

Kol Mitzhalot

Technical Tips and Advice for Parents of the *Chattan* and *Kallah* /// **Version 14**

Mazel tov! It's finally happening!

Your joy knows no bounds, your eyes shed tears of happiness, and somewhere, deep down in your heart - you might be a bit worried too... As parents, you are about to face a series of huge expenses that can cause even affluent families to struggle. In our generation, living costs are very high, and the expenses prior to a wedding reach unbelievable proportion, especially for *avrechim* and *Bnei Torah* with limited income. It's important to know that everything written here falls under the categories of "possible," "customary" or "preferable," but is no way "necessary"! It is possible to put more and more effort into each detail, endlessly.

The purpose of this booklet is to make the many arrangements during this busy period easier and to provide those organizing the wedding with an idea of what to expect, what they must organize, and when. We hope that this booklet will help maintain the emotional calmness so important during this period and make more room for truly enjoying the joyous occasion and thanking Hashem for His great kindness. It helps to know that most of the necessary arrangements are listed here, eliminating the need to try to think of "what else is left to do..." (We'd also like to take this opportunity to recommend that you keep a calendar in order to stay on top of the dates and times of the different tasks).

The first version of the booklet was the product of the thoughts and experiences of the author, but over time, we received hundreds (!) of emails on the subject and were exposed to the pain of many families who lost large sums of money and whose joy was severely tainted. They felt, after that fact, that "if only someone had told me...", things could have been different. Those parents shared their experiences and the lessons they learned so that we could spread the information and save others the severe distress. We have incorporated the lessons and messages in this booklet and attempted to emphasize points that many people repeated. Therefore, we recommend that even parents who have made several weddings already read the booklet thoroughly at least once, as a wise person learns from the experiences of others.

The booklet is meant for parents based on the norm, but it is also possible that not all of the arrangements will be made by the parents, but rather by uncles and aunts, siblings, friends, a professional wedding planner, or anyone else. The vast majority of the information is relevant to anyone organizing an event, not only the parents of the couple.

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Mazel tov! | **Gmach Birkat Yisrael**

Before the *Simcha* /// Laying the Cornerstone

The decision has finally been made, and your dear children are engaged. Now, it is your turn to meet the future in-laws, get to know them, as well as to settle how you will be cooperating in order to **lay the cornerstone**, the foundations of the new home that is about to be built.

Without you - the parents, the couple would not be here today, and without you, it will also be very difficult for them to get started and establish themselves. Therefore, it is worthwhile to approach this subject thoughtfully, with understanding, mutual respect, and most of all – the desire to give the new couple a sense of stability and security.

Before we get into the list of details that are worth discussing, we will offer a general recommendation that has repeated itself from numerous parents, and that is to discuss every detail and every step with the other side, in order to avoid one-sided decisions, misunderstandings, confusion, unpleasant experiences, and more. This is true both at the beginning of the process and throughout the entire period until the wedding, and even going forward. Several parents who made weddings shared that after asking the other side, delicately and hesitantly, about certain options (such as skipping a specific element to save money, or a particular custom), they discovered to their surprise that the other side was happy to hear the idea, or that the issue was not important to them at all, and they reached an immediate agreement.

[Parenthetically, there are certain 'rules' that are common in different communities and sectors, like that the *chuppah* is usually according to the *chattan's* customs (since he is bringing her into his *chuppah*), the engagement is usually hosted by the *kallah*, and so forth. But the following beautiful story is worth mentioning in this context: in America, in the days of **Rav Moshe Feinstein**, ZT"l, there were families in which both parents (the father and mother) would walk their son to the *chuppah*, and families in which the two fathers would walk the *chosson*, while the mothers would walk the *kallah* (like the custom in Israel). This difference in customs often aroused great tension between the parents and caused a lot of distress to both families, with each side demanding to follow its own custom. When Rav Moshe was asked which custom should be followed, he replied, "In our family, we have an iron rule that we won't compromise on under any circumstances! **By us, our custom is to do what the other side wants...**")

This is especially important in light of the fact that every small friction at this sensitive stage of building a new home can have very long-term effects, even more so if the couple themselves are aware of it. **Our warm recommendation is not to involve the couple themselves at all** in any issue regarding which there is a difference of opinion or an argument, and all of the discussions on this topic should be held **directly between the parents**, not through the couple, who aren't meant to know or be involved at all! This section was added following dozens (!) of messages that we received and stories about issues that started out tense and uncomfortable, and after a pleasant and friendly conversation, were resolved in peace. In any event, **this is not the focus of the booklet**, which is intended to provide technical information only; every person should do as they see fit, and may truth and peace always prevail.

Some of the arrangements are details that everyone discusses, while others depend on personal preference. Moreover, there are those who prefer to write down every detail and summarize it all with precise amounts and definitions, in order to avoid any possible misunderstanding, while there are others who opt for more general agreements, without getting into the small details. This too could arouse some tension, and a lot of motivation and mutual understanding is necessary to overcome it. Consider whether it is better to feel slightly uncomfortable now, or risk a bigger argument later.

Although it is difficult to make a list that suits a range of communities and customs that are sometimes extremely different from each other, we have attempted to include most of the details below, and each family can select the relevant elements and the weight that they want to place on each part.

- Place of residence**, permanent? Temporary? Buy? Rent? The parents decide? The couple decides?
- Support in buying an apartment** [who gives, how much, when, how], what is included [related expenses, renovations, taxes, fees].
- Support in buying furniture**, for those buying an apartment, **what** [living room: bookcase / table / chairs / kitchen: cabinets / dining area / countertop / sink / bedroom: beds / closet / nightstands / chest of drawers], **how much** [limit for total amount, limit for amounts of each item, setting the general level of quality].
- Support in buying electrical appliances, basic** [refrigerator, washing machine, oven, stovetop] and **extras** if desired [air conditioning, microwave, heating].
- Support in paying rent** [if an apartment is owned/not owned, and what happens if the reality changes and an apartment is bought].
- Support for the couple**, general and specific, if at all, how much, usually according to what was originally settled.
- Organizing the events**, who is doing what [engagement party - yes/no and where? *Aufruf*? *Shabbat Sheva Brachot* - only, or together instead of the *Aufruf*].

- Wedding expenses**, irrelevant to settle all of the details now, but it is possible to set a limit on the amount or to check that the general idea is the same regarding the **venue** [style, kashrut, level, estimated number of guests on each side and their division] **and service providers** [limit on amounts? band, photographer].
- Customers**, in general - are there special customs, unique or unusual expectations.
- Gifts**, at the engagement and at the wedding, **for whom** - the couple / parents / event (what to do with extras), **for what** (for the couple as they desire / for the apartment (some are worried about needless frivolity), **from whom**. What about gifts that were officially given for one purpose but they agreed would be used for a different purpose.

Stage One /// The Day After the *Vort*

There are things that should be closed as soon as possible, right after the *vort*

Venue

The first thing to do after the engagement is to **look for a venue**, which will also determine the date of the wedding. There are less busy seasons of the year (winter, Elul), and periods when, within a few hours, a hall can be taken! Therefore, it is a good idea to work quickly and check a few venues simultaneously, and to close with the most suitable one. There are halls where the catering is ordered separately, and this should also be settled immediately. It is clear that this stage (like all of the details to follow) needs to be coordinated and agreed upon with the "other side." Make sure that there are no important events at the yeshiva / schools / work / in the family on this date.

For your convenience, you can use **Gmach Birkat Yisrael's list of halls**, which features the full contact information for halls all over the country: name, address, contact person, telephone, guest capacity, accessibility features, and so forth. The list can be downloaded from the website directly at [Text Ratz Publishing](#) (accessible with all filters). If you have decided to hold a *Shabbat Aufruf* / *Sheva Brachot* in a hall – that should also be booked as soon as possible.

After you have closed on a hall "orally," you will usually be asked to provide a deposit within a few days, and to sit and settle all of the event details. Before you pay the deposit and sign a contract with the management of the venue - here are a few **very important** points and tips;

- Electricity** - Verify that there is no electrical clock that turns off the lights or sockets earlier than your scheduled end time (especially for those who tend to end late). Make sure that all of the sockets will have power (for the design of the *kallah's* chair, in the kitchen, the photographer, etc.).
- Hours** - Check that the hall will already be open in the early afternoon hours for the catering staff and for you, that the floor will already be clean, the tables set up, the power on, the waiters will already be present, the kitchen will operate at the desired pace, and more.
- Cleaning services** - Verify whether the venue provides, as part of the package, cleaning of the entrances, restrooms, bar tables and more during the course of the event. If you don't ask, sometimes you will not receive this part. If necessary, coordinate in advance that the tables will be cleared away quickly at the end of the meal in order to make room for the dancing. This is often delayed or not done at all, and it can cause crowding and pressure during the dancing.
- Morning events** - Make sure that no events are being held the same morning or at noon, and if there are - be very careful to receive a clear promise that everything will be ready on time, that the *kallah's* chair and any other equipment will be guarded carefully. In such a case, it is worth asking a cousin to pop in at afternoon time to check that everything is under control.
- Phone numbers** - Get the phone number of the event manager, maintenance person, security, kitchen manager/head waiter and more, just in case.
- Tips for waiters** - If you want, you can ask for an option of paying a fixed tip in advance to the head waiter for all of the waiters, **on condition** that they don't come to ask at the end of the event. This is very convenient, due to the goodbyes and wishes at the end of the event, the photos, and so forth.
- Leftover food** - There are halls that randomly refuse to give the hosts the leftover food (they have another event tomorrow...), although the hosts paid top dollar for it! Include this condition in advance, even if you think now that you won't want to take it.

Price - All - all - all included. Many hosts find themselves paying for unexpected fees, such as for cleaning, "lighting fee" (really!), "service" (in addition to the tips for the waiters!), the *mashgiach kashrut* (even though they ordered expensive catering with a proper *hashgacha*...), security, and more.

Everything needs to be specified in a signed agreement! If the hall has its own contract - review it carefully, and don't hesitate to add your own clauses. Being slightly uncomfortable now = greater peace of mind later.

Catering

There are halls that provide the food themselves and cook onsite, and there are halls that have an agreement with a specific caterer, as well as halls that allow you to choose the caterer. When you calculate the costs and compare venues (if there are a few options), calculate the price for renting the hall + cost of the food per number of guests. The hall with cheaper catering prices is not always cheaper once you add the cost of the venue itself. **Important!** In terms of the food, check that the price includes e-v-e-r-y-t-h-i-n-g.

At the popular halls, it is not customary to hold a tasting dinner, and the menu is usually familiar and can be settled over the phone. If you don't know exactly how many meals you will need, check with the caterer if you can get "reserve meals"- meaning, if the tables become crowded, the waiters will open new tables, and only then will you pay for them. On the other hand, it might be better for the waiters not to make this decision themselves, but rather to arrange that they must ask a family member (make sure you appoint someone in advance to do this, see 'Wedding assistant' below). This is even more relevant regarding the buffet table (*mesamchim* meals). In addition, the division of seats should be proportionate to the table and not too crowded.

It is clear (meaning, check) that the number of meals that you paid for is set in advanced, and will not be "determined according to demand at the event itself." Consider in advance whether to have a table of honor and how many seats it will have, so that it won't be empty, or worse - won't have enough seats.

If you are offered several menus at different levels, check whether upgrading to the more expensive menu actually makes a significant difference in the food (on the table, not on paper), or whether the difference isn't worth the additional amount, especially if you aren't going to serve meat and so forth. When you choose a menu, especially at fancier venues, don't be tricked by the sophisticated names of the dishes, which you may discover are just ordinary foods (these venues usually let you taste the different options in advance, when you come to sign with the hall). At halls popular in the Charedi sector, tastings are not very common, and the parents usually know the standard menu by heart.

When a *mesamchim* buffet is provided, check with the management of the hall that it will actually be provided in practice. Often, in the commotion of the wedding, the matter is forgotten, the food is not brought out to the buffet table, trash piles up, the drinks are finished, the food supply is halted too early, and the service you paid good money for isn't actually provided to your guests. In addition, check that the waiters will clear the tables during the dancing if needed; sometimes they forget, especially if it is an external caterer. It is recommended to appoint someone to be responsible for all of these technical details and remove the burden from your shoulders (see below: Wedding assistant).

When the food is not prepared in the kitchen, rather brought in from outside, it is important to check that the hall will allow the use of its kitchen, if it has one. There have been cases of the management refusing, the *mashgiach kashrut* refusing, and so on. Check this issue in advance. If the food is brought in from outside, think in advance about the types of foods that often get ruined in transit, delicate elements that can fall apart or sensitive foods (lettuce, carrots, couscous, and so forth) that can spoil quickly, especially in the summer and in hot seasons. Sign **a clear, written contract** summarizing all of the details (the caterer usually requires this), and make sure that the contract is executed in full at the event itself (this will be the job of the wedding assistant). Usually, you will be asked to provide a deposit upon signing the contract, which is a certain percent of the deal.

Tip! If space is problematic, you can bring impressive bags of sweets to the children in the family and give them out immediately as the meal begins, outside the hall. In this way, everyone will be happy. When this is done, check if it is more worthwhile to make a bulk order that includes Shabbat as well.

Photographer

In terms of photographers, the demand is high too, and it's a good idea to book one quickly. On the one hand - what is left after the wedding (on technical level!) are the photos and videos; on the other hand - not many couples open their albums on a daily or monthly basis, after a few years have gone by. There are photographers who are more expensive than the standard, but sometimes their work does not justify their high rates. Therefore, it is not worth splurging on a high price, but attempts to be too thrifty can also result in a lot of heartache. In our experience, younger and less familiar photographers put a lot more effort into their work in order to prove themselves, compared with famous photographers who sometimes seem to have lost their enthusiasm a bit. Considering these points and discussing with the "other side" could lead you to the right choice for your families.

There are photographers who will let you choose the good pictures out of all of the photos taken (some utilize special software), while other photographers will do it themselves. What's better? You decide. Even for quick, efficient couples, this can sometimes drag the process out for months.

We have been asked to point out: When the photographer does whatever he wants, a situation can easily arise in which it is forbidden to look at the album / video, according to the *Shulchan Aruch*. This is especially relevant to videos of the dancing (even if you are not stringent in this area, there may be women who are and it is worth respecting their wishes), certain photography positions, and more. Insist on your preferences, he is working for you!

Photo shoots at locations: If this is important to you, coordinate the details as well. We received very painful letters on this topic, and many *kallahs* severely regretted their photo shoot. Common reasons were: too much heat and sweating before the wedding (or worse - torrential rain), dirt and dust on the wedding dress, pressure and mistakes in calculating the time, coming late to the wedding and exhaustion from the photo shoot. Therefore, it is worth considering if this addition to the album is actually important to you. In any event, there might be a grove, overlook, garden, or pretty location near the hall which you can visit more easily during the hour before the wedding.

Mandatory: Prepare a **detailed, clear, written contract** in advance and copy the parts relevant to you (there are definitely parts that can be omitted):

- The event will take place at _____ in the city of _____ on _____ (better to include the secular date to avoid misunderstandings).
- There will be a separate female photographer for the women, at a quality equal to the male photographer (so that she doesn't show up with a regular camera).
- There will be video photography at HD quality throughout the entire event + editing + a clip (high-quality video clip) at the beginning.
- The photographer himself will be present (if you are interested in him specifically) and not a team representing him (which could turn out to be very amateur).
- The entire team will be onsite at the hall from ___ until ___ exactly (option: with the exception of the female photographer, who will be present from ___ until ___).
- There will be a photo shoot before the event, beginning at _____, at (location): _____ (not recommended, as aforementioned).
- At the beginning and/or end of the event, there will be family photos with/without backgrounds, and outdoor photos for the *chattan* and *kallah*.
- If additional time is needed at the event, the price will be: ___ per hour, according to a relative calculation of the time.
- The photos will be printed as (a digital album? album with pockets?), photo size _____, with ___ printed pages.
- For the album, it will be possible to choose ___ photos out of all of the photos taken.
- In addition, the photographer will also provide ___ albums (for the parents), type _____, size _____.
- A CD of photos from the event at development quality will be provided by _____ at the latest, or ___ days after the photo selection is finished.
- ___ copies of the video will be provided by _____ at the latest.
- The printed album will be ready by _____ at the latest, or ___ days after selections have been made.
- The final price for everything, including: photographer, female photographer, video, editing, (delivery), and additions will be _____ **and all prices already include VAT.**
- ___% will be paid as a deposit, ___% at the end of the wedding, and ___% will be paid upon receipt of the album. |Signature|

- The standard price for **all** of the above, from a professional, familiar photographer, should be about NIS 7000.

Band

The wedding band industry is primarily run by managers (agents). At many yeshivot, there is a wedding band manager who can be contacted to arrange a band that meets your preferences from a spiritual, professional, and financial perspective (you will usually get a better price through him as well). The prices for 'regular' bands range from NIS 3,000 - NIS 10,000, and vary depending on whether you have a *poiker* / keyboard / instruments, etc. You can sign a contract with them, although usually the well-known bands that work through a manager do not cause problems and follow through with what was agreed upon (we, in any event, have hardly received any complaints about bands). When

calculating the number of tables in the hall, add about half a table for the band, sound, and photography teams (you don't really want hungry, weak service providers).

When you close with a band, coordinate the following details with them:

- They will be all ready and waiting **from ___ to ___** including/not including the *chuppah*.
- They will record** the entire wedding, including the *chuppah* and bentching (if microphones are used), as you decide.
- Coordinate the **style of the music** to the guests / yeshiva.
- Whether they should play / not play "*Yamim al yimei melech*" for every rabbi who enters (if you appoint a wedding assistant - tell the band to listen only to his instructions).
- Whether to give / not give **the microphone to guests** (especially those who know how to sing...).
- If you want them to learn a **specific song** beforehand, for the wedding. If it is a song of your own, and if you have the sheet music - send it to them in advance.
- They will burn the recording onto a **CD** at the end of the wedding and give it to the family (or to the wedding assistant).
- The final price** for the entire evening, including all of the details settled.
- Recommended: a price **for additional time, per hour** in the event that this is needed at the end of the event (which will be measured relatively).

"The Other Side"

As mentioned at the beginning of the booklet, it is very important for each side to coordinate with the other side, especially before closing a deal with anyone. This includes:

- Venue** - Location, level, no. of meals, menu, hours, payment, and more.
- Band** - It is customary that the *chattan* chooses this, but not always; the same is true regarding the songs, style, microphone, hours, and more.
- Photographer** - Level, cost, hours, outdoor photo shoot, studio, female photographer, video.
- Invitations** - Wording, hours, design, size, type, quantity, mailing.
- Borrowed equipment** - *Chuppah* equipment, etc. - so that it isn't brought twice (or worse - not brought at all).
- Payments** - To the service providers and waiters at the end of the wedding, how much, which side is paying (see below).
- Honorary roles** - *T'naim*, *Mesader Kiddushin*, witnesses, *ketubah*, *brachot*, bentching, *Sheva brachot*.
- Schedule** - For the wedding, when will the *chuppah* be (sunset?), Yichud room, dancing, bentching, end time.
- Sheva brachot** - Who will make them, where, when, who will attend, how many are invited, *panim chadashot*.
- Shabbat** - *Aufruf/Sheva brachot* (many do this together and *share* the costs), who will attend, how many, children, sheets and bedding, etc.
- Apartment** - Buy or rent, location, mortgage, participation, furniture and more - usually settled in advance.

Engagement announcement

There are different opinions on this matter - for some, this is a very important and obligatory matter, while others think it is a waste of money (there are places where the announcement can be made for free). In any event, if you have decided to invest in it, take a minute to think about the wording (Rabbi/Rav/Reb/R' - *Shlita*, *Hashem yishmerehu v'yichayehu/nero yair*). Make sure that there are no mistakes in the names, dates, and titles. For some reason, in many cases, this simple, small bit of text has the most mistakes in the entire newspaper. It is a good idea to receive the sample by email and approve the announcement, and not rely on oral confirmation.

Stage Two /// Before the Engagement Party

Gifts and Jewelry for the *Kallah*

It is customary for you, the mother of the *chattan*, to give your new *kallah* jewelry at the engagement party (there are those who have the custom of putting the new jewelry on the *kallah* personally). Most people buy gold jewelry, despite the expense (after all, it's a once-in-a-lifetime gift). It is very worthwhile to plan this purchase correctly, and

consider how to achieve the best results, in terms of your budget and in terms of the *kallah's* taste. If you are paying a few thousands for this gift, it is a very good idea to make sure that the *kallah* really loves it and will enjoy it for many years to come. Try to ask for recommendations of a good store/seller; there are stores with exorbitant prices that aren't justified by the quality.

You, dear mother of the *chattan*, have a few options when it comes to buying jewelry for the *kallah*:

- A. **Surprise** the *kallah* with jewelry of your choice, according to your personal taste. This option is very, very, very discouraged, even if you explicitly state that "the *kallah* can exchange it." Most *kallahs* don't feel comfortable returning what they received, and she might feel like this was a missed opportunity if you didn't choose something that suits her taste.
- B. **Bring a few options** to the engagement party. There are stores who will agree to this, usually if you leave a deposit. This is not a good option either, because the *kallah* might not actually like any of the choices, because the *kallah* isn't always free to think about it at the engagement party, and because in this case, the *kallah* will feel even more uncomfortable exchanging it at the store later...
- C. **Go with the *kallah* to choose.** Even if you are totally sure that your *kallah* feels comfortable going with you - she might not actually feel at ease in this type of situation. You don't know each other well enough yet, and yes - her choice will have a direct impact on the amount of money that you will pay, and it's uncomfortable. We recommend skipping this option!
- D. **A sales representative.** There are sales representatives who can come to the home with several samples, or worse - with a printed catalog, to present their wares. Usually, buying through them is much less trustworthy than buying from an official, recognized store, and their selection is not great either.
- E. **The customary, recommended option:** choose a store or a trustworthy, well-known seller from home who has a wide selection, and coordinate a maximum price for the jewelry with the salesperson. You can (but do not need) to tell her which types of jewelry can be included in this price (necklace / bracelet / ring / earrings / watch / Jerusalem of Gold piece). Afterward, the *kallah* can go, accompanied by whoever she chooses, and pick her jewelry based on what the salesperson shows her (according to the budget you determined). Check that the store has good, trustworthy service and that they provide a warranty for the jewelry. If there isn't enough of a selection at one store, you can choose a few stores in advance, and the *kallah* can find jewelry at one of them. Or, make it clear to the *kallah* that if she doesn't find something in the store that she likes, she shouldn't "compromise" on something, rather she should tell you and you will look for a different store. It's fine!

Very important! If you decided to choose the recommended option and settle on a budget with the jewelry store, make it very clear that they are providing service to **your *kallah***. After she makes her choice, check that they write her name **very clearly** on the jewelry that she has chosen, so that nothing will get mixed up by mistake. There have already been stories of people who bought a completely different piece of jewelry by mistake. The *kallah* ended up upset that she received something she didn't choose and didn't like at all, and the mother-in-law got annoyed at the price that exceeded her limit and wasn't even pretty. But both sides didn't say a word for years because they "felt uncomfortable" (it might be a good idea to check with the *kallah* delicately that the item she chose is "the one with the circles at the sides..." [Wow! It's gorgeous!] in order to spare yourselves heartache later).

In any event, if you buy the jewelry according to your taste, it is a very good idea to make sure that **it can be exchanged**. This is true regarding any gift (to anyone).

There are many different types of gifts and many customs and opinions, and sometimes, they differ depending on the period of the year when the engagement takes place - holidays, birthdays, etc. The following is a short list of customary gifts, and when they are usually given (in the Litvish / Sefardi communities. Among Chassidim, it changes according to each *chassidut* and the length of the engagement period), but **none of these are obligatory, and they can differ based on the custom and the context!** It is recommended to consult with women in the family and people who are "in the know."

- Bouquet of flowers** See separate section.
- Ring** Yichud room [aside from the wedding ring], there are those who give a diamond ring.
- Necklace** At the engagement party or later during the period. Most people give gold jewelry.
- Earrings** At the engagement party or later during the period. Most people give gold jewelry.
- Bracelet** At the engagement party or later during the period. Most people give gold jewelry.
- Watch** Engagement party / first Shabbat / birthday / other.

- Siddur** First Shabbat / meeting / other
- Machzor set** On holidays, if relevant, or at any time
- Tehillim** Shabbat / Last time they meet
- Candlesticks** Shabbat of the *Aufruf* / *Sheva brachot*

Gifts for the *Chattan*

Engagement party

It is customary for the father of the *kallah* to buy the *chattan* a set of **Talmud Bavli**, and to check which Shas he prefers to receive. It is possible to get one or two Gemaras wrapped up in a special gift package and then sent to the *chattan's* house or to the hall. It can also be purchased later. The common editions purchased as a gift for the *chattan* are:

- Shas Oz V'Hadar - *Chattanim* edition (27 volumes, 36 cm) - estimated price: NIS 3,600
- Shas Oz V'Hadar - Expanded edition (27 volumes) - estimated price: NIS 3,000
- Shas Oz V'Hadar - Regular edition (20 volumes) - estimated price: NIS 2,500
- The new Shas Vilna - Expanded edition (27 volumes) - estimated price: NIS 2,700
- The new Shas Vilna - Regular edition (20 volumes) - estimated price: NIS 2,100

For *chattanim* who are *bnei yeshivot* only - It is possible and recommended to order sets for discounted prices with free delivery from the Text Ratz offices, by calling [039-111-444](tel:039-111-444) Extension 2, or from the [Text Ratz website](#). Additional sets are also available from them - *Tur*, *Shulchan Aruch*, combined *Tur-Shulchan Aruch*, *Rambam Frankel* edition, *Mishnayot*, and more. In addition to the Shas, some give the *chattan* a **watch** at the engagement party, or a different gift. **It is always a good idea to make sure that it can be exchanged.**

During the Engagement Period

The customary times for giving the significant gifts include: the first Shabbat with the in-laws, holidays, birthdays, and the last time they meet.

Possible ideas for gifts for the *chattan*: **Shulchan Aruch, Rambam, Tur, Mishnah Berurah, Nach, table/standing *shtender*, kiddush cup, machzor set, havdalah set, etrog box** (or a *mehudar etrog*), **chanukiah, megillah, Seder plate, watch, cufflinks, tie** (comes with the risk of not knowing his taste). At the other meetings (for those who hold them), usually a small gift or letter is given, and your son/daughter will probably manage with it alone.

For the Wedding

It is customary for the *kallah* to buy the *chattan* a **tallit** to use at the *chuppah*. Preferences that should be checked with the *chattan*: ● size ● type of fabric (regular/non-slip) ● length and thickness of the strings ● how they should be tied ● color of the stripes (for those who wear an all-white *tallit*). It is also customary to give a *tallit* and *tefillin* bags set. Check: ● Type [velvet/leather/other] ● color ● size of the bag ● embroidering the name (full name/part/initials).

Engagement bouquet

There is a widespread custom today that the mother of the *chattan* sends the *kallah* a large, beautiful bouquet of flowers. The average cost of this bouquet ranges from NIS 900 to NIS 2,000. It is nice to bring the bouquet to the hall where the engagement party is being held, or to send it to the *kallah's* house. Before you order, ask to see actual photos from the florist, unless it is an experienced, well-known store. In addition, it is worth comparing prices and styles at a few stores.

There are those that charge high prices, as is standard in this market, although their quality does not justify the price at all. By the way, it might be best to check the price of a large, impressive bouquet at the desired price (you can ask for photos), without telling the florist that it is for a *kallah*. The moment you say the word *kallah*, the price may skyrocket.

The bouquet should be prepared as close as possible to when it will be delivered, especially in the summer, in order to avoid quick wilting. If you are adding a vase or dish, check that its proportions and style are logical, so that it can be used in the couple's future home (with their future crawling toddlers too...).

A very nice idea that has become popular in recent years: The bouquet will eventually wilt, and aside from the vase and maybe a plastic piece, nothing will be left of the significant monetary investment. Therefore, there are many who purchase a meaningful gift for the *kallah* (mixer / food processor / steam iron / power drill / other) and include with it a nice bouquet equal to the difference between a large bouquet and the price of the gift. Professional florists

are familiar with the concept, and usually find an elegant way to integrate the bouquet with the gift package. In this way, even after the flowers wilt, the gift remains for many years to come. In this case, it is a good idea to include a return receipt as well.

Shtar T'naim (Engagement contract)

For those who have the custom, coordinate with a rabbi (the Rosh Yeshiva, one of the rabbis from the yeshiva, the community rabbi, etc.) to arrange the *T'naim*. Ask about the desired wording of the *shtar* and purchase the relevant one at a book or Judaica store (you can also buy the *ketubah* at the same time, see below).

Engagement party

It is customary that the *kallah's* side organizes the engagement party, and correspondingly - the event takes place according to the *kallah's* parents' preferences and in their neighborhood. Today, many do not hold the engagement party at a hall, especially if the *vort* was relatively large and most of the family already attended. There are those who hold the party in a large home, or in a small hall.

If you are going to take the leftover food with you, check if suitable containers will be available. If you don't have any use for the quantities of leftover food, you can donate it to a local yeshiva (don't forget to include the *hechsher!*) It's a pity to throw it all out.

If you are having the party at a hall, it is recommended to quickly review the additional sections in this booklet about catering for weddings and organizing the *Shabbat Chattan*. Take what is relevant for you from there. Remember to bring a camera + battery or to appoint someone to take pictures with their cell phone. If you have a speaker system, prepare a playlist of appropriate background music in advance. There are Gmachs that lend out speaker systems for free, or for a nominal fee.

Third Stage ///The Engagement Period

Buying an Apartment

The details on the subject of housing are abundant and change from case to case, and they could fill an entire book on their own. As such, the assistance that we can provide in this booklet does not fully respond to the need. But one general recommendation that many families mentioned is: if you are planning to buy an apartment, and you have the means - **work as quickly as possible and don't delay at all!** When a decision is made to buy an apartment "later..." - this could end up taking a few years, and in the meantime, the money is wasted on rent, prices go up, and when you are finally ready to buy, the financial means aren't always still available.

You can look for an apartment via companies that don't take an agent fee, but rather just a monthly subscription fee. The savings amount to tens of thousands of shekels. It is **obligatory** to check with the Ministry of Construction and Housing whether you are entitled to purchase an apartment through the *Mechir Lamishtaken* program. If you are - invest the NIS 240 to submit an application, and if you win - it's your gain.

Renting an Apartment

It's impossible to look for an apartment to rent three months before the wedding, because you don't want to pay for those months needlessly, and the landlord won't save you the apartment either. On the other hand, it is risky to wait until the last week, and there have been couples who had to pay to stay at a hotel for a week, or to live with their parents. Therefore, about **a month and a half before the wedding**, start looking for an apartment, and as time goes by, work more intensively and quickly. Don't be too lazy to go and see the apartment for yourselves and check it thoroughly, because you will have plenty of time later to regret that laziness...

In most cases, especially in areas that are Charedi or becoming more Charedi (pretty much everywhere, B"H), it is not a good idea to approach an official real estate agency that takes a month's rent for finding you an apartment. Most landlords advertise their apartments with offices that don't charge an agent fee, but rather a monthly subscription fee ranging between NIS 10-200. They will send you daily or weekly reports by mail/fax/email. A few examples are Yisa Bracha, Diromat, Bursat HaDiro, Luach Ha'aretz, and more. Searching via these companies produces much better results without the added cost. The advertisements usually overlap and there is no reason to pay double to two such companies.

When you go to see an apartment that is for rent (some of the following is also relevant when buying an apartment), compare these elements based on your priorities:

- Total price** Including: electricity, water, gas, municipal property taxes, building committee fee, payments for repairs, painting when you leave, special payments.
- Furniture** None / partial / fully furnished. Check that the furniture is in proper working order and if there is anything broken, etc. - notify the landlord in advance.
- Size** Less than 20 sq.m. is too crowded. More than 80 sq.m. is too large for a couple. Of course, according to your norms.
- Condition of the apartment** Regular lighting, sunlight, air flow, ventilation, moisture, regular/private entrance, etc.
- Age of the apartment** Flooring, paint, stability, noise between floors, tilted flooring for draining of water, animals.
- Solar water heater** Boiler, Junkers [average cost of a boiler for a couple is NIS 100-150 per month. Take this into account]
- Reception** A young couple doesn't usually have a landline phone, and there are apartments that don't have cell phone reception - a fact that could be slightly annoying.
- Location of the apartment** Level, area (near shul, kollel, work, buses, mini-market, accessible by car), elevator, surroundings, community.
- Landlord** Ask about his personality, check with the previous tenants if possible, and maybe with neighbors as well.
- Leaving early** Is it possible to leave in the middle of the contract, and under what conditions (alternate tenant, etc.).
- Undertakings** Is it possible to lend/rent the apartment to friends of the tenants, painting upon exit, other appendices of the contract.

The above is meant to give you an idea of the relevant issues, but in most cases, you will need to forfeit at least one of the sections. Be realistic, compare the characteristics of the various apartments available. Out of the apartments you found - choose the best one, and don't wait for the perfect apartment to appear. Worst comes to worst - you can always try to shorten the duration of the contract (the standard period is one year). By the way, if you need to pay municipal property taxes - check with the municipality if you are eligible for a discount (this can save you thousands of shekels per year).

Important! If you never had an apartment registered under your name, or - if you bought an apartment but aren't going to live there in the near future due to continued construction, etc., and your income is under a certain amount, you are entitled to assistance for rental payments from the government. The assistance can reach up to NIS 850 per month for a couple without children. You must prepare:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> All checking accounts showing all sources of income | <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of your ID card + appendix |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Application | <input type="checkbox"/> Valid rental contract |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Confirmation of payment of the application fee | <input type="checkbox"/> Marriage certificate |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of a check with bank details |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> List of employers from the National Insurance Institute |

This can be submitted to one of the assistance companies: **Milgam**, **Amidar** or **Mgar**. You can receive all of the relevant information from the Ministry of Housing at *5442. You are legally entitled to this money, and the Torah teaches us to value our money!

Buying Furniture

If you are entering an empty apartment and need to buy furniture, it is highly recommended to start checking the options as early as possible. When people go shopping under pressure, they make every possible mistake. If absolutely necessary, it is always possible to arrange temporary second-hand furniture until the actual purchase is made.

Take into account that furniture orders can sometimes take up to **60** days to supply, especially wood furniture. Electronic appliances arrive within a day or two, and a technician can come to install them two days later (ovens and washing machines can only be opened and hooked up by licensed technicians, otherwise you lose the warranty). The critical items for a home are the **refrigerator, washing machine, and mattresses** (it is possible to ask for a spare base until the beds you bought arrive). With these items, it is possible to get by for a short period of time until the arrival of the oven/gas range, closets, bookcase, and the rest of the furniture, so these should be purchased first. In general, it is

recommended to wait until after the wedding to buy anything that doesn't need to be bought in advance, so that you will be more aware of your actual needs.

The following are a few lessons learned from the costly mistakes of others:

- ☑ **Never buy at the first store you enter!** Even if the salesperson seems very honest, check prices at three different stores, at least. It is recommended, even mandatory, to check on price comparison websites. The differences can be huge, and it is your right to notify the salesperson of the competitor's excellent prices. Most of the furniture you will see in stores is manufactured by the same companies, so the differences are mainly in the warranty, service, and price. Check if the price includes VAT, and how much installation (does the technician have an official certificate?), delivery, and more will cost.
- ☑ **Summarize clearly and in writing**, before you pay, all of the details of the transaction. Products (name and exact model number promised), dimensions, colors, additions, exact price of each product with all of its added elements, exact price for delivery and installation (elevator? Bars on windows? Removal of a door? Pipes?), and the latest date for supplying the items. This will save you arguments and heartache later on.
- ☑ **It is mandatory to measure the exact dimensions and sizes** of the areas where your furniture is meant to go, so that you don't discover that the cover of the gas range knocks into the edge of the countertop, and the closet is slightly taller than the ceiling... When buying furniture for a temporary apartment, make sure there is an **option of disassembly and installation** at a later point (this differs based on the quality of the furniture and the manner of assembly, ask the salesperson), and choose **universal sizes** that will work in most apartments. Consider solutions such as a bookcase that can be divided into separate sections, a washing machine that opens at the top, sliding doors instead of hinged, etc.
- ☑ **It is worth checking in advance how many years are included in the warranty**, in order to save the cost of the insurance that the technician will offer you "at a special price valid only on the day of installation." For the warranty to be valid, it must appear on the invoice. **Important:** For some products, the warranty and your purchase documents need to be sent to the company's offices in order to be valid.
- ☑ **Accompanying items:** The technician may offer you surge protectors, hard water filters, faucets, pressure reducers, and a range of other products for your appliance, at a price that is double what you will find at the most expensive hardware store in the neighborhood (and some of them are actually worth buying).
- ☑ **When the products arrive**, check that they are completely intact. If you find any flaws - let the technician and the store know immediately, and if it bothers you - you can demand a repair or replacement. In addition, check that you received exactly what you ordered. It is a good idea to stand next to the technician so that he does a thorough job. If there is a serious issue - don't hesitate to send the product back with the delivery person, and definitely do not sign anything that says you received the product intact. Regarding electronic appliances, the technician is meant to sign the installation slip for the warranty.
- ☑ **Future use:** There are design elements that look good in the store, but you should consider future use as well. For example: white products usually get dirty // dark wood shows every scratch // sharp corners may look nice, until you knock into them with bare feet // have you left enough room for large objects? (oven? A crib??) // Try to think ahead, so that you don't regret your purchases later...

Nedunya

The *nedunya* is composed of numerous items that need to be purchased at different places, and this can take a long time. It is not a good idea to start buying anything before the engagement party, because the couple will probably receive gifts that will spare you the purchase. Moreover, if you are interested in contacting Gmachs and funds that provide *nedunya* items for discounted prices or even for free, there is no reason to buy for full price. After the engagement party, however, it is definitely a good idea to actively start buying the many items, in order to avoid pressure as the wedding approaches.

The full list of items can be found in the **Kol Kallah** booklet published by Birkat Yisrael. It is a good idea to check of what has already been purchased and motivate yourself to finish the list as soon as you can. Sometimes, people are tempted to buy the most expensive items, which seem to be the best quality, but remember that with so many different items, the price differences can add up to a significant sum. It also might be nice to leave room for the couple to upgrade as time goes by.

Gmachs / Funds

There are many Gmachs that lend out supplies for the event itself: benchers, prayer cards, flowers, tablecloths, dishes, *mechitzahs*, professional cooking and heating supplies, furniture, props for dancing with the *kallah*, *chuppah*

equipment (see below), and more. You can find lists of such Gmachs in phone books, local community directories, and more. Using a Gmach can save you thousands of shekels. **Request:** You reserved items from a Gmach, but then decided to cancel? Please let them know, so that others can enjoy the items instead!

In addition, there are many funds and organizations where you can obtain *nedunya* items or even stipends (the expenses can really add up) for wedding expenses, especially when there are extraordinary circumstances. To obtain them, you will usually be asked to send: the original wedding invitation, a photocopy of the *chattan* and/or *kallah* and/or parents' ID cards + appendix, details of the circumstances (no. of children in the family, income and expenses, etc.), a recommendation from the Rosh Yeshiva / community rabbi, bank account details / address for sending a check.

Invitations

Addresses

If you don't already have lists of your friends and family (from a bar mitzvah or prior wedding), prepare a new list, and try to do this quickly. How do you start? Very simple. First, take a pen and paper and write the "categories." For example: Family - father's side, family - mother's side, neighborhood, father's yeshiva, mother's workplace, etc. Now, next to each category, write down where information can be obtained for all of the people listed. For example - at the mother's workplace, the office can be contacted for a list of all of the staff members, from which you can pick the relevant people. The same can be done for the father's guests, and so forth. Family - contact relatives from each side who have recently hosted an event, since they probably already have a list. Then, review your cell phone contacts, and finally, the neighborhood directory.

If you have a computer - you can make a list in Excel that includes separate columns for: title (Rabbi / Professor / Dr.), last name, first name, street, number, apartment no., city, zip code. With this type of file, you can easily make labels (a function in Word) that can be printed on stickers [ask someone who knows how to do it]. This will save you hours of writing by hand, and the list can be saved for your next *simcha*, with small updates.

Printing

Try to calculate in advance how many invitations you will need, and add at least 10% to that number. Especially if this is the first wedding in the family, and you still do not have a good estimate. By the way, the list from your last bar mitzvah isn't sufficient, because the *chattan/kallah* will also take a certain number of invitations, and people have probably been added to the list in the meantime. Take into account that difference in price for printing 700 vs. 900 invitations is not high, but printing an additional 200 invitations separately costs much more. So make sure that you won't need to reprint extras. When in doubt, print extra rather than less.

Tip: Review the list of invitees, and count how many you think will stay for the meal (based on experience from previous events, not just guessing). This will help you determine how many meals to order from the caterer.

Invitation: In general, most people don't attribute much importance to the appearance of the invitation. Women are usually more concerned. Those who want to upgrade don't necessarily need to spend more. You can embellish an invitation by adding a small element at a minimal cost (a simple ribbon, diamond sticker, etc.). Especially if there are sisters/nieces who enjoy arts and crafts.

Envelopes: There are three sizes of invitation envelopes - envelopes provided by the venue, regular envelopes, envelopes by special order (consider whether the cost for sending them will be higher). The venue provides a fixed amount, or according to the number of meals ordered. Additional envelopes cost extra. Those who have chosen a non-standard size should check whether the invitation fits into the envelopes provided by the venue, and whether they weigh more than a regular letter (stamps will cost more). There are invitations with a folding piece that can replace the envelope. If you use these, make sure to print the name and address in the right place, in order to prevent them from getting lost in the mail.

Mail

If you are sending the invitations by mail, make sure to send them **at least** a month before the event. Don't have enough time? Check additional options at the post office, such as 24-hour mail, quick registered mail, and more (this is not cheap but sometimes necessary). When sending by mail, if you include the names of both families on the envelope, invitations may be sent back to the other side. Therefore, it is better for each side to list only their family's name (the addressee only knows them anyway).

There are private delivery and postal services, such as Heimishe Post, Yeshivot, and more. The cost is lower through them, and they are usually quicker, but they only provide services in central cities. In your area, you can deliver them yourselves (or your children can...), but if the addresses are complicated, it is recommended to use a professional

service. Take into account additional invitations for the grandparents, who will probably enjoy giving them out to their friends. Of course, provide the *chattan* and *kallah* with invitations as well for their friends and rabbis/teachers.

Clothing for the family members

Sometimes, there are so many things to do that we don't know where to start, but one area that we get a head start is on purchasing the clothing (and other items) as soon as possible. As the wedding gets closer, the pressure increases and it is a pity to compromise or make mistakes. This is the rule: whatever can be bought today - buy today!

If there are a few siblings who need clothes, it is convenient to do the shopping together (or to take each one separately for a full shopping trip and finish each child's purchases). Take into account that if you buy several items at one store in one purchase, you can condition the purchase on receiving a significant discount, and in many cases, the store owner will agree (at Charedi stores, not chain stores). In any event, make **detailed lists** of all of the clothing items needed for each family member as early as you can.

Dresses

Some families like to have matching dresses for all of the girls in the immediate family. There is no doubt that this looks lovely, but consider whether it is worth the effort and the cost. In any event, it is possible to buy, sew, or rent dresses. There are wonderful people who have opened Gmachs that rent out gorgeous matching dresses for all of the girls in the family, for free or at a nominal fee. This is a true act of kindness that saves families a lot of money.

Sewing or buying dresses should be arranged as early as possible because it can take time. Consider whether the elements are age appropriate. Check with a good professional seamstress who uses quality materials that will last, so that you can reuse the dresses in the future or rent/sell to others. If you rent dresses, check a few different places, ask for photos, and when you find a style you like, it is a good idea to go see them up close and check their condition.

Also check whether it is possible to sew and make alterations according to the sizes you need. There are Gmachs that rent dresses for cheap prices; just check that they have the sizes you need. Think about comfort as well, and make sure the dress won't feel too stiff during the event. You won't always find the same matching dress for everyone, and in order to sew a dress identical to the one you found, significant skill is needed so that the results look the same. If you aren't sure that sewing another matching dress will produce the desired result, it is better to look for a dress at a different place. In general, why not wear a nice dress from the last *simcha*?

Hairstyling

There are those who invest in professional hairstyling for the sisters, and in this case, it is also worth checking that the hairstylist can do a sufficiently professional job. Go to the hairstylist early and bring the dresses. It is recommended to avoid unstable, heavy hairstyles that could cause serious issues during the event itself.

If there are a few sisters, check what the additional fee is for having the hairstylist come to your home. The cost may be justified for your peace of mind. The *kallah's* sisters can get a better price if the hairstylist is doing the *kallah's* hair as well. In such a case, everything should be started early, beginning with the older sisters and ending with the youngest (since their hairstyles are at higher risk of falling apart). The *kallah* is last, unless she needs to leave for an outdoor photo shoot.

Check whether the dress needs to be worn before the hair and makeup are done, so as not to ruin them. If so, cover up the dress with plastic to prevent stains and dirt from the makeup and the hair styling. Tip: make a hole in a trash bag and push your head through. This will provide a hermetic cover that you can simply tear off afterward. Aim to finish these preparations at least an hour before you plan to leave the house.

Fourth Stage /// Before the Wedding

One week left...

About a week before the wedding, it is recommended to spend time calling the relevant service providers and people involved, in order to prevent any unwanted surprises. This includes: the *Mesader Kiddushin*, band, photographer, venue, caterer, makeup artist, *kallah* chair stylist, driver for the *chattan/kallah* if relevant, various Gmachs, and more. Verify that they remember the date (Hebrew date + secular date + day of the week), the hours, and all of the details that were settled, because if there were any misunderstandings, it would definitely be best to discover them a week early.

Wedding Assistant

This section is probably **the most important and significant recommendation in this booklet**, which can spare you a lot of heartache and regret. Many people who have implemented it have expressed their sincere thanks and applauded the idea, which saved them time, money, and a big headache.

Our recommendation is to **appoint an "assistant" representing you at the wedding**, who will make sure everything runs smoothly. The assistant can be a good friend, a cousin (better not to use a brother, but rather someone more external who won't be too engrossed in the wedding). Choose someone who is serious and responsible, so that the service providers will also treat him seriously, and who will act wisely and stay on top of things, without annoying the various professionals or marring the pleasant atmosphere of the event.

You will ask the assistant to come to the hall very early, and his role will be to make sure that all of the small and big details are progressing at the desired pace, when the families themselves are **too busy to pay attention to these things**. Like what, for example? Sometimes the hall "forgets" and doesn't fulfill its promises regarding the number of place settings, the menu, the hours, the cleanliness, etc. At many weddings, the event drags out (especially before bentching) for a long time without any real reason, and then there isn't enough time left for dancing. Therefore, it is warmly recommended to prepare an organized list of instructions and give it to the assistant (and to the parents, so they have a copy). The following is a suggested list that can be copied and printed, which you can obviously add to:

- Upon arriving at the hall:** Put the *kallah's* bag in the Yichud room. Concentrate all of the supplies for the *chuppah* in a safe, accessible location.
- Gifts** - Organize a corner for gifts, make sure there is a safe, envelopes, and pens (it shouldn't be hard for people who want to give you a gift to do so...)
- Then:** Check that the hall, the restrooms, and the furniture are relatively clean, and that there are really ___ number of place settings as agreed (men/women).
- Then:** Check that the menu completely matches what was ordered (come prepared with the menu that was agreed in advance). Do the same during the actual meal.
- Time:** ___ Check that the entire photography staff has arrived, and has brought the supplies agreed upon in advance (backgrounds, props). If not - call them urgently.
- Time:** ___ Check that the band and the ensemble has arrived as agreed. (Coordinate with them who will be responsible for telling them when to play 'Yamim' for rabbis.)
- Time:** ___ Check that the *Mesader Kiddushin* has arrived or is almost there, that the witnesses aren't in the middle of *Mincha*, that the microphone at the *chuppah* works properly.
- Time:** ___ Prepare supplies for the *chuppah*: candles and glass holders, wine, *kiddush* cup, light candles and hand them to parents of the *chattan* and *kallah* (recommended to appoint someone else to be responsible for this part).
- If they will walk to the *chuppah*** through a strong fan at the door, it is recommended to turn it off momentarily or to protect the flames from the wind with a hat/other way.
- A bit afterward**, when the *chuppah* starts, it is 'permissible' to put out the candles and pack them (this is not obligatory, just a custom).
- At the end of the *chuppah*:** Collect all of the supplies from the *chuppah* and keep them in a safe place. **Make sure that the *kallah's* parents have the *ketubah*!**
- After ___ minutes have passed**, check that the first course has been served on time. Is the music too strong and loud?
- Time:** ___ Check whether the photographer needs to be reminded to go to the Yichud room to take pictures.
- Time:** ___ (or ___ minutes after the *chuppah* has ended) - remind the parents/friends to knock on the Yichud room door.
- Time:** ___ Prepare a *kiddush* cup and wine, and remind the *chattan/kallah's* father to start getting ready for bentching and *Sheva brachot*.
- At the end of the meal:** Check that the waiters are clearing the tables and moving them aside for the dancing.
- Time:** ___ Check that the buffet (*mesamchim*) is functioning, that there is enough food, drinks, cups, etc. as agreed.
- Taxis:** The Rosh Yeshiva or an important rabbi has arrived? Check the issue of payment to for the taxi/driver. This can be prepared in advance.

- End of the dancing:** Take the CD from the band and keep it in a safe place (especially if there is no other copy).
- Toward the end:** Ask the kitchen to pack up all of the leftover food (as agreed, and if you can use it).
- Pictures:** Assemble all of the families, married couples, etc. near the background. It is a pity for to wait five minutes for each one separately.
- Mitzvah Tantz?** If relevant, make sure to organize the area quickly, otherwise it could be delayed for a long time for no real reason.
- End of the event:** Scan the hall and make sure there are no lost items, gifts, *chuppah* equipment, etc., make sure that the *kallah's* parents took the *ketubah*.

You can add any other relevant details based on your specific needs. Think how much stress and worrying can be eliminated by just one assistant who does his work well. It is recommended to give him a **list of phone numbers** of everyone connected to the event: the *Mesader Kiddushin* (his driver), witnesses for the *chuppah*, manager of the hall, head of the waiters, photographer, band, and more. In any event, save the same list in your pocket too (or in your phone).

Supplies For the Wedding

Contents of the suitcase:

- Booklet of blessings for the *chuppah* in large print + list of honors.
- Special wipes for cleaning stains quickly.
- Black and white thread + needle + safety pins.
- Tylenol, band-aids, first aid kit.
- Glitter. Wheat. Ashes. (For various customs)
- Spare *ketubah* (3 versions) + pen.
- Spare white tie.
- *Tefillah* for the *kallah* (white leather)
- Candle holders for the *chuppah* + candles + lighter.
- Silver disposable *kiddush* cup + plate + corkscrew.
- White wine (highly recommended, in case it spills (and it always spills).
- **Thin *chattan* glass** for breaking (mandatory!! to prevent danger).

B"H there are many other Gmachs that provide all of the necessary supplies for the *chuppah* and wedding, check the directories. This will spare you the headache. Every one of these things is small on its own, but **try to imagine the moment when you really need it - and you don't have it...** It is recommended to open the suitcase beforehand at home and make sure that all of the items are included. If not - notify the person responsible for the Gmach before the wedding. Make a list of everything that needs to be brought to the hall, so that nothing is forgotten:

Both families: Cash (and a lot of it), suitcase for the *chupah*, bags of treats for the kids at the meal, key to the couple's apartment (!!), supplies for babies, names for davening, props for dancing with the *kallah* (the friends should bring these, not the sisters who are busy), roll of trash bags for carrying out the gifts.

Kallah's side:

- Tallit.** For the dear *chattan*. Sometimes gets lost...
- Tefillah for the *kallah*.** Maybe also for the mothers and the guests.
- Dancing props.** See below.
- White coat for the *kallah*.** In the winter. And white umbrella.
- Kallah's bag*.** Place in the Yichud room immediately upon arrival at the hall (appoint a sibling or the assistant).
- _____

Chattan's side:

- Wedding ring.** Can be kept in the *chattan's* pocket. *
- Gift for the Yichud room.** In the *chattan's* pocket. *
- Kittel.** For those who have the custom Recommended to iron in advance.
- Spare shirt and tie for the *chattan*.** Highly recommended!
- Ketubah*.** Especially if half of it has already been filled in.
- Tefillin!** For *Shacharit* the next morning.
- Bag for the Yichud room.** See "*Kol Kallah*."

*If your custom is for the *chattan* to enter the *chuppah* with empty pockets, appoint someone who will put it into his pocket at the correct time.

Witnesses for the *chuppah* and other honors

The *chuppah* is often delayed when there are no witnesses (relatives cannot be witnesses), so it is worth planning this in advance and coordinating with the witnesses. You can give the honor to two of the *meshivim* at the yeshiva,

who can come to the *chuppah* on the yeshiva's bus so that you won't get stuck. There are those who have the custom of having separate witnesses for the *chuppah* and the *kiddushin*, and in this case - you will need to prepare four non-related people.

In addition, it is a good idea to plan the list of honors and blessings in advance (including the appropriate titles for each one, and what happens if they aren't present, etc.), and not to leave this spontaneous. You can also choose someone who "knows" how to honor each one of the people called up to the *chuppah* properly; this same person can also help during the *Sheva brachot* after bentching.

The Big Day

It is highly recommended for this day to be completely free of technical arrangements, other than what is absolutely necessary on the day of the *chuppah*. This will only happen though if you make an effort to finish everything in advance. The night before, the *chattan* / *kallah* and their families should go to sleep early (at least try...). The day of the wedding is very exhausting, and they need to be alert. Plan time for prayer and contemplation on this big day, quietly and calmly. It is a good idea for the *chattan* to go to *Mincha Gedolah* even in the summer (*vidui* like on Erev Yom Kippur). If you want to go to the Kotel on the day of the wedding itself - try to go for Shacharit or immediately afterward, **not in the afternoon** (in general - it is best not to leave the house on the day of the wedding to go anywhere. They say that Dr. Murphy is hovering in the sky with a helicopter and binoculars...)

Prepare a clear list of everything that needs to be done on this day, and hang it in a prominent location in the house. Everything that has been done can be checked off, so that you can see exactly what is left. Make sure to have a light but filling meal during the day (you can order in) for the family members. Before you leave, make sure you haven't forgotten any of the things you need to take to the hall (as listed above). If the wedding is in a different city - check if you can leave in the early morning hours and calmly get ready there. Regarding hairstyling and makeup on the wedding day, see above in the section entitled "**Clothing for the family.**"

Unfortunately, there have been and apparently will be many cases of break-ins to the homes of families hosting a wedding during the event itself or the Shabbat *Chattan*, and it turns out that the thieves (including Arabs!) have learned to check invitations placed in synagogues or in the neighbors' mail boxes. In order to prevent terrible disappointment, it is recommended to **leave guards** such as neighbors or people in the area who will either stay in the home or at least stop by occasionally. There are those who suffice with setting lights to go on and off automatically, and a soundtrack in the background (there are even soundtracks of household noises, Google it), but most of the thieves have already heard of this trick. There are yeshiva students who will do this for a nominal fee.

If there is a baby in the family that can't be left with a babysitter, hire someone (not one of the guests) to babysit near the hall (Yichud room?). In this way, the baby can easily be fed/taken care of but won't disturb. Don't rely on sisters/cousins to do this, because they won't actually be focused on babysitting and the mother will end up taking care of the baby anyway. During the course of the event, make sure **to smile and be courteous** to the guests. They have dedicated time, effort, and perhaps money on travel and a babysitter in order to come to your *simcha*, and they deserve to be treated appropriately. Be happy to see each and every guest (even those who you don't know, for now...) as if they were the guest of honor coming to visit you at your home. The participants will enjoy the event more, participate wholeheartedly in your *simcha*, and the hearts (and the cameras) will capture these special moments.

Payments at the end of the wedding

Coordinate with the in-laws the entire issue of payments at the wedding, who is paying, how much, and to whom. It is recommended for one side to give all of the necessary sums to the other side in advance, **and only one side will make the payments to all of the service providers**. In this way, you will avoid making mistakes and paying twice, which could be hard to recover later.

It is highly recommended to prepare the payments **in sealed envelopes**, and to write on each envelope what it is meant for - the venue, photographer, band, waiters, bus for the friends, etc. (it is possible to entrust at least some of these with the wedding assistant you choose). At the wedding itself, you may not be focused enough to start calculating how much 85% is of NIS 7550, and some of the professionals aren't organized enough either...

In addition, make sure to also have some money set aside for unexpected expenses, such as: taxi for the Rosh Yeshiva, an extra bus for the *chattan's* friends, money for traveling back home, and for a few *tzedakah* collectors who will show up at this auspicious time. There is a nice custom to donate a meal for the poor, based on the story of Rabbi Akiva's daughter, to a soup kitchen or to a yeshiva (and make sure that the meal is actually upgraded or paid for from this donation).

Tips for the waiters - There are those who hold that not giving a tip is likened to stealing, because it is accepted in the market that this is part of the waiters' salary. Decide in advance which of the families will give it and how much. There are those who give the tip in advance to the manager of the venue or to the head waiter, in order to distribute it to the waiters, with the understanding that they will not ask for a tip again (see above). In addition, check what the going rate is for tips, so that no one takes advantage of you. The amount can range from NIS 30 to 200 per waiter, depending on the level of the event (and there are halls and events where it is clear that giving a tip is a real obligation). And...right before you leave:

- Ketubah** - Parents of the *kallah*, did you take it??
- Lost items** - Someone (the wedding assistant) should quickly scan the entire hall to make sure that no important items have been forgotten, including under the buffet table that is covered with a tablecloth down to the floor, the Yichud room, the hall's offices, the dressing area, the box with the gifts, and in the rental car. The safe has been emptied, correct?
- Gifts** - Check that no gifts have been left in corners. Bring trash bags to carry everything out, especially if it is raining.
- Chattan and kallah** - It is possible to help them take the gifts to their new home, including carrying them up to the house if necessary. The *chattan's* father can give him some cash, something that the *chattan* himself usually won't remember to take (to buy food at the mini-market/travel expenses for the next day...). Afterward, he'll manage alone...
- Leftover food** - Although your mind is focused on other things right now, the truth is that you have just paid a lot of money for the food at the wedding, and some of it could be very useful. In any event, if it is going to be thrown away, it is a very big *mitzvah* to take the food to a large yeshiva and put it in the dining room (make sure to write which kashrut it is). For you, this will take a few minutes of effort; for the boys, this can be a very big *chessed*, and it will definitely be eaten.

On the subject of payments - Are you planning on continuing your automatic payments to the yeshiva or seminar? It is always nice to support Torah institutions, but if you are tight on money right now - remember to cancel the automatic payments. Usually, one phone call to the office is enough, but not always.

Stage Five - *Sheva brachot*

The *Sheva brachot* Week

Make a list for yourselves in advance, and one for the *chattan* and *kallah*, showing where the meal will be held each day. Consider who to invite to each meal. The days are usually split "equally" between the families, all according to the needs and preferences. Make sure there are "*panim chadashot*" every day, especially if there are no neighbors in the area.

It is recommended not to hold the meals in locations that are hard to reach for the extended family, especially in harsh weather or stressful times. If you are using the bus or train, check schedules in advance (when the last bus leaves...). Renting a car for the week? **Reserve it at least one week in advance!**

The Shabbat *Aufruf* / *Chattan*

There are many different customs: some hold it at home and are called up to the Torah at the nearby shtiebel; some take the entire extended family to a fancy hotel. In Sephardic-Yeshivish circles, the *chattan's* side usually organizes the Shabbat *Chattan* and there is no *Aufruf*. In Litvish circles, some have also adopted this idea and the families organize a Shabbat *Chattan* together, with a Shabbat *Aufruf* with only close family. In any event, if you are making two large Shabbat events, it is customary for each family to organize one Shabbat.

We will provide a general list of tasks suitable for all of the types of Shabbatot; choose the relevant tips.

Location:

If you are holding the Shabbat **at home or in a nearby synagogue**, look for apartments for your guests **a month in advance**. Hang signs in all of the buildings in the neighborhood + synagogues. **A tip we received:** To avoid mixing up all of the keys to the different apartments, prepare stickers / keychains / bags with notes that feature the last names and addresses of the apartments that you will use, and attach them to the key as soon as you receive it. At the same

time, fill in a chart of "who is staying where," so that the guests know exactly where the apartment is and you won't get confused either.

Coordinate with the *gabbai* of the synagogue in terms of calling guests up to the Torah, the *kiddush*, etc. It is a good idea to prepare a basic map of the neighborhood for each of the guests (you can mark the location of the synagogue, the place where the meals will be held, etc.). This option is obviously much cheaper.

If you decide to **rent a location**, search well for a good place. **Ask people** who have already stayed there, and calculate the travel time for family members to and from the location, on Friday and Saturday night, in the winter or summer. Also consider the geographic distance between the sleeping accommodations and the place where the meals will be held, especially in very hot or rainy weather. It is a good idea to hurry up with these arrangements and close with a location as soon as the *shidduch* is decided, because the good locations are grabbed quickly.

Preparations and necessary supplies:

Prepare a detailed list for yourselves of things to bring, including clothing for the entire family, heaters, sheets, hot plates, hot water urns, and more. If possible, you can prepare a few personalized items for the Shabbat, such as "**Shabbat Shalom!**" signs and "**Welcome! – Bubbe and Zeide's Room**" (leave a few blank signs that you can fill in if the need arises, for last-minute guests, direction signs, etc.).

It is nice to prepare a schedule for Shabbat and place one in each room/apartment, so that the guests know what to expect and when to arrive (it is recommended to write a slightly earlier time for the meals, based on each family's tendencies...). Decide on the sleeping arrangements in advance according to the needs (beds, cribs, stairs, noise), and on Friday afternoon, when people start to show up, make sure that there is someone to greet them with a smile and show them to their room.

Tip: At the Shabbat Chattan, usually after the morning meal, people want to hold a *minyán* for *Mincha Gedolah*, because it's already late enough. The problem is that if this happens, people show up for *Seuda Shlishit* a second before sunset, and with the various speeches, the meal lasts too long and Shabbat only ends at a late hour, which makes things difficult for many families. Therefore, it is recommended, especially in the summer, to schedule *Mincha* about an hour and a half before sunset, without an early *minyán*. In this way, everyone will "need" to get up early to daven, and *Seuda Shlishit* will start early. There will be time for everyone who wants to speak, and Shabbat will not end much later than expected.

Things that could be forgotten: **Sefer Torah, siddurs, chumashim, kiddush cup, corkscrew, tea lights for the guests, havdalah candle and besamim, the souvenir** (if you prepared one). If you decided to prepare a **souvenir from the Shabbat** - prepare it as early as possible. For those who are stringent about this on Shabbat - remember to **open all packages and bottles** in advance. Finally - who will speak at each mean? Time limit? Who will be *chazzan*? Is there a *ba'al koreh*? Who will be called up to the Torah and when?

Food:

Aside for the menu for the meals, decide in advance on the additional elements such as a **coffee and tea corner**, and **refreshments** in the rooms, especially in the summer when the guests arrive from afar and the children (not only them...) are very hungry. Provide the guests with the option of making *kiddush* and *havdalah* for themselves. Set out a *kiddush* cup and grape juice in a prominent place in the dining room at all times, or where people are sleeping (there are silver disposable cups sold in packages of ten... but there are those who are stringent not to use them... Anyway.)

- Coffee and tea corner** - Milk, instant coffee, Turkish coffee, tea (essence or instant), chocolate milk powder, sugar, teaspoons, hot beverage cups, regular cups, plastic tablecloths, tissue, urn (**safe for children!!**).
- Reception area** - Fruit / snacks / candy / cakes / cookies / soft drinks / cups / schedule (erase whatever you don't need, it is recommended to prepare these in advance and cover with plastic wrap to keep fresh). Don't put out food that could spoil (kugel), melt (ice cream), dry out or go bad. If you have decided to give the *kallah* a gift for Shabbat (candlesticks?), this can be placed in their room and set up nicely, with candles or oil of course (unless you have decided that guests will not be lighting in the rooms.)
- Menu** - We haven't written a detailed list here, because someone who is truly capable of cooking for an entire Shabbat Chattan on their own will manage without our list, and those who aren't need to do some serious homework, because it is **very complicated**. In the event that a few people are sharing the cooking, prepare a chart of the detailed menu - who is cooking each part, and whether it has been prepared yet (so that you can track progress). You've decided to cook everything yourself? **You must talk to someone who**

has done this in the past. In terms of the quantities, storing and heating the food, and especially in terms of the logistics and the times.

- Dishes** - Serving pieces and cutlery; there are Gmachs that can lend them. You can bring disposables (much more practical). If you ordered catering - they usually also provide the dishes. If not, remember: plates (different sizes), cups, cutlery, serving bowls, small bowls (salads, desserts), napkins, tablecloths, according to your menu.
- Candy** - Don't forget to bring them for the *aliyah* to the Torah. For those who aren't experienced: there are seven *aliyot*, and at each one, there will be grandmothers and aunts who want to throw candies - lots of them. If there aren't enough, the candies will run out before the critical *aliyot*, and it would be a pity for the *chattan* to receive nothing. The recommended quantity under regular circumstances is at least three kilograms, divided by the grandmothers and their offspring, and less at least 30% from the amount that is actually going to be thrown according to the number of little girls in the women's section. The *chattan* will be very grateful if you buy soft taffies, and not hard, painful candies (the dentists will thank you too). **Tip:** You can divide them up into bags in advance according to the *aliyot*, and in quantities relative to the person who is getting an *aliyah* at that time (uncle / grandfather / *chattan*).

General advice and tips:

- Learn about the location** - Stop by the location at your convenience and see up close what you will need to organize. Think about the: *Aron Kodesh* // *Sefer Torah* // *Chumashim* // *Siddurs* // tables // chairs // shtenders // curtains // *mehitzahs* // beds // mattresses // cribs // direction signs // lighting // power socket splitters // extension cords // fans // heaters // Shabbat timers // sheets and bedding // floor mats for sinks // string for tying (for the urn, doors, signs, and more), and so forth. Check whether you need to ask for **keys** to the kitchen, storage room, rooms, and the complex in general. You checked that the air conditioner is on in the dining room / Beit Midrash and it's too cold? It probably won't be too cold when there are a hundred people in the room! Regarding heating, it's the opposite. When there are windows, you can always open them and balance the temperature.
- Keys to the rooms** - In many cases, in yeshivot and similar places, there are no keys to lock the rooms. But when you host married couples there, it is different, and most people do not feel comfortable sleeping with the door open. In addition, there is a risk that someone could enter the complex and steal things from the rooms (during the meals, for example). Try to find a solution for this. No solution? Expensive items can be locked in the private vehicles.
- Equipment** - You will often have to bring various equipment, based on the conditions at the site. There are Gmachs that provide equipment for events, including: tables, chairs, tablecloths, nice dishes, trays, large pots, hot plates for the pots, heaters, fans, candles, Shabbat timers, extension cords, *Siddurs*, *Chumashim*, *Sifrei Torah*, and much more. Make sure in advance that nothing is missing.
- Come early** - It is a good idea to come early Friday morning (if you finish early, you can always rest a bit) to prepare everything as early as possible. This way, you can also discover early enough (hopefully not...) that the location is not clean, the air conditioner doesn't work, the power fell in the kitchen due to too many hot plates, the elevator is stuck, the rooms have no locks, there is a leak, there are safety issues, and more.
- Safety!!** Dedicate time to a thorough survey of the safety situation, especially if there are going to be children attending. We received a special request from the management of Hatzolah to add and warn that **at these types of Shabbat events, many tragedies occur**, in a manner that is completely disproportionate to a regular Shabbat at home. The reasons are obvious and almost impossible to avoid:
 1. The encounter with their cousins causes many children to play wildly and can result in ideas that you would have never even imagined.
 2. Most of these Shabbat events take place in locations that are not adapted for mischievous children (like yeshivot, for example).

Therefore, to prevent your *simcha* from turning into a tragedy, *chas veshalom*, check thoroughly that: **the candle lighting area is isolated and safe!** (All of the candles must be concentrated in the dining room in a stable, isolated corner, and not in each guest's separate room! This is *pikuach nefesh!*). **The hot water urn must be stable and far from the reach of little hands! Check that every high area is fenced off! Check gaps in fences! Check potential places where children might climb! Heavy objects that are not fastened to the wall! Exposed electric panels! Glass! Heavy equipment! Exits to the roof! Elevators! Locks! Access to the street!** And more. Is there a safety issue that you weren't able to solve? Appoint responsible adults to take turns staying with the children during the entire meal. Safety first!

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Mazel tov!

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For your convenience, the following is a list of all of the common purchases and errands, in chronological order and by subject. Put it in your pocket and check off what you've already finished.

----- ✂ ----- ✂ **General to-do list for the *chattan's* parents - Cut and save** ----- ✂ -----
 - ✂ -----

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Names for davening | <input type="checkbox"/> Send out invitations | <input type="checkbox"/> Support funds | <input type="checkbox"/> Find a venue |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Sheva brachot</i> events | <input type="checkbox"/> Housing for the couple | <input type="checkbox"/> Order from Gmachs | <input type="checkbox"/> Close with the venue |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shabbat <i>Aufruf / Chattan</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> Mortgage | <input type="checkbox"/> Clothing for the <i>chattan</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> Close with a band |
| <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Nedunya</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> Clothing for the father | <input type="checkbox"/> Close with a |
| <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Organize the apartment | <input type="checkbox"/> Clothing for the mother | photographer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Wedding assistant | <input type="checkbox"/> Clothing for the brothers | <input type="checkbox"/> Engagement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Supplies For the Wedding | <input type="checkbox"/> Clothing for the sisters | announcement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> List of honors | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Ketubah</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> Jewelry for the <i>kallah</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare money and checks | <input type="checkbox"/> Guest list | <input type="checkbox"/> Watch for the <i>kallah</i> |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Print invitations | <input type="checkbox"/> Engagement bouquet |

----- ✂ ----- ✂ **General to-do list for the *kallah's* parents - Cut and save** ----- ✂ ----- ✂ -----

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> List of honors | <input type="checkbox"/> Clothing for the sisters | <input type="checkbox"/> Watch for the <i>chattan</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> Find a venue |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare money and checks | <input type="checkbox"/> Guest list | <input type="checkbox"/> Support funds | <input type="checkbox"/> Close with the venue |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Names for davening | <input type="checkbox"/> Print invitations | <input type="checkbox"/> Order from Gmachs | <input type="checkbox"/> Close with a band |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Sheva brachot</i> events | <input type="checkbox"/> Send out invitations | <input type="checkbox"/> Bridal dress | <input type="checkbox"/> Close with a |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shabbat <i>Sheva Brachot</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> Housing for the couple | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Kallah's</i> chair | photographer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Mortgage | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Kallah's</i> bouquet | <input type="checkbox"/> Makeup artist for the <i>kallah</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Nedunya</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> Sheitel | <input type="checkbox"/> Engagement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Organize the apartment | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Nedunya</i> | announcement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Wedding assistant | <input type="checkbox"/> Clothing for the father | <input type="checkbox"/> Choose jewelry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Supplies For the Wedding | <input type="checkbox"/> Clothing for the mother | <input type="checkbox"/> Shas for the <i>chattan</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Bag for the Yichud room | <input type="checkbox"/> Clothing for the brothers | |

Guide booklets from Gmach Birkat Yisrael:

- **Kol Chattan** - All of the technical arrangements for a *chattan* during the engagement period
- **Kol Kallah** - All of the technical arrangements for a *kallah* during the engagement period
- **Kol Mitzhalot** - Technical tips and advice for parents of the *chattan* and *kallah*

Please note:

The files are constantly updated according to recommendations based on common experiences; to receive the latest edition of this booklet or others - contact us by email. We are always happy to hear your feedback, comments, lessons, and other ideas:

birkatisrael1@gmail.com

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With blessings for a *binyan adei ad* /// Gmach Birkat Yisrael

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