

Hachnasas Kallah & Simchas Chassan Vekallah:

A. Hachnosas Kallah - Escorting the Kallah:

1. Escorting a Kallah is so important that it supersedes the Mitzvah of Torah learning.
2. The more people who are present at the wedding, the greater the honor of the Chassan and Kalla, and the more we add to their joy and mutual endearment.
3. We are not required to attend a wedding when we are certain that there are many people in attendance, whereby your presence will not be missed.
4. If someone has reason to believe that the family would be hurt by your absence from their wedding, you may be obligated to attend the wedding to fulfill your obligation to provide the Chassan with 'that which he is lacking.'

B. Simchas Chassan Vekallah:

1. It is a Mitzvah to gladden the Chassan and Kallah, both by dancing for them and by saying things that will make them happy.
2. The primary way to gladden the Chassan is by singing the praises of his Kallah and saying how beautiful and charming she is - even if the compliments are a bit of an exaggeration - to reassure him that his choice was a good one.
3. Gladdening the Chassan should be done in accordance with his level. We offer intellectually stimulating Divrei Torah to a Ben Torah. A simpler person will derive pleasure from hearing Divrei Agaddah. Yet a simpler Chassan will appreciate light conversation and amusing words. But even this should carry a moral message for the couple.
4. Other ways to gladden the Chassan and Kallah can be fulfilled by being Mesader Kiddushin, saying a bracha

under the chupa or after benching, giving the Chassan something to eat or drink, getting the Chassan to laugh with a good joke, and so on.

5. The presence of an important person at the wedding may also fulfill the Mitzvah. The same can be said of someone who comes from afar and makes an unusual effort to attend the Simcha.
6. Musical instruments are an important element in bringing joy, and is considered as much as a requirement as the Seuda.
7. In Jerusalem, Ashkenazim limit musical accompaniment to one instrument.
8. Talmud: "Anyone who partakes of the wedding feast and does not gladden the groom, degrades the five "sounds" with which Hashem blessed the Jews at Sinai. On the other hand, someone who does gladden the groom, merits Torah, which was given with five sounds, and it is considered as if he offered a korban todah, and rebuilt one of the ruins of Jerusalem."
9. We are permitted to derive personal pleasure from the wedding. In fact, seeing the guests enjoying themselves definitely adds to the pleasure of the baal simcha. However, the focus should be on bringing joy to the chassan and kallah and their families.
10. The rule is to place oneself in the shoes of the chassan and kallah and do for them whatever we would like them to do for us if we were in their position.

C. Tznius Issues:

1. A "Mitzva Tantz" should only be done in communities who have such a minhag. It is otherwise forbidden.
2. There must be **complete** separation between men and women - especially during the dancing. Especially when intoxicating beverages are consumed.

3. Ideally, there should be separate seating during the dinner; however, those that are lenient have on whom to rely on.
4. Families should refrain from spending exorbitant amounts of money in order to make elaborate, expensive weddings beyond what is necessary.

D. Providing the Couple With Their Needs:

1. A father must exert himself personally and financially to marry off his children.
2. He should “sell everything that he owns so as to marry off his daughter to a Talmid Chocham.”
3. He should even collect Tzedakah in order to marry off his children.
4. The community is obligated to provide whatever is necessary for a poor Chassan and Kala - yet should be discreet when doing it.
5. A poor person who is provided for through Tzedaka must be given “the needs that he is lacking”, which would include: food, clothing, household utensils, and living quarters .
6. A community must even sell holy objects like a Sefer Torah in order to provide for orphans getting married.

Sheva Brachos:

- The phrase “Sheva Brachos” refers to the set of blessings, usually seven ("sheva") in total (see below), recited in conjunction with the marriage ceremony and at a meal eaten in honor of the new couple during the first week of their marriage. Colloquially, this term is also used to refer to the meal at which these brachos will be recited. Technically, only six of these blessings are actually unique to the marriage celebration, as the ‘seventh’ bracha is the “Hagafen” made on a cup of wine.

The text of the brachos can be found in most siddurim and “bentchers” immediately after Birkas HaMazon.

A. General Laws:

1. The couple traditionally honors attendees with appointing them to recite the Sheva Brachos. Because these blessings are meant especially for the (bride and) groom, it is better that the groom himself not recite them and for the person reciting the blessings to face the couple. However, if nobody else present is able to say the brachos, the groom may do so.
2. Many believe that the same person must recite all of the brachos, but the near-universal practice is to permit dividing the brachos among various people, especially because there are usually several people who the family wants to honor.
3. All those reciting the brachos should still make sure to listen and say amen to all of the others.
4. The order of the brachos is not essential, meaning that if one made a mistake and skipped a bracha, he should recite the bracha that was skipped.

B. Minyan:

1. One needs a Minyan to the sheva berachot, whether under the chuppah or during the week after.
2. This minyan does not have to be standing under the actual chuppah, but must be able to hear the brachos directly and not through a microphone.
3. If only the final bracha of “Asher Bara” will be recited (see below), only three men need to have joined the meal and be present at Birkas Hamazon.
4. If the Sheva Brachos begun while a minyan was present, but then some of the people left before all of the brachos were recited, they may still continue to recite the remaining brachos.

5. If there is no minyan at the chuppah, some say that the couple should delay the marriage until they are able to find one, while others believe that it is better to get married as planned and then make the brachos later.

C. Who is Included?

1. The groom is included in the minyan, as are any of his relatives, the mesader kiddushin, and the eidei kiddushin.
2. Women do not count towards the Minyan for sheva brachot.
3. A minor does not count for the minyan of sheva brachot.

D. Cup of Wine:

1. Even under the chuppah (where the brachos are not recited with Birkas haMazon), the Sheva Brachos should be recited over a cup of wine. If wine is not available, another alcoholic beverage can be used.
2. Regarding the cup under the chuppah, those reciting the brachos do not need to drink from the cup, but the bride and groom should at least taste from it. They need not drink a cheekful.
3. When making Sheva Brachos after a meal, the Rama writes that two cups of wine should be used: one for bentching, and the other for the six brachos made for the couple. However, not everyone agrees to this ruling, and the Shulchan Aruch writes that the custom is to use one cup. This may be relied upon if only one cup of wine is available.

E. Under The Chuppah & After the Meal:

1. After reading the kesubah, all seven brachos are recited under the chuppah, regardless of the status of the bride and groom, as long as 10 Jewish men are present.
2. The custom has developed in almost all Jewish communities for these brachos to be recited while the bride and groom are under the chuppah, but before entering the yichud room.

If the brachos were not recited beforehand, they can still be recited several days later.

3. A new cup of wine should be used and not the one already used for Birkas Eirusin. If one is using the same cup it must be refilled.
4. Some Poskim hold that everyone in the audience must stand for the Sheva Berachot recited under the Chuppah.
5. The order of Sheva Brachos under the Chupoa begins with a blessing on wine, while the blessing on wine is recited at the end of all Sheva Brachos after Birchas Hamazon after the meal.
6. Initially, a person who partakes at the wedding feast is required to remain until the Sheva Brachos have been said.
7. However, as many people cannot stay until the very end of the wedding, there is a simple solution. At the beginning of the meal one should have specific intent that he does not want to be a part of the wedding meal. By having in mind that he does not want to be included in everyone else's meal, but is rather eating alone, he will not be required to hear the sheva brachos or recite the zimun. Through this stipulation he has removed himself from the larger wedding meal and may leave whenever he wishes. Those leaving early can bench with a zimun of a smaller quorum.
8. If a guest is not required to recite birchas hamazon, such as he only ate fruit and drinks, he may leave without hearing sheva brachos.

F. Week after Marriage:

1. Where either the bride or groom have never been married before, meals can be made in their honor for the seven days after their wedding, with the day of their wedding counting as the first day.
2. Although a meal can be made with Sheva Brachos for all seven days, there is no obligation to do so each day.

3. These meals have the status of Se'udos Mitzvah, and it is therefore preferable to have meat and wine, but Sheva Brachos are still recited if there was no meat or wine.
4. The sheva brachot are only recited at a meal in which bread is eaten and birkat hamazon is recited.

G. Beit Chasanim - The House of the Groom:

1. According to some Sephardim, if the meals during the week after the wedding do not take place in the house of groom one may only make the bracha of hagefen and ashar bara (and not all sheva).

H. Panim Chadashos - New Faces:

1. In order to recite all 7 berachos, one must invite someone who did not attend either the wedding or a previous sheva berachos. However, there are lenient opinions that can be relied on, that even somebody who was present at the *chupah*, yet was not present for the festive meal, qualifies (in later *sheva brachos* occasions) as *panim chadashos*
2. While some poskim require that the panim chadashos be given a setting, others are more lenient; the minhag is to be lenient and allow calling in a stranger or waiter to count as panim chadashos.
3. The Panim Chadashos can come even in the middle or towards the end of the meal.
4. A woman cannot count as a panim chadashos.
5. A child cannot count as panim chadashos.
6. While many poskim hold that panim chadashos means only one new person, some hold that two are required.
7. If you only attend a wedding for a short time and don't eat (e.g. just for dancing) , you may be counted as *panim chadashos* a different night.
8. There is no requirement for Panim Chadashos on Shabbos.

I. Who Needs to Eat Bread ?

1. The accepted ruling is that Sheva Brachos are recited only after a meal of bread, after Birkas Hamazon.
2. Ideally, at least ten of the attendees should eat bread. However, many poskim allow Sheva Brachos to be said if only seven people ate bread, and some even permit Sheva Brachos to be said if only three people ate bread, as long as there is a minyan in attendance. Either way, the (bride and) groom themselves should have eaten bread.

J. Mixing the Cups:

After the blessings have been said:

- Pour some wine from the two cups into a third cup.
- Pour some wine back into the first two cups.
- The bride, groom, and person who made the blessing each drink from a different cup.

NOTE: Each cup will contain some wine from each of the original two cups on which the blessings had been made.

K. Second Marriages:

1. If both the Chasan and the Kallah have been previously married, Sheva Berachot is only recited for one day.

L. Practices During the Week after Marriage:

1. A chasan is compared to a king. Just like a king wears fancy attire, so too a chasan should wear fancy attire.
2. If the bride and/or groom had never been married before, there are seven days of celebration (don't go to work, no *tachanun*)
3. If both bride and groom were married before, there is one day of *sheva brachos* (in *birkas ha'mazon*) at the meal eaten after the *chuppa*, but three days of celebration (don't go to work, no *tachanun*).

4. Neither husband nor wife should go to work; however, if the husband gives his wife permission, she may work.
5. Work that is permitted on Chol HaMoed is also permitted to a groom and bride. The prohibitions of work on these days are more lenient than Malacha on Chol HaMoed. Therefore, writing is permitted when necessary. Likewise, laundering is also permitted. One may also write words of Torah, even using a computer.
6. It is also permitted to do light work that does not take one's mind off the joy of the Seven Days of Feasting.
7. It is permissible to purchase furniture – whatever they need for their new home.

M. Counting the Seven Days:

1. The counting of the seven days begins with the Chuppah. Therefore, if the Chuppah is held before sundown and the meal is held at night, we count the seven days from the Chuppah and not from the meal. Even if the Chuppah was close to sundown, we consider part of the day as a whole day, and it is considered as the first day.
2. When the Chuppah is held during twilight – Bain HaShmashos, we also begin counting the seven days from daylight and not from the night. This is because of the principle of safek brachos lehakel – whenever we have a doubt in a matter of blessings we are lenient.
3. However, if the Chuppah was 30 minutes after sunset, or at least 25 minutes after sunset, we may count the seven days from the evening.
4. On the seventh day of the Seven Days of Feasting, one may only recite the Sheva Brachos until sunset alone, even if the meal was in the daytime. One may not even recite them during Bain HaShmashos (twilight).
5. When the seventh day of the Seven Days of Feasting falls on Shabbos, and the meal of Sheva Brachos is made at the

Shalosh Seudos meal, and the meal continues after sundown – on account of the Mitzvah of adding onto the Shabbos, even though they are obligated to recite the Retzay v'hachalitzeinu in Bentching, nonetheless, the brachos of Sheva Brachos are not to be recited after Shkiya. Therefore, the custom under such circumstances is to recite bentching before sundown so that the Sheva Brachos can be recited while it is yet day.