



## פרשת ויקהל

This week's Parasha details the various components of the Mishkan. The Mishkan was where the presence of Hashem rested, as it says in the Pasuk "ועשו לי מקדש" - "make for me a Mikdash". The word לי in the Pasuk connects to another לי that we find in our religious ceremonies, and that is the לי of "הרי את מקודשת לי" (behold you are sanctified unto me). These are the words a groom tells his bride in order to bond with her in marriage. Marriage, just like the Mishkan, brings down the presence of Hashem. "איש" "ואשה שכינה שרויה ביניהם" - "when a man and woman unite in marriage, the Shechinah of Hashem is amongst them.

### **The Tradition of Breaking a Glass under the Chupah**

In this class, we analyze one of the highlights of the wedding ceremony: when the Chatan steps on a glass and breaks it. What does this act symbolize? Why is it such an integral part of the Chupah?? In today's class we offer a different reasons and explanations of this holy Minhag.

1. The basic reason for this custom is to remember the destruction of the Bet Hamikdash. The Chatan reads the Pasuk "אם אשכחך ירושלים" (if I forget Jerusalem, I should forget my right hand). The Minhag is brought down by the Shulhan Aruch to put ashes on the Chatan's head in the place of the Tefillin (as the Pasuk says "פאר תחת" (אפר), and the Ramah brings the custom to break the glass. Now that the Bet Hamikdash is destroyed we can no longer bring down the Shechina via the Mishkan or Mikdash. We therefore commemorate a remembrance of the Bet Hamikdash specifically at a wedding (as opposed to any other Simcha) since at a wedding the

Shechina comes down to the couple with the *לי* of "הרי את מקודשת לי" which takes the place of the *לי* of "ועשו לי מקדש". We also remind the Chatan at his highest moment of joy, that no celebration is complete as long as we do not have our Bet Hamikdash! The breaking of the glass reminds the Chatan- and everyone attending his celebration- that our joy is incomplete until the Bet Hamikdash is rebuilt and that in the absence of the Temple, it is weddings that play an integral role in bringing down the Shechina.

2. The Gemarah Berachot (ל דף) tells a story about Mar the son of Ravina who made a wedding for his son. During the wedding, Mar realized that the rabbis were becoming overly frivolous; he took a beautiful wine glass worth 400 zuz, and broke it before them. This settled the Rabbi's and returned them to their normal mood. Rav Ashi as well, made a wedding for his son and felt the rabbis were behaving with too much levity. He also took a glass, and smashed it. Thereby startling the rabbis and bringing them "back down" to an acceptable level of celebration. The Tosafot says that this Gemarah is the source for breaking glass at a wedding. It helps remind people not to get too carried away in their celebration which may lead to acting improperly. According to this reason, breaking *any* type of glass item would serve this purpose, not just a cup. Tosafot uses the words "לשבר זכוכית"- "to break *glass*". In addition, according to this reason, breaking the glass at *any* time- not just under the Chupah- would also serve the purpose to help remind everyone not to get "carried away".
3. The great Rava would begin his discourses with "מילתא דבדיחותא"- (light hearted words or jokes). Why would Rava begin a Torah class with a joke?? This was in order to "throw a bone" to the Satan. As a general rule, the Satan prosecutes; he tries to disrupt any goodness that the Jews may enjoy. He attempts to block a Jew from learning Torah, thereby meriting eternal blessing. We need to divert, the Satan

from focusing on us. If his mind is not on us, he will be too preoccupied to attack us. This is why, on the holiest day of the year- Yom Kippur- There is a ceremony in which a goat is thrown off a mountain לעזזל. This seems to be a satanic ceremony! Throwing an animal off a mountain and watch as it is torn to pieces!! The explanation is that it **is** a satanic ceremony. This sacrifice is for the Satan to partake of. While he is focusing on this goat, the Kohen Gadol is free to perform the holy obligation of the day, without interference from the Satan.

This is also a reason behind the obligation to wash Mayim Acharonim after a meal. The Satan watches us enjoy a hearty meal, and wishes to go prosecute us before Hashem and say; “did they deserve to eat and enjoy like that with all the sins that they have committed?!” For this reason, we wash our fingertips, this water is “for the Satan” it’s a little something for him to keep busy and “forget” about us. We must therefore be careful to discard, and not reuse this water.

This is why as Raba was about to give over a Torah lesson, he spoke lighthearted words. He knew the Satan was there; ready to stop him from delivering his discourse. He therefore, “gave the Satan something” by joking before the class thereby satisfying him and Rava was now free to teach the holy words of Torah.

This explains a Pasuk in the Eishet Chayil, which we recite on Friday nights, "פיה פתחה בחכמה ותורת חסד על לשונה". In describing the righteous woman, Shelomo Hamelech writes “her mouth opens with wisdom and the Torah of kindness is on her tongue”.

A woman is not obligated to learn Torah. Any Torah she learns is therefore considered for her as “an extra”. The Satan does not bother a woman from learning, since she is not obligated to do so. Therefore a woman is free to study Torah without fear of the Satan disrupting her. For this reason, when a woman is about to deliver a Torah class she does not need to “throw the Satan a bone”. The

Satan in any case is not bothering her. The woman has no need to begin her class with a joke as Rava did. We now understand the Pasuk "פיה פתחה בחכמה"- "her mouth opens with wisdom. She may open her words with Torah immediately, without having to make jokes before she begins. Why is this? This is because "תורת חסד על לשונה"- "her Torah is a Torah of חסד". It is a Torah that - like חסד - is something done that is above and beyond what is obligated for the person, she is studying Torah even though she is not obligated and therefore enjoys freedom from the Satan's attacks. She does not have to worry about him, and can therefore open up her words with Torah.

This explains why the Chatan breaks the glass at the wedding. A wedding is a very joyous occasion, and the Satan would like to use the moment to prosecute against us. The Chatan therefore "gives something to the Satan" the broken glass is for the Satan to keep, it should be discarded (not to be saved, or be reconstructed!). Once the Chatan breaks the glass and satisfies the Satan we are free to celebrate without fear.

4. Shimon Hamsoni was known for his theory that every time the word את appeared in the Torah it was to teach us something. His opinion was that there were no Auxiliary words in the Torah, and every את had a reason. He began to go through the entire Torah finding a purpose for every את. He was almost done when he reached the Pasuk "את ה' אלקים תירא"- "fear Hashem". What could the word את in a Pasuk about fearing Hashem include?! What could be equal to Hashem that we must fear?! Shimon Hamsoni was stumped. He concluded that since he could not figure out a need for this את, his entire theory must have been flawed.  
"just as I have received reward for expounding (the words of Torah) so too I will receive reward for abstaining". With this, Shimon Hamsoni

“walked away” from what he had been working on for so many years! Until R’ Akibah came along and expounded that the word את in the Pasuk "את ה' אלקים תירא" comes to include an obligation to fear the Rabbis. A person must fear the Talmid Hacham just as he fears Hashem. With this, he reestablished the theory of Shimon Hamsoni that every word את in the Torah is for a reason. R’ Mordechai Gifter zt’l asks, what was R’ Akibah’s inspiration to interpret the את in the Pasuk as an obligation to fear Rabbis, just like you fear Hashem?? It was Shimon Hamsoni himself!! R’ Akibah just witnessed Shimon- a rabbi who toiled so many years to validate his theory- simply walk away from all those years of work because he felt it must not have been accurate since he couldn’t figure this את out! What honesty and integrity!! This was a prime example of the selflessness of Rabbis! R’ Akibah saw this, and was prompted to interpret the את as an obligation to fear these great Rabbis just as one fears Hashem!!

There is a story of R’ Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt’l who was invited to give a model Shiur to some students. This was R’ Shlomo Zalman’s “interview”, to see what kind of class he was able to deliver. The Rabbi prepared a complex and lengthy Shiur. Midway into it, one of the students asked a question. The Rabbi pondered the question for a moment, and then said aloud “I must have been mistaken”. He closed his Sefarim and explained that this boy’s question proved his premise incorrect, and he could not continue because he now felt that what he had been saying was wrong! When the Rabbis who were watching saw such an honest and self effacing Rabbi, they immediately hired him to be the Rabbi in their Yeshiva.

The classic example of this trait is when Moshe Rabeinu broke the tablets. After being in heaven for 40 days and 40 nights without food, drink, or sleep, Moshe Rabeinu came down with the most precious Luhot. These Luhot represented his “life’s work”. They were the heavenly tablets that Moshe was going to present to the Jewish nation. When he descended from the mountain he witnessed the

Jews sinning with the golden calf, and immediately threw down and broke the Luchos. The Torah ends with the words "לעיני כל ישראל", and Rashi explains that this refers to Moshe breaking the Luchos in front of the eyes of all the Jews. This is considered Moshe's greatest act of his career. Why is this so?! Why is breaking the Luchos greater than any other act that Moshe performed on behalf of the Jews?! It was because this act personified the selflessness of Moshe Rabeinu. It was not about him, it was *only* about the אמת, and doing what was right and nothing else. Even though Moshe invested much effort to produce these Luchos, he did not hesitate to throw them down if he felt that was the proper thing to do.

Sometimes we become so involved in a project that when we realize we may be mistaken in something, we fight and try to push it through because we are "too far to turn back". It becomes about *us* and our efforts, and not about the truth (there was a recent study done by the wall street journal that showed that 7 out of 10 theses done by professors have flaws that the *professors know about!* They just were too deep into the theory to concede that they were wrong!)

The Chatan breaks a glass in order to remind himself of the lesson of Moshe Rabeinu's breaking the Luchos. It symbolizes that we must remember not to let ourselves get in the way of what is right. Many times in an argument, we forget exactly what it is we disagree on, and it becomes only about us and our egos. The Chatan is reminded as he is about to start this new relationship. That just like these great men, he should not be ashamed to admit if he is incorrect, and not let his ego stand in the way of peace. Like Moshe Rabeinu breaking the Luchos, the Chatan too should do what's right without putting himself first.

5. The purpose of marriage is to fulfill the Misvah of פרו ורבו and to have children. When Rachel Imenu had a baby after so many years of waiting she named him יוסף. "אסף אלקים את חרפתי" she declared.

“Hashem has gathered in my shame”. Rashi explains that until now, when something broke around the house, Rachel had no one else to blame. There was no one else in her house! Now that she had a child, the blame was shifted to the child, and she was no longer to blame for everything that happened. The breaking of a vessel thus stands for having children. It represents the relief that Rachel felt after so many years of being barren. The breaking of the glass done by the Chatan symbolizes the purpose of marriage –having children.

Having children is an integral part of Shalom Bayit. A child in the home breaks the tension between husband and wife. It creates an important diversion, so that the man and woman are not focusing solely on each other which lead to micro analyzing and bickering. The nine words that a man tells a woman in order to marry her ("הרי את") ("מקודשת לי בטבעת זו כדת משה וישראל") represents the 9 months of pregnancy in order to have a child. This is the purpose of marriage and is integral in keeping a peaceful home.

6. Shelomo Hamelech wrote in Kohelet (chapter 7 Pasuk 2) "טוב ללכת אל בית אבל מלכת אל בית משתה" (it is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting [a wedding]). Why is Shelomo Hamelech comparing a funeral to a wedding?? They don't seem to have anything in common! Wouldn't it have been better for Shelomo Hamelech to compare things that are similar, and then teach us what is more important?! We understand what a funeral has to do with death, but what does a wedding have to do with it?? The answer lies with the very reason why we get married. The purpose of marriage is to have children, and thereby continue the existence of the world. We realize that we are not going to be here forever, and it is therefore necessary to leave over a legacy and a continuation for the future. In this way, marriage does indeed symbolize the idea that one day we will be gone, and this is its similarity to a funeral that prompted



Shelomo Hamelech to compare them. They both remind a person of his fragility it is only that a funeral does so more vividly.

We find many times at a wedding, under the Chupah people are moved to tears. They begin to cry but many times are not sure why. They think perhaps because it is an emotional scene. In reality, it is their Neshamot crying, because the Neshama senses the reason why this marriage is taking place- we don't live forever. *This* is what causes the people to cry.

The breaking of a glass under the Chupah signifies the fragility of mankind. Just as the "life" of a glass comes to an end with the Chatan stepping on it. So too after 120 years we too must return our Neshamot to Hashem. For this reason we are obligated to get married and have children, in order to leave over of ourselves for the future. The breaking of a glass thus represents the concept of a wedding.

7. We break a כוס (cup) under the Chupah because the כוס stands for דין-judgment. The Ben Ish Chai writes that the Chatan should step on and break the same cup that had been used for the Berachot under the Chupah. How does the כוס represent Judgment? The numerical value of כוס is 86. This is the same numerical value as the name of Hashem of Judgment, אלקים. By breaking the כוס the Chatan breaks any judgment that may be on them. This is why immediately after the Chatan breaks the cup everybody yells מזל טוב! What greater joy than to break דין!
8. There is a story in the Gemarah about a Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah. When he was just 18 years old, he was asked to be the new head of the Yeshiva and fill the position of the recently dismissed Raban

Gamliel. Rabbi Elazar consulted with his wife, and she expressed concern over him accepting this position. “What if after a while they get rid of you too”?! She asked. He answered her “it is worth using a beautiful crystal cup- even if just for a short time”. Meaning, it is worth it to enjoy the benefits of being the head of the Yeshiva even if it is only for a short time. The crystal cup mentioned in this story represents this concept of something being worth the benefits even if they are short lived.

When the Jewish people left Egypt on the night of Pesach, Hashem temporarily lifted them all the way up to the 50<sup>th</sup> level of holiness. Afterwards Hashem put them back to “ground level”, and they had to work their way back up. The obvious question is; if Hashem was not going to leave them at this high level, why bring them up there in the first place?? The explanation is that even though they were only on this high spiritual level for a short time, there was a רשימה (spiritual remnant) that stayed with them from this experience. This effect benefited them greatly.

We see from here that even though a spiritual benefit maybe temporary, the רושם (impact) that remains makes this well worth it! Like walking into a perfumery and not purchasing anything, when a person walks out he still smells beautifully! When a man and woman get married they are on a tremendous high. The Chatan is like a king and the bride is like a queen. There is no וידוי said in the prayers when the Chatan is part of a Minyan. They are forgiven for all of their sins!! The day after Sheva Berachot however, everything comes “crashing down”. They are no longer the celebrities that they were in the previous week, and “real life” begins. They may wonder “was it all worth it”?? Why bother if it doesn’t last?? By instructing the Chatan to break a glass we remind him of the glass mentioned by Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah, which represents the idea that something short lived is

still well worth it! Even though the euphoria of the wedding fades, the **רושם** and spiritual benefits that come along with it remains!! This should encourage the bride and groom to realize the great and long lasting advantages of their marriage.

9. The Pasuk says in Bereshit **"על כן יעזב איש את אביו ואת אמו ודבק באשתו"** "therefore a man shall leave his parents and cling to his wife and they shall be one flesh". The Torah instructs a man to "leave" his parents house, but does not command the woman to leave her parents house. Why is this so? A man's role in a marriage is to be a **מַשְׁפִּיעַ**-a giver. His job is to provide for his wife and family, and be a *giver* not a taker. This is manifested in several ways one of which is having children. The man gives and the woman accepts. The Torah instructs a man to leave his parent's house- where until now he had been a "taker" living off the kindness of his parents- and to now begin a life as a giver and to provide for his wife. The wife on the other hand, has no such obligation and is therefore not required to leave her parents house.

This was part of the mistake of Adam Harishon. Instead of being the spiritual "giver" and leading his wife in spirituality, he listened to her advice to eat from the tree, and followed *her* instead of her following *him*. This represented a **פגם**-a defect, and at a wedding we come to try and rectify this **פגם** of Adam Harishon.

The Berachot that we recite under the Chupah contain references to Adam and Chava. We say **"כשמחך יצירך בגן עדן מקדם"**-"like you made joyful the ones you formed (Adam and Chava) in Gan Eden from the earliest times". We also say **"יוצר האדם"**. We are coming to be **מתקן** and fix the mistake of Adam, by uniting in marriage, with each spouse knowing their proper roles.

The cup is a vessel that is a receptacle. It represents receiving, and does not represent giving. It accepts and hold the liquid poured into it. The Chatan takes the cup and breaks it. This symbolizes the Chatan no longer being someone that is a receiver or a “taker”. He is now a married man, and must be a *giver*. He must “leave” his parents house and lead his wife on the proper path. When a couple has their respective roles clear, they fix the mistake of Adam Harishon and they merit growing to great spiritual heights together.

These are only a few of the reasons behind the Minhag of a Chatan breaking a glass under the Chupah. Our Minhagim are full of meaning and symbolisms! May we merit observing all of our wonderful customs meticulously, and continue our wonderful traditions. Amen!