshe, Hakhnasat Kalla) relates this custom to a broader theme of the wedding day – atonement. The wedding day is viewed as a day upon which one’s sins are forgiven, and white symbolizes spiritual purity – “If your sins are like the scarlet, they shall be as white as snow” ([*Yishayahu* 1:18](https://www.sefaria.org/Isaiah.1.18?lang=he-en)). Others claim that the kittel is meant to remind the chatan of the shrouds worn after his death. This may be intended to ensure that the chatan tempers his rejoicing (see [*Berakhot*31a](https://www.sefaria.org/Berakhot.31a?lang=he-en)), in accordance with the verse, “Serve God in awe, rejoice with trembling” ([*Tehillim* 2:11](https://www.sefaria.org/Psalms.2.11?lang=he-en)). This may also indicate that marriage is meant, ideally, to last until the day of one’s death (see Teshuvot Maharm Shick, [EH 88](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh%2C_Even_HaEzer.88?lang=he-en)). Finally, some suggest that white is a color of royalty, and on his wedding day, a chatan is compared to a “king.”

**Ashes on the Head of the Chatan**

The Talmud ([*Bava Batra* 60b](https://www.sefaria.org/Bava_Batra.60b?lang=he-en)) teaches that we mourn for the Beit Ha-Mikdash even at our most joyous moments:

The source for these [mourning] practices is a verse, as it is stated: “If I forget you, Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning. Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I remember you not; if I set not Jerusalem above my highest joy” ([*Tehillim* 137:5–6](https://www.sefaria.org/Psalms.137.5-6?lang=he-en)).

What is the meaning of, “Above my highest [rosh] joy”? R. Yitzchak says: This is referring to the burnt ashes that are customarily placed on the head [rosh] of bridegrooms at the time of their wedding celebrations, to remember the destruction of the Temple. R. Pappa said to Abaye: Where are they placed? Abaye replied: On the place where tefillin are placed, as it is stated: “To appoint to them that mourn in Zion, to give to them a garland in place of ashes” (Yeshayahu 61:3).

Rashbam explains that since tefillin are referred to as a garland (see [*Yechezkel* 24:17](https://www.sefaria.org/Ezekiel.24.17?lang=he-en)), it may be inferred from this verse that the ashes were placed in the same place as the tefillin.

While the Shulchan Arukh ([EH 65:3](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh%2C_Even_HaEzer.65.3?lang=he-en) and OH 560:2), and other authorities cites this custom, some (see Chayei Adam 137:2; Bi’ur Halakha 560; see also Kaf HaChaim, OC 560:21) note that this was not customary in all communities. Nowadays, it is the general custom to put ashes on the head of the chatan, while saying the verse, “If I forget you, Jerusalem...”

**Minyan for the Wedding Ceremony**

The Talmud (see [*Ketubot* 7b](https://www.sefaria.org/Ketubot.7b?lang=he-en)) teaches that the sheva berakhot must be said in the presence of a minyan (ten men). The gemara cites two sources:

R. Nachman said: Huna bar Natan said to me that it was taught: From where is it derived that the benediction of the grooms is recited in a quorum of ten men? It is as it is stated: “And he took ten men of the Elders of the city and said, ‘Sit you here,’ and they sat” ([*Rut*](https://www.sefaria.org/Ruth.4.2?lang=he-en) [4:2](https://www.sefaria.org/Ruth.4.2?lang=he-en)). And R. Abbahu said that the source is from here: “In assemblies [mak’helot], bless God, the Lord, from the source of Israel” ([*Tehillim* 68:27](https://www.sefaria.org/Psalms.68.27?lang=he-en)).

The Talmud ([*Megilla* 23b](https://www.sefaria.org/Megillah.23b?lang=he-en)) lists these blessings, the birkat chatanim, among those rituals that must be performed in the presence of a minyan.

The Tur ([EH 34](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh%2C_Even_HaEzer.34?lang=he-en)) cites a debate regarding the first part of the wedding ceremony, the kiddushin. According to R. Shmuel Ha-Nagid, the birkat ha-eirusin may be performed without a minyan. However, R. Hai Gaon and the Rosh disagree and maintain that just as the sheva berakhot must be recited in the presence of a minyan, so too must the birkat ha-eirusin. The Shulchan Arukh ([EH 34:4](https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh%2C_Even_HaEzer.34.4?lang=he-en)) rules that it is preferable (lechatkhila) that the birkat ha-eirusin be said with a minyan. Some (see, for example, Rosh 35:4) write that the wedding is meant to be performed publically.

If the kiddushin is performed without a minyan, the sheva berakhot are not recited. The Acharonim discuss whether they may be recited in the presence of a minyan during the first seven days after the wedding (Ritva, [*Ketubot* 7b](https://www.sefaria.org/Ketubot.7b?lang=he-en)), or even later (Arukh Ha-Shulchan 62:12).