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## Some Jewish Wedding Traditions

By Sarah Williams

The Jewish faith is one that is deeply ensconced in tradition. A traditional Jewish wedding follows a number of beautiful traditions that date back for thousands of years. The traditions include the signing of the Ketubah, the use of the chuppah as well as traditional dances that are performed at the wedding. The rings exchanged during a Jewish wedding also have traditional connotations.

The signing of the Ketubah is the traditional start to a Jewish wedding ceremony. The Ketubah is a written agreement that not only asserts that the bride is not already married but also outlines the expectations that the couple hold for each other in the marriage. This ornate document can later be framed and prominently displayed in the couple's home as a reminder of their commitment. After the bride and groom have signed the Ketubah, the groom takes one final look at his bride before lowering her veil and beginning the wedding procession. This tradition has biblical roots and recalls the story of Jacob who married the wrong woman because she was veiled and he did not realize his mistake in time.

The wedding party traditionally precedes the couple in the wedding procession. The bride and groom then proceed down the aisle together accompanied by both of their parents to symbolize that their union includes the union of both families and not just the bride and the groom. The couple ends their procession under a traditional canopy called a chuppah. This canopy symbolizes that God is present and that he is sheltering and protecting the couple.

After the couple exchanges their wedding vows, a rabbi reads 7 traditional blessings. After the blessings the groom steps on a wine glass to break the glass in a symbol of human frailty and the suffering that members of the Jewish faith have endured and this with a final blessing from the rabbi concludes the ceremony. Unlike other traditional weddings, there is usually not a receiving line at the conclusion of a Jewish wedding. Tradition holds that the couple spends a few minutes alone immediately following the wedding so many members of the Jewish faith honor this tradition by leaving the ceremony immediately and waiting until the reception to offer their well wishes to the couple. This togetherness time was traditionally an opportunity for the couple to consummate the marriage but in modern times it is more of chance for the couple to reflect on their wedding ceremony and the start of their life together before the chaos of the wedding.

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Even the rings that a couple exchanges during a Jewish wedding have traditional values. Tradition holds that the couple exchange very simple rings that are devoid of gems, engravings or other distinguishing marks. With nothing to distinguish the beginning or the end of the ring, it is a beautiful symbol of a love that endures forever with no clear beginning or end. This symbolizes both the couples love for each other as well as God's love for his people.

A traditional Jewish wedding reception features many dances. An energetic dance called the Hora is performed at many traditional Jewish weddings. In this dance the bride and groom hold a handkerchief between them while they are seated in chairs and hoisted into the air by their guests. This dance is a celebration of the bride and groom and recognizes the significance of their union. If this wedding represents the last son or daughter of one of the parents to be married there are a few more traditional dances that may take place. If the bride was the last in her family to be married, she and her sisters may honor their mother in a tradition known as Krenzi. The mother is crowned with flowers and her

daughters honor her in the form of dance. Also, if either the bride or groom was the youngest to be married both of the parents will be honored through the Mizinke dance. In this tradition all of the guests circle the parents and shower them with flowers and praise.

The Jewish faith is a faith that is full of history and tradition. Many couples and their guests choose to honor these traditions by incorporating them into their wedding ceremony and reception. Many of these traditions are the defining moments of the celebration and they lend an atmosphere of historical significance to the wedding.

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### **Choices In Wedding Music**

**By Kirsten Hawkins**

American weddings have come a long way over the years. In a society that is made up of people from so many different cultures, lifestyles, religions, and backgrounds, it is no surprise that the traditions in the wedding ceremony are as vastly different as well. Wedding music is no exception. From the ceremony itself to the party atmosphere of the reception, the wedding music sets the tone for the event.

Traditional Wedding Music:

## Some Jewish Wedding Traditions

At most weddings we can expect to hear selections that have come to be known as traditional wedding music. Titles like Ave Maria, the Minuet from Don Giovanni, and, of course, The Bridal Chorus and The Wedding March have long been the standard music for a wedding. Particularly religious ceremonies may include hymns like Amazing Grace and a Jewish wedding almost always includes a hora danced to a medley of tunes like Hava Nagila, and Siman Tov U Mazeltov.

The traditional wedding music holds a special place in our hearts and many think that a wedding ceremony is incomplete without it. The couple must decide whether or not to use traditional wedding music in the ceremony, as well as how much of it to use. If this part of the wedding tradition is important to you, then traditional wedding music is the way to go.

### Modern Wedding Music:

Often couples will forgo the traditional wedding music selections and instead include modern or popular music in the wedding ceremony. This practice is so common that some titles are becoming traditional wedding song selections themselves. It is not unusual to hear When a Man Loves a Woman, Always and Forever, or I Will Always Love You sung, performed, or played at weddings today. Often more modern titles like these will appear in a ceremony along with the more traditional wedding music.

### Avant-Garde Wedding Music:

As people's attitudes change and varying forms of wedding ceremonies take place, the choice of wedding music often changes right along with them. Occasionally couples will choose music for their wedding that reflects the stark difference in their personalities and makes a unique and bold statement. While your wedding ceremony is primarily for the couple getting married, it is important to remember that it is an event attended by your family members as well. While you may wish to make an impression on your guests with your choice of music, you should still be cautious not to offend your respective grandmothers. As such, a selection by an artist like Marilyn Manson may never be appropriate for a wedding ceremony. This does not mean that your wedding music choices are restricted to traditional classics or sappy love songs. I once attended a very avant-garde wedding where three couples married in the same ceremony. It was a beautiful event and was made memorable by their choice of music. The couples strode down the aisle to the sounds of Pink Floyd's Signs of Life, an instrumental track from the album A Momentary Lapse of Reason. It was a wedding ceremony that I will remember forever.

Kirsten Hawkins is an event planner from Nashville, TN. Visit

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for more

event planning tips, strategies, and resources.



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