

EXCERPT

# Eternal Joy

THE REBBE'S PERSPECTIVE  
לישואין



VOLUME 2

## ENGAGEMENT AND MARRIAGE

LETTERS AND TALKS OF THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE  
RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON

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A GUIDE TO SHIDDUCHIM & MARRIAGE

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VOLUME II  
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CHAPTER 10

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RABBI MENACHEM M. SCHNEERSON

SICHOS IN ENGLISH  
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**SICHOS IN ENGLISH**

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**ETERNAL JOY  
VOLUME TWO  
- EXCERPT -**

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718.778.5436 | [www.SIE.org](http://www.SIE.org) | [editor@sie.org](mailto:editor@sie.org)

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DEDICATED TO  
THE LOVING MEMORY OF

# Rabbi Yonah Avtzon OB"M

הרה"ח ר' יונה בן הרה"ח ר' מאיר ע"ה אבצ

*Director of Sichos in English*



Who, in addition, dedicated heart and soul to the holy endeavor of building Jewish homes.

As a prolific and devoted shadchan for many years, he brought hundreds of shidduchim to completion, and was involved in thousands more.

The marriage of his two passions - disseminating the Rebbe's teachings in English and facilitating shidduchim - is aptly represented by this series of the Rebbe's guidance on topics related to marriage.

May the study of these volumes inspire all of us to elevate our relationships and homes, inviting the presence of the Shechinah.

And may we merit the ultimate marriage of Hashem and the Jewish people, with the coming of Mashiach speedily in our days.

*—by his Family*



CHAPTER TEN

# *Wedding Preparations*

## The Focus of a Wedding

There is a famous saying in connection to a wedding: “Amidst the hustle and bustle of wedding planning, it is important to ensure not to forget the main part, the marriage ceremony of the *chassan* and *kallah*.”

*(Toras Menachem — Hisvaaduyos, Vol. 40, p. 36)*

## Joyous Preparations

We find in *halachah* that the *chassan* and *kallah* must do many things in preparation for their wedding. Although [the preparations] may be tedious, they are a *mitzvah* and must be done with joy, even before the actual joyous celebration.

*(Sichos Kodesh 5741, Vol. 1, p. 518)*

### THE MANNER IN WHICH THE WEDDING IS TO BE CELEBRATED

## Joy and Expansiveness

... There is no legitimacy to your expression, “sparingly arranging a wedding.”

This is paradoxical as a wedding must be joyous, and

joy breaks boundaries, even to the ultimate extent of expansiveness, which is the complete opposite of frugality.

*(Igros Kodesh, Vol. 17, p. 306)*

## The Importance of Every Detail

As a *chassan*, Rabbi Tzvi Abba Lerman was learning at 770 in New York, across the ocean from his parents who were unable to travel. The Rebbe paid careful attention to every detail of his preparations for the wedding.

The Rebbe inquired of Rabbi Bukiet, a teacher in 770, if Rabbi Lerman had the necessary clothing for his wedding, and he even instructed Rabbi Hodakov to loan 1000 dollars to Rabbi Lerman so that he could buy a wedding ring and a *sheitel* for his *kallah*. The Rebbe also asked Rabbi Lerman about various details regarding the wedding and told him that he should have flowers, music, and pictures.

In *yechidus*, the Rebbe asked Rabbi Lerman if he had bought a present for his *kallah*. Responding that he hadn't, Rabbi Lerman asked the Rebbe what exactly he should buy. The Rebbe replied that he should buy her a *Tze'enah U'Re'enah Chumash* and a *Siddur Korban Minchah*.

*(As told by Rabbi Lerman)*

## Focus on Increasing Joy

... Another point I wish to emphasize is that there is some misconception that a wedding must entail burdensome expenses, etc.

For, although our Sages stated that it is a great *mitzvah* to participate in a wedding and to add to the joy of the bride and bridegroom, they certainly did not mean to say that it

is necessary to spend excessive amounts of money, but only that the *simchah* itself should be a happy and hearty one. ...

*(From an English letter of the Rebbe, dated 7 Tammuz, 5721)*

## With the Utmost Care for Halachah

... It is clear that everything [related to a wedding] should be done in order to assure the maximum degree of compliance with the will of G-d, the Creator and Master of the Universe and of man, Whose Providence extends to everyone individually. Even if it is a question of *hiddur*, or even an extra measure of *hiddur*, and even if there are some difficulties to overcome in this connection, no effort should be spared to do even that, because it is all for the added benefit of the “everlasting edifice.”

Incidentally, even among non-Jews, tremendous importance is attached to the marriage ceremony, which is attended by all sorts of customs and practices designed to bring good luck and good fortune to the newlyweds, with all sorts of symbols, good omens, etc.

*(From an English letter of the Rebbe, dated 8 Tishrei, 5722)*

## A Truly Chassidic Wedding

There is absolutely no sense in squandering money on wedding expenses.

It would be of great merit if you were to demonstrate to other young men of *anash*, may they be well, that a *chassidische* wedding consists of extravagance — true extravagance — regarding all spiritual matters.

The value of Jewish money is not because it can be used to demonstrate to another that you had nicer flowers than

him at your wedding and so on, but so that the *chassan* and *kallah* gave much *tzedakah* before their wedding. ...

(*Igros Kodesh*, Vol. 27, p. 11)

## Humble and Refined

It is self-understood that — similar to all other aspects of Torah and *mitzvos* — the theme of “without cost” [i.e., making a wedding in a frugal and miserly manner] should not be entertained; it is a *mitzvah* to take part in the financing of a wedding (as is understood from the fact that our Sages speak at length about the greatness of *hachnosas kallah*).

Furthermore, this is to be accomplished in a manner whereby both parties (both the side of the *chassan* and the side of the *kallah*) participate — according to the conditions which they have agreed to (in accordance with the expression of our Rebbeim: “As has been spoken about and agreed on ... [by] both sides”).<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, this ought to be done in the manner of *Rashi*’s commentary on “Walk modestly”<sup>2</sup> “(Feast in a refined manner, and rejoice) in a refined manner, not frivolously.”

However, the “tumult” and “hype” that is made of trifling and peripheral matters leads to turmoil and a lack of tranquility for body and soul, especially when one seeks to be “*mehader*” in worldly matters (and quite often alarmingly so).

Quite possibly, this is one of the fundamental reasons for the various decrees, etc., established by *Gedolei Yisrael* to lower wedding expenses.

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1 Text of the *tena'im* of the Rebbe Rashab which was signed by the *Tzemach Tzedek*.

2 *Sukkah* 49b, s.v. *Hotzeisa*.

This is in addition to the general principles that “The Torah has compassion on the money of Israel,”<sup>3</sup> as well as that of “Not embarrassing he who is lacking,”<sup>4</sup> etc.

... Lubavitch has never embraced the notion of “decrees,” ... but for the benefit and merit of the *chassan* and *kallah*, it would be very worthwhile to reduce expenses, especially the expenses that fall into the category of sheer extravagance.

The matter of “walking modestly” should be carried out in each and every location according to the conditions of that particular place, etc.

Nevertheless, the extravagance that surrounds weddings in general these days, particularly in America — which affects the preparations prior to the wedding, the day of the wedding itself, and the time following the wedding — is, in many instances, the opposite of “walking modestly” and of “There is nothing more beautiful than modesty.”

As stated above, it is not my goal to minimize the joy of Jews, and I have no desire to decree limits on the amount of participants.

(It is also worth noting that with regard to Yaakov’s wedding ... the Torah specifically states,<sup>5</sup> “He assembled ... all the inhabitants of the place and made a feast.” ... This surely applies to the wedding and joy of a Jewish bride and groom. ...)

Seemingly, it would be best to follow the *Rambam*’s principle that all matters of man are to be conducted in a manner of the *derekh mitzu’ah*, the “moderate path.”

In any event, with regard to actual practice: It is my considered opinion that a Jewish-chassidic wedding must be

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3 *Rosh HaShanah* 27a.

4 *Taanis* 26b.

5 *Bereishis* 29:2.

as abundant as possible with regard to all spiritual matters, which is related to a reduced amount of spending on material matters.

Additionally, and of equal importance: All of the above is obviously to be done [only] on condition that it can be achieved in a “pleasant manner,” without leading to disagreement.

*(From a yechidus in the winter of 5724,  
printed in Simchas Olam, pp. 110-113)*

## **Joy Should not be Restricted**

*A rabbi wrote to the Rebbe of his intention to form a rabbinical oversight body in Eretz Yisrael. One of its goals would be to “establish rules with regard to simchos,” [such as limiting the number of guests, expenses, and so forth, during weddings and other Jewish celebrations]. The Rebbe wrote the following in response:*

Commencing the activities [of a Jewish organizational body] is not done by enacting prohibitions, especially [guidelines such as] those that limit ... the joy of the *chassan* and *kallah*.

The committee should first arrange proper rabbinic ordination for a significant number of *anash*, their placement in appropriate positions, and actively promote positive activities. Following that you can look into instituting restrictions.

*(From a written response of the Rebbe, 29 Shvat, 5742)*

## **“Derech Mitzu'a” — An “Intermediate Manner”**

[You write to me] regarding the manner of celebrating the wedding. [You are unsure] whether to invite a larger number

of guests, etc., which would — as you write — require you to assume a great amount of debt.

It is my considered opinion that this is not worthwhile. Moreover, there is also the famous ruling of the *Rambam* in chapter 3 of *Hilchos De'os* that [with regard to all matters,] the “*derekh hamitzu'a*,” the “moderate path,” is the correct and proper course.

This is [further] understood in light of the fact that specifically the “middle line and path” (*kav ha'emtza'i*) is the “central rod” (*bri'ach hatichon*) that ascends to the highest levels.

*(Igros Kodesh, Vol. 10, p. 131)*

## Renting a Hall

You write to me about the wedding arrangements:

In general, I am dissatisfied with the amount of money that is wasted on renting a hall and other similar spending. It is true that our Sages, of blessed memory, speak in exceedingly effusive terms about the importance of causing the *chassan* and *kallah* to rejoice, and how each and every individual is obligated to take part [in facilitating this joy].<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, we can easily observe that the greatest degree of joy results when the wedding is not made in a formal hall, a hall that costs a “towering sum,” but rather when the wedding is made with the approach of “the simpler, the better” (*b'ofen dekol depashit maaleh tefei*).

However, it is also self-understood, that arrangements such as the above must be made in a gentle manner and with the **full** consent of both sides. Included in this is also

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<sup>6</sup> See *Berachos* 6b.

the consent and willingness of the women, as is understood from the chassidic discourse,<sup>7</sup> “How does one dance in front of the ***kallah***.”

*(Igros Kodesh, Vol. 19, p. 394)*

## A Truly “Large Wedding”

Regarding what you write about the expense of having a large wedding:

It is completely illogical to view it necessary to place a strain upon yourself and spend elaborate sums of money in order to have a large wedding, when it is more important for the wedding to be “large” in a qualitative sense.

This is particularly so in light of the saying of our Sages, of blessed memory, commenting on the verse, “[Avraham made] a great feast”: “It was great in the sense that the ‘Greatest in the world’ (i.e., G-d) attended.”<sup>8</sup> In other words, it should be evident in all aspects of the wedding that G-d is in attendance.

Most importantly, [G-d’s attendance] should be evident in all of the details pertaining to the *chassan* and *kallah*, [not only during the wedding, but] even more importantly, in their preparations for the wedding and their good resolutions for the future.

Regarding all the above, it should be made apparent that the “Greatest in the world” approves of them and that they merit the Divine Presence among them.

Understandably, all of the above has nothing at all to do with the expenditure of funds (aside from giving money to *tzedakah*). Moreover, the expenditure [of *tzedakah*] cannot be

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7 *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5652, p. 288.

8 *Bereishis Rabbah*, 53:10.

labeled “expense,” since G-d promises: “Tithe, so that you may become wealthy,” and “Test Me please with regard to the [mitzvah of *tzedakah*].”<sup>9</sup>

What the world considers to be “large” and “great” (which in chassidic terminology is termed *veltishe hanachos*, a worldly outlook), and having fanfare and notoriety,<sup>10</sup> etc., is not at all worthwhile for a number of reasons.

It is my hope that just as you are making arrangements for the material matters surrounding the wedding, even more so are you making preparations for the spiritual matters of the wedding, which is deemed by the Sages of the Great Assembly to be “an eternal edifice.”

If such interest in all the particular details is expressed about the temporary physical dwelling that you write to me about, how much more must such interest be expressed with regard to an edifice which will endure for decades, and surely with regard to an edifice that endures throughout a person’s entire life.

And how much more so does this apply with regard to “an **eternal** edifice,” for the soul is eternal.

*(Igros Kodesh, Vol. 16, p. 40)*

## Using Extra Money for Better Purposes

... So too with regard to extravagant wedding expenses and having many wedding guests: Even if money is no object, the money can still be used for even better purposes, as [the term] “a great feast” is to be understood in the sense — as noted by our Sages, of blessed memory — that the “Greatest in the world” attended.”

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9 *Malachi 3:10.*

10 In the original: “*mit a tararam.*”

When everything will be in the most exemplary spiritual fashion,[whereby you] rouse yourselves to Torah and *mitzvos* and, most importantly, to build your home among the Jewish People as a chassidic home in all aspects, the “Greatest in the world” will certainly be in attendance, blessing your edifice in all aspects.

*(Igros Kodesh, Vol. 18, p. 207)*

## Make a Spiritually Large Wedding

Make your wedding large in the spiritual sense. (By and large, this is associated with minimizing the materiality and mundanity that can be associated with a “worldly” wedding — the word *olam*, world, deriving from the term “obstruction” and “concealment” [of G-dliness and holiness]).

... How great shall be your merit, as well as the merit of the *chassan* and *kallah*, may they be well, if you will restore the enactment of Jewish leaders [to not make extravagant weddings] among *anash* and all Jews, may they be well, by serving as a living example [of making a modest wedding] and moreover, doing so gladly and enjoyably.

May the wedding take place in a good and auspicious hour.

*(Igros Kodesh, Vol. 33, p. 105)*

## A “Yechidus” of Reb Nissan

*The following are selected excerpts from what the Rebbe told the famous chassid, Reb Nissan Nemanov, during a yechidus in the winter of 5719. In the course of this yechidus, the Rebbe asked Reb Nissan to publicize — to the greatest possible extent — the Rebbe’s following words:*

The manner of celebrating weddings by *anash* in America

is such that the weddings are celebrated specifically in a large hall — something that is very expensive.

This causes the people who make the weddings to become greatly indebted for large sums of money, so much so that they must toil long and hard afterwards in order to cover their debts.

A results of such conduct is that the wedding guests must leave correspondingly large checks.

Even if a guest can bring himself to attend the wedding out of friendship, even though he is not able to write such a large check, his wife , however, will not want to attend under such circumstances. A smaller gift will cause her to be embarrassed in front of her friends.

The results are predictable: Either he won't participate at all when his friend marries off a child — something [that he should do, for] it is truly notable and lofty — or he will compel himself to give a correspondingly sizable check — something that he is truly incapable of doing — and go into debt because of it.

When a wedding is held in a large hall, the honored guests sit at separate tables [rather than at one long table, or something similar].

Making proper seating arrangements becomes an arduous task for the person hosting the wedding. He has to place each person at a table that befits his honor; were he G-d forbid to seat a guest at a table that does not befit his honor, the guest would be insulted, etc. This causes the host to be totally preoccupied, etc.

We can well understand that when people are seated in such a fashion and are worried about such matters, no type of chassidic *farbrengen* can result.

The outcome is that weddings are not at all celebrated as in times past. Then, chassidim would utilize a *chassidishe simchah* for a truly proper (*far dem richtigen*) *chassidishe farbrengen*, in order to revitalize the spirit of *Chassidus* in all aspects.

This revitalization would occur ... especially during a *farbrengen* that took place during a *simchah*, when people are exultant and the atmosphere is suitable [for spiritual arousal and reawakening].

What happens now when weddings are celebrated in such a [modern] fashion? It is not at all a *chassidishe farbrengen*! The only result is that it leads the people [who make the weddings] to strain themselves and work exceedingly hard in order to pay off the wedding debts. ...

This is true even of young men who are somewhat spiritually advanced, capable of learning *Chassidus* and even praying at length, etc. Even they conduct themselves in this manner.

It is difficult for me to tell any one individual that he should not act in such a manner, for one cannot tell a person, "You should be the odd man out." Yet this conduct extends even to trivial matters, such as paying extravagant sums for the decorations, etc.

There is a twofold disadvantage to such behavior: (a) it tires people out tremendously, and they have no strength left [for more important things], which itself is sad enough; (b) All people are limited in time and ability. By having to devote so much time to taking care of their material concerns, it is inevitable that they will lack time to study Torah, *nigleh* and *Chassidus*, etc.

(*Sichos Kodesh* 5719, p. 225)

## Seating Arrangements

*During a yechidus in 5732 with a member of anash on the occasion of the upcoming wedding of his daughter, the Rebbe remarked:*

In my opinion, if you wish to follow it, you should not make place cards for the tables; it only increases one's headaches ... [as] people aren't happy [with the seating arrangements], etc.

You may relate this in my name.

*(Shidduchim VeNesuin — Likkutei Horaos, Minhagim, U'Biurim, p. 149)*



“

I am confident that both you and your chosen partner in life have firmly resolved to establish a truly Jewish home on the foundations of the Torah and Mitzvoth. In addition to the essential aspect of living up to the Jewish way of life, in accordance with G-d's Will, this is also the channel to receive G-d's blessings and to ensure lasting happiness, materially and spiritually.

May G-d grant that your marriage take place in a happy and auspicious hour and be an "everlasting edifice" (Binyan adei-ad).

With the blessing of Mazzal Tov,  
Mazzal Tov,  


Excerpt from a letter of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, 3 Nissan 5723

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