

An Affair to Remember

Whether it's a traditional Jewish or Hindu wedding, everybody still gets married. In honor of Valentine's Day The Gamecock takes a look at different traditions for starting a life of wedded bliss.

Jewish weddings mix love, law

BEVERLY WILSON Staff Writer

I will not hear the "Wedding March" at my wedding.

This is because I am Jewish and I have embarked on an exploration of the customs and traditions that are unique to Jewish weddings. I wanted to get married the way my ancestors did and what I have found has been both enlightening and exciting.

As unromantic as it may seem, in Judaism, marriage is basically a legal arrangement. The first step in getting married is tenaim, or "conditions" of marriage. This is when the couple announces they are changing their status. They are then designated as bride and groom.

Traditionally, this meant settling the dowry, setting the date and time which was sometimes written in an actual document. This is not a common custom in our times, but a couple often uses this occasion to make decisions about their life together.

Bridal showers in Judaism reflect the communal sentiments Jews have often held in great esteem. Women of the community gather to celebrate sisterhood, dance, sing, and pass on memories to the bride. Women will then go to the mikveh, or ritual bath, during the week before their wedding to become ritually pure.

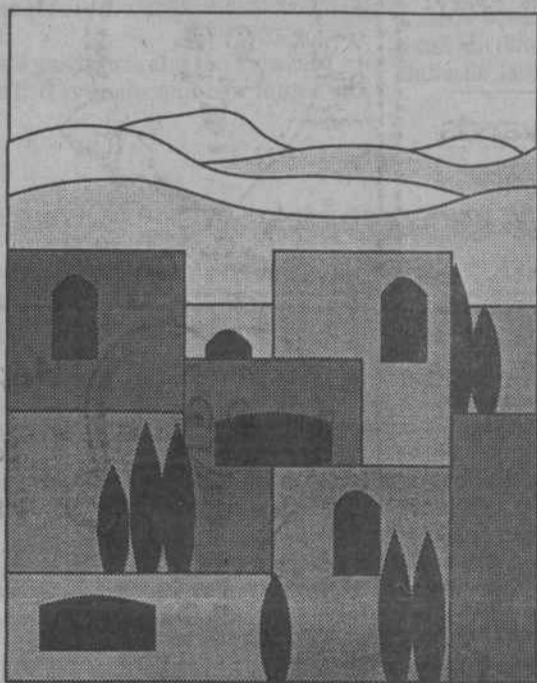
Men also have parties where they sing, dance, and drink, however they are not quite "stag parties" because in Judaism, it is much better for a man to be married than single, so they do not relish having the "last night of freedom" found in our modern American culture.

Other customs include fasting the 24 hours before the wedding and not seeing each other for a period of time ranging from a week in traditional communities to a day. Also, a father doesn't "give away" the bride. In Judaism the responsibility to see their children marry is on both parents so the bride's mother and father will escort her to the chuppah, and the groom's mother and father will escort him to the chuppah.

These customs are not just to build anticipation but also to help signify the seriousness of what is

happening. A Jew's wedding day is considered as holy as Yom Kippur, the day of atonement, because this is when our souls are closest to God.

Since, Judaism is a community oriented faith, the Sabbath before the wedding the groom will get honored with an aliyah, or calling up, to the Torah where he will recite blessings over it. Since we read the Torah in synagogue the entire community sees this and will break into song and shout Mazel Tov, or good luck, when he finishes. This custom is known as the aufruf (pronounced as uff-ruff) and has been modernized to include an aliyah for the bride as well in non-traditional communities.



This is a piece of the illustration on Wilson's ketubah.

The actual wedding is very beautiful. Before the wedding, my fiancée will have a tish. This is a custom where he will try to deliver a teaching on something in the Torah to his friends who will heckle him. This is because it is believed there will never be a day he is more nervous than this and some boisterous jesting with his buddies will relieve the tension. While this is going on, I will meet my friends and we will sing and

joke. This is called attending the bride.

Then we will have a ceremony called bedeken. This is the veiling. I will be ready and my groom and all the guests will come and look at my face and then lower my veil. This is based on the story in the Torah when Jacob married Leah instead of Rachel.

We will then sign our Ketubah. As I said before marriage is a legal arrangement. The ketubah is a marriage contract which discusses what I will do for him and he will do for me. This is our contract between ourselves and it actually stipulates monetary sums in case of divorce or the death of either spouse.

Traditionally it only provided money for the bride.

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Tradition essential to Hindu weddings

DIPKA BHAMBHANI Asst. Features Editor

The family is an integral part of a traditional Hindu wedding; two families rather than two people get married.

In the past marriages were arranged by parents and close family members, but, because of western influences, that number has dropped greatly.

The people who aren't following traditional parental arrangements still involve the parents and family greatly. This becomes apparent through an examination of the trials and rituals of a Hindu marriage.

After a couple decides to wed, their respective parents make the arrangements. Generally, Brahmins will analyze the moon signs and situation of the bride's and groom's stars.

Based on the results of the muhurta, the moon and star sign chart, the couple's families decide whether or not it would be wise to go on with the wedding. If the couple is slightly incompatible, the wedding may still go on but not without an added puja, or religious ritual and a prayer gathering. If the couple is totally incompatible, in most cases they will not marry.

Nowdays, couples rely on the star analysis, less, as the bride and groom get to know each other before the engagement and dating is more tolerated. In a traditional arrangement, where the bride and groom don't really get to know each other until they are married, the muhurta holds a greater weight to the parents because in India, marriage is very spiritual. A couple's son performs the eventual salvation for the parents during their funeral which makes marriage one of the most important rites of passage.

The first arrangement made after the couple is approved by the stars and the family, is the ring ceremony. The parents invite all family and friends to a party formally announcing the couple's engagement while the bride and

groom exchange rings. The wedding announcement is a symbolic moment especially for the bride's father because giving away his daughter is his greatest sacrifice. She is considered a symbol of Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, so giving her away is a big step.

The time between the engagement and the actual wedding ceremony varies from family to family. Some couples may wed two days after the engagement while others may wait two weeks. Nonetheless, during that time, the two families host showers or parties, called ladas, where everyone sings, dances and essentially celebrates.

The frequency of these celebrations also varies from family to family. Some families will host only a couple of parties and others will have one almost every night before the wedding day. Every time the families host one of these parties they send away each guest with a gift to thank them for coming.

A day before the wedding, the bride has something like a shower, a ceremony called Mehendio.

She gathers with her female friends and relatives to eat, gossip, and decorate her palms and feet with a long term dye, henna. The designs on her hands and feet are very intricate and take a long time to create.

However, the pampering doesn't stop there. On the actual day of the wedding, both the bride and groom, in their own houses, go through a purifying ritual. They cleanse themselves with a turmeric, sandalwood paste and oils, as a type of aromatherapy. Then they are bathed to chanting.

It is customary for the bride to have 16 adornments on her wedding day. Her female friends and relatives all jump in to help get ready.

Brides in most parts of India, wear saris, a nine-yard piece of tailored silk. Generally for weddings, girls wear pink, yellow or red saris, which are the most popular.

Traditionally, jewelry includes necklaces, earrings, bangles, rings,

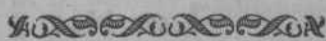
a nose-ring, anklets, toe-rings and armlets. Her hair is sprinkled with scented water and usually in an upsweep or bun surrounded with a string of flowers.

Grooms may wear a typical Indian suit or a western three-piece. Turbans for grooms are very popular and/or a veil of flowers around the groom's head to protect him from any evil eye. The groom goes through less adornment.

The wedding site is traditionally at the bride's house, and is a canopy held up by a wooden frame lined with flowers.

When the groom is ready, he seats himself on a white horse and starts the procession known as barat. His friends and relatives surround him while singing and dancing to the brides house, where the wedding takes place. The steps of a wedding ceremony are: Jaimala is where the bride and groom garland each other, Kanyadana is when the bride's father gives her away. Then a huge sacrificial fire is started, and the bride and groom walk around it seven times. Actually the bride walks around the fire three times. Then, while her groom makes his rounds, also called pheras, the bride stands upon a stone to help her be loyal and faithful to her imminent husband.

After the pheras, the ceremony enters its most imperative phase. The couple takes seven steps together facing the north, as the bride comes to the groom's left, allowing him to take on the world. With each of their steps, the couple prays for food, strength, wealth, happiness, progeny, cattle and devotion. The wife is then sprinkled with holy water to purify her from any previous sins and prepare her for her new life. After this part, the marriage is considered final. The husband marks his new wife with vermilion in her hair. The bride then bids farewell, officially to her own family. Normally the evening of the wedding day, the families host a final reception.

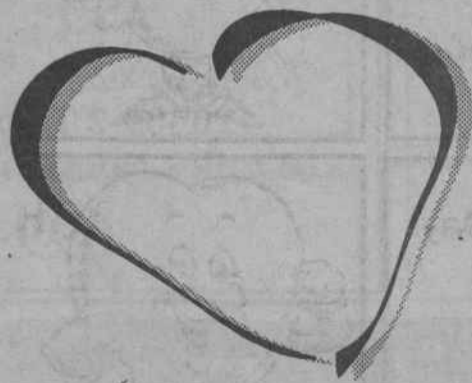


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