

CHASAN AND KALLAH: THE SEVEN FESTIVE DAYS

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

For seven days after their wedding, the chasan and kallah continue to joyously celebrate their marriage. Indeed, the seven days following a wedding are considered like a "private Yom Tov" for the chasan and kallah.[1] It is important that the young couple, along with their families, study the following laws and customs before the wedding so that they start off their married life in accordance with the halachah.

The obligation of simchah

- The chasan is obligated to spend time with his bride and make her happy for the entire seven festive days. [Even if the chasan or the kallah was previously married, the couple is still obligated to perform the mitzvah of simchah for seven days. If, however, both the chasan and kallah were previously married, then they are obligated to engage in the mitzvah of simchah for only three days.[2]]
- The chasan and kallah must eat their meals together.[3]
- The chasan should limit his Torah study during this time, i.e., he should not immerse himself in intricate texts but rather engage in less demanding areas of study.[4] If the kallah does not mind, however, he may study whatever he chooses.[5]
- The chasan and kallah dress in their better clothing (bigdei kavod).[6]
- It is a mitzvah for others to make the chasan and kallah happy and to praise them throughout the entire seven festive days.[7]
- It is permitted for a chasan and kallah to visit the sick and to comfort mourners during this time.[8]

Walking alone

A chasan may not walk unaccompanied outside [in the street or in the marketplace] during the seven festive days, and neither may a kallah.[9] Two reasons for this prohibition are given: 1) A chasan and kallah must be carefully watched so that mazikim do not attack them[10] ; 2) It is not befitting the honor of a chasan and kallah to walk out alone during their first week of marriage. The following rules apply:

- The prohibition applies even during the day[11] and even if there are many people in the street.[12]
- They are not to go out even to shul[13] or for the performance of any other mitzvah, unless that

mitzvah must be fulfilled and no one else is available and they cannot go together.[14]

- The chasan and kallah may go outside together even if they are not accompanied by others.[15]
- According to one opinion, the chasan or kallah should not even be alone inside the house during these seven festive days; they must be accompanied by at least one person at all times.[16]

Work

The chasan and kallah[17] are prohibited from doing any work or engaging in any business for the entire seven days. This prohibition stands even if the kallah allows the chasan to work.

There are different opinions in the poskim regarding the type of "work" that is prohibited. Some maintain that only work that entails tirschah (toil) or is very time-consuming (such as most labors which are prohibited on Chol ha-Moed) is prohibited.[18] Others, however, hold that even light housework, except for work entailed in food preparation, is prohibited.[19]

It is permitted, however, for the chasan and kallah to do any work or engage in any business if otherwise they would incur a loss (meleches davar ha-aveid) and no one else can take care of it for them.[20]

A chasan and kallah may deposit their monetary gifts in the bank and may go shopping for household appliances and furniture.[21]

According to most poskim, a chasan and kallah are allowed to take a haircut during this time.[22]

Sheva Berachos

Nowadays, it has become commonplace for a newlywed couple to be regaled at at least one festive meal a day by their relatives and friends during the first week of marriage. At such a festive meal, seven additional blessings (Sheva Berachos) are recited after Birkas ha-Mazon is completed, provided that several conditions, which will be enumerated in the next chapter, are met.

It must be stressed, however, that while the basic concept of Sheva Berachos is recorded in the Talmud[23] and codified in the Shulchan Aruch, there is no obligation for a chasan and kallah to partake in this type of meal. Indeed, in earlier times many communities did not celebrate Sheva Berachos at all,[24] and some communities never even heard of it.[25] Some poskim even question whether this type of meal is considered a seudas mitzvah.[26] Accordingly, while it is recommended by some poskim[27] for the chasan and kallah to partake in Sheva Berachos[28] at least once a day,[29] and this has become the common practice,[30] it is by no means an obligation.[31] If they so desire, they may eat by themselves or with their immediate family and no Sheva Berachos will be recited. When Sheva Berachos meals become a source of stress, strain or strife for the couple or their families, they should be advised that such meals are absolutely not required. Many people are

not aware of this.

The seven festive days begin immediately after the chupah. There are three possible timetables:

- If the chupah takes place at night, that night and the day after are considered day one, followed by another six nights and days.
- If the chupah takes place by day (any time before sunset), then that day is considered day one, and that night plus the next day is considered day two. This is so even if the yichud and the actual meal took place entirely at night.[32]
- If the chupah took place after sunset but was completely over before the stars came out (during bein ha-shemashos) some poskim consider that day as day one[33] while others hold that the first day begins only that night.[34]

On the seventh day of the seven festive days, Sheva Berachos should be recited before sunset.[35] If that cannot be arranged, some poskim allow reciting Sheva Berachos up to forty minutes past sunset [in the United States],[36] while many other poskim are stringent and do not allow reciting any one of the blessings even one minute after sunset.[37]

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1. While shivas yemei ha-mishteh is a Rabbinic obligation (Rambam, Hilchos Ishus 10:12), see Rambam, Hilchos Aveil 5:1 that it was originally enacted by Moshe Rabbeinu. See also Rashi and Ramban, Bereishis 29:27.
 2. Chelkas Mechokek 64:4.
 3. While it is permitted for the kallah to be mochel and allow the chasan to spend time or eat by himself during the seven festive days (Rama E.H. 64:2), it is not recommended and it is not customary that she do so (Chupas Chasanim 14:2).
 4. Chida in Shiyurei Berachah E.H. 64.
 5. Tzitz Eliezer 12:73.
 6. Pirkei d'Rav Eliezer 16, quoted by Aruch ha-Shulchan E.H. 64:3.
 7. Pirkei d'Rav Eliezer 16; Yalkut Shimoni, Shoftim 70.
 8. B'tzeil ha-Chochmah 2:44.
 9. While Shulchan Aruch mentions this prohibition only for the chasan, Aruch ha-Shulchan, based on the Talmud, includes the kallah as well.
 10. 54b. Mazikim are supernatural forces which are controlled by the Satan.
 11. Radal on Pirkei d'Rav Eliezer 16.

12. Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Beis Chasanim 17). The Sephardim, however, permit going out during the day when there are people on the street.
13. Beis Shemuel E.H. 64:2, quoting the Perishah.
14. Rav Yaakov Emdin (Migdal Oz, pg. 11).
15. Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Beis Chasanim 17).
16. Aruch ha-Shulchan E.H. 64:3.
17. Shulchan Aruch mentions this prohibition only for the chasan, and some poskim maintain that position (see Kisei Eliyahu 64:1; Maharsham 3:206). Other poskim hold that the kallah is included in this prohibition as well (Minchas Pitim 62).
18. She'elas Ya'avatz, vol. 2, 185.
19. Chida in Shiyurei Berachah E.H. 64 and Chayim Sha'al 2:38-60. Tzitz Eliezer 11:85 and 12:73 quotes this view and prohibits even writing, unless he is writing Torah thoughts. Rav Y. Kamenetsky is quoted as orally instructing a chasan not to carry a heavy suitcase up the stairs (Emes l'Yaakov E.H. 64:1).
20. Chazon Ish E.H. 64:7; Yabia Omer 4:8. Other poskim are more stringent.
21. Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Beis Chasanim 14:12).
22. Yabia Omer 4:8 and 5:38.
23. Kesubos 7b, based on pesukim in Megillas Ruth.
24. Maharil (Hilchos Nissuin) quoted in Sova Semachos, pg. 12. See also Aruch ha-Shulchan O.C. 640:14, who writes that in his community no special meals took place during shivas yemei ha-mishteh.
25. Teshuvos Chasam Sofer E.H. 122, regarding the community of Frankfurt. In later times, however, the custom changed even in Frankfurt (Rav Y. Martzbach, quoted in Sova Semachos, ibid.). See also Beir ha-Gra E.H. 55:11 and Pischei Teshuvah C.M. 7:13, quoting the Tumim.
26. Pri Megadim O.C. 444:9. See, however, Mishnah Berurah 640:34, who clearly considers this type of meal as a seudas mitzvah.
27. See Rav Pealim E.H. 4:6 and Yabia Omer 3:11.
28. Especially on Shabbos; Rav Yehudah ben Yakar (Perush ha-Berachos, Sheva Berachos).
29. According to some early authorities, it was customary to do so twice a day (Maseches Sofrim 11:11). The ninety-eight blessings gained according to this custom have the power to "sweeten" the ninety-eight curses recorded in the Tochachah in Parashas Ki Savo (Chidushei ha-Rim).

30. Among the Ashkenazim. Sephardim, however, generally celebrate a Sheva Berachos only if the meal takes place at the home of the chasan and kallah or their parents.
31. This custom does not have the binding power of a minhag which must be upheld, since it is relatively new and is not based on any binding source.
32. This is the consensus of most poskim. Moreover, as long as the chupah began before sunset, even if the blessings themselves were recited after sunset, the day that the chupah began is considered day one.
33. Sova Semachos, pg. 13 quoting several poskim.
34. Pischei Teshuvah E.H. 64:12; Rav M. Feinstein (oral ruling quoted in Oholei Yeshurun, pg. 25).
35. Sha'arei Teshuvah O.C. 188:7; Pischei Teshuvah E.H. 64:12 and many other poskim.
36. Rav M. Feinstein (oral ruling quoted in Oholei Yeshurun, pg. 25). See Sefer Bein ha-Shemashos 10:11 who allows b'diavad reciting the blessings up to 17 minutes after sunset [in Eretz Yisrael].
37. Rav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 59:18); Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Beis Chasanim 7:13); Yabia Omer 5:7; Sova Semachos 1:3. [If the chupah took place during bein ha-shemashos, a rav should be consulted.]

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