**Introduction**

*Mazel Tov* on your engagement! We are honored that you have decided to share your wedding with us. As you prepare for this milestone event, you will be planning the ceremony that will sanctify your love for each other, as well as festivities that will celebrate your marriage. This guide provides important information about planning your wedding through the Jacksonville Jewish Center and its clergy. Please read it carefully, and feel free to call the synagogue office if you have any questions. After reading, sign the Wedding Policy Agreement found on page 34 and return it to Danielle Berke, Assistant to the Clergy. Please note we must have the signed copy in order to reserve officially your wedding date on our calendar.

As you get closer to your wedding date, you will also need to complete the Ceremony/Checklist and return these forms to Danielle Berke, Executive Assistant to the Clergy. The choices you make and the unique customs and traditions of Judaism will shape your wedding day into a truly memorable and personal experience. We have designed this Wedding Guide to answer many of the questions frequently asked by engaged couples and to explain the laws and traditions of Jewish marriage observed by the synagogue and clergy. We wish you much health, happiness and fulfillment as you begin to plan for your married life together! We look forward to celebrating many joyous occasions with you in the years to come.

Rabbi Jonathan Lubliner

Rabbi Shira Rosenblum

Hazzan Jesse Holzer

**Important Contacts**

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**Marriage in the Jewish Tradition**

The importance of marriage in Judaism is summed up by the Talmudic statement, “One who has no spouse lives without joy, without blessing, and without goodness” (Babylonian Talmud, *Yevamot* 62b). Indeed, God tells Adam, “It is not good for one to live alone; I will make a fitting partner for him” (*Genesis* 2:18). Our tradition views the companionship of marriage as a desirable norm and the foundation upon which the centrality of the Jewish family rests.

When a Jewish couple marries, moreover, they are encouraged to fulfill the Torah’s very first commandment: “Be fruitful and multiply” (*Genesis* 1:28). In procreation we partner with God in bringing new life to the world and raising children to serve as the next link in the chain of Jewish continuity.

Marriage celebrates the creation of a new Jewish family. More than simply the union of two lives, your upcoming wedding is understood to be the beginning of a new world. The *Zohar*, one of the classical texts of Jewish mysticism, underscores this by stating, “God is constantly creating new worlds by causing marriages to take place” (*Zohar Lekh-Lekha,* 1:89a).

Your wedding day will be one of the most significant occasions in your life. It is a consecration, a sanctification of life’s infinite potential for blessing. Indeed, one of the terms for marriage in Hebrew is *kiddushin*, which means “holiness.” When you enter the bonds of *kiddushin*, you enter a relationship that says to the world that you are now part of an exclusive relationship, inextricably connected to one another by a holy bond. The *Ba’al Shem Tov*, the founder of Hasidism, phrased it well: “From every human being there arises a light that reaches to heaven. When two souls are destined to find each other, their streams of light flow together, and a single brighter light goes forth from their united being.”

**A Note to Same-Sex Couples:**

The Conservative movement “acknowledges the lessons of modern science and psychology in teaching that sexual orientation is not an individual decision but rather a core component of human identity.” Accordingly, the traditional proscriptions in the Torah cannot be understood as a wholesale condemnation of homosexual orientation, especially when the idea of such did not exist in antiquity. On the contrary, given Judaism’s clear rejection of celibacy in favor of monogamy and its insistence on preserving human dignity, we favor the establishment of committed and loving monogamous relationships for gay and lesbian Jews. The clergy of the Jacksonville Center will officiate at same-sex weddings for two Jewish individuals.

With this in mind we have endeavored to use gender-sensitive language as much as possible. Still, there are aspects of the traditional Jewish wedding liturgy and its rituals which are not applicable to same-sex marriage. The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Conservative movement has developed two different wedding rituals for same sex couples, which honor the sanctity of their union without making invidious comparisons with the text and rituals of the traditional wedding ceremony. Our clergy will be happy to explore these options with you, each of which includes wine, rings, blessings and a covenantal document.

**Marriage Eligibility within Conservative Judaism**

The clergy of the Jacksonville Jewish Center will officiate at weddings in which both members of the couple are Jewish (i.e., born to a Jewish mother or converted to Judaism in accordance with Jewish law).

In cases where they are unable to officiate because only one partner is Jewish, the Center’s clergy are available to couples for pre-marital counseling, and to help inter-married families find a comfortable and meaningful home within the Jewish community. In our day and age we know that inter-married couples can create Jewish homes and raise children with strong Jewish identities.

Jewish individuals who have obtained a civil divorce degree after marriage to a Jewish partner must also secure a *get*, a Jewish divorce, before remarriage. The rabbi will ask to see your *p’tur,* the certificate confirming that a Jewish divorce was duly executed. If you have not yet obtained a *get,* the rabbi will discuss how to arrange one.

**Selecting a Wedding Date**

While the selection of a wedding date will reflect your personal wishes, you will also need to take into account the schedules and prior commitments of the clergy, the synagogue (or other venue), as well as the plans of family and friends.

Jewish tradition does place some limitations on the choice of a wedding date. In selecting a date please keep in mind that weddings are not held:

* On Shabbat (Friday evening until nightfall Saturday; for Saturday night weddings, see p. 6), or on major Jewish holidays.
* During *hol ha-moed* (the intermediate days) of Sukkot and Passover, so that we give these religious occasions our full attention.
* On days commemorating tragic events in Jewish history, such as the three weeks before *Tisha b’Av*, the date which commemorates the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem as well as other sad events of the Jewish past. This three-week period falls somewhere between late June and early August – a quick check of the Hebrew calendar will tell you when this period occurs on the civil calendar in any given year. The synagogue office can help identify these dates on the calendar.
* From the beginning of *Sefirah* the second night of Passover until *Lag b’Omer*, the 33rd day of this period. During this season we observe *Yom Ha-shoah*, Holocaust Remembrance Day, and recall other tragic episodes that befell the Jewish community during the time of Roman rule as well as the Crusades. There are several days during the *Sefirah* period, however, on which weddings may be held, including *Rosh Hodesh Iyar* and *Yom Ha-atzma’ut* (Israel Independence Day) -- a quick check of the Hebrew calendar will tell you the corresponding dates on the civil calendar for all the above. The synagogue office can help identify these dates on the calendar.

In planning your synagogue wedding, please note the sanctuary’s permanent seating accommodates 375 persons, although the use of portable chairs can bring the total to 435. The Witten Chapel accommodates 65 individuals, but can be expanded to seat 110.

All reservations for wedding dates at the synagogue must be made through Lori Schoettler, Director of Finance and Operations. No date is official until it is confirmed by Danielle Berke, Clergy Assistant, who will ensure that the requested date is appropriate within the framework of the Jewish calendar and that our clergy are available on that day to officiate.

When a wedding is scheduled to take place at another venue, it is still necessary to confirm the date through our Clergy Assistant, Danielle Berke, for the same reason.

**A Note about Saturday Night Weddings**

The observance of Shabbat is central to our values and beliefs as a Conservative synagogue. Because cooking, set-up, photography and other wedding preparations, as well as the signing of marriage documents would violate both the letter and spirit of Shabbat as understood by Jewish law, we have adopted the following policies:

* On Saturday evenings, a wedding ceremony may begin no earlier than one hour after the conclusion of Shabbat (Bear in mind that Shabbat ends 42 minutes after sunset. Thus, when sundown occurs at 5:45 PM, Shabbat is over just before 6:30 PM, and the wedding may begin at 7:30 PM). This is true of all weddings, whether held at the synagogue or another venue, at which the clergy of the Jacksonville Jewish Center officiate.
* The wedding party may gain access to the synagogue to prepare for the ceremony only after Shabbat is over (i.e., 42 minutes after sundown).

We discourage Saturday night weddings during the portion of the year when Daylight Savings Time is in effect because Shabbat ends quite late in the evening during this period. The disadvantages of starting a wedding ceremony at 9 or 10 PM are self-evident, but unavoidable when one plans a Saturday night wedding between April and October.

**Wedding Location**

Holding your ceremony in the synagogue highlights the sanctity and Jewish character of your wedding. In addition, for those with multi-generational ties to the congregation, the sanctuary may well have served as the venue for many family celebrations over the years, adding yet another layer of meaning to the event.

Some families hold weddings at their homes in an atmosphere of warmth and intimacy.

Whether or not you choose to have your reception at the synagogue, at home, or another location, we encourage you to observe *kashrut*, the Jewish dietary laws, as an integral aspect of the celebration.

**Wedding Reception as a *Seudat Mitzvah***

In Judaism, a wedding reception is thought of as a *seudat mitzvah,* a religiously mandated feast, because the reception is considered a continuation of the ceremony. Indeed, a traditional Jewish wedding, the meal ends with a special Grace after Meals(*Birkat Hamazon*) which includes the *Sheva Berakhot*, the seven blessings of marital consecration, recited at the ceremony itself.The notion that the ceremony is religious, but the celebration is secular, is foreign to Jewish teaching. For this reason, the observance of *kashrut* at a wedding reception faithfully reflects the Jewish value that the “why” and “how” of any lifecycle celebration are always connected.

Some couples may feel that it is inconsistent to plan a kosher reception if they do not observe *kashrut* in their homes. But the opposite is true. Just as you’re planning a wedding ceremony in accordance with Jewish law and teachings, so, too, should your celebration conform to the same value system, because it is a natural extension of the ritual.

**At their discretion individual members of the synagogue’s clergy may opt to officiate at Jewish wedding ceremonies even when the affair is not kosher, but will only stay for the reception when the meal is certified kosher *(i.e., under rabbinic supervision), or, if held in a non-kosher venue, when the menu consists exclusively of dairy and vegetarian foods, or kosher fish. This is a matter of religious principle which applies in all cases, even when families are prepared to arrange for clergy to have a separately prepared kosher meal.***

**Wedding Officiants**

One of the synagogue’s rabbis and the *hazzan* officiate at weddings held at the Jacksonville Jewish Center. In the event a family wishes to invite other rabbis or *hazzanim* to officiate instead of the Center’s clergy or co-officiate with them, it is necessary to obtain the consent of the senior rabbi and *hazzan*. It is understood that visiting clergy at the Jacksonville Jewish Center are bound by the same religious standards that apply to the synagogue’s own clergy.

**Meetings with Clergy**

It is important to arrange a meeting with the officiating rabbi as soon as possible after securing a date, at which time the couple will have the opportunity to share their personal history as well as their hopes for the future. The rabbi usually meets with the couple a half dozen times prior to the ceremony. The first several meetings focus on premarital counseling and the acquisition of relationship building skills necessary to a strong marriage. The rabbi will also discuss with you Jewish teachings as they apply to the sacred partnership between spouses and the creation of a Jewish home.

As the wedding dates gets closer, the rabbi will review the nature and meaning of the Jewish wedding ceremony, the requirements for the *ketubah* and rings, and the ways in which one can add creative elements to the ceremony.

Rabbi Lubliner is a certified Premarital Course Provider for the State of Florida. Once couples have completed four-hours of premarital counseling with Rabbi Lubliner, they will receive a certificate of completion entitling them to a marriage license in Duval County at discounted cost, as well as a waiver of the 72-hour waiting period that normally pertains to all Florida residents between the time one obtains an application to marry and the wedding itself (for more information about civil licenses, see p. X).

Couples should plan on meeting with Hazzan Holzer at least four months prior to the wedding date to discuss ceremonial music. Hazzan Holzer will chant portions of the wedding liturgy, such as *Mi Adir* and the *Sheva Berakhot*, the seven blessings of marital consecration. He can also assist you with other musical questions regarding the processional and recessional, as well as Jewish music during the reception (e.g., selections for a set of *hora* dancing).

**Obtaining a Marriage License in the State of Florida**

* Couples wishing to be married in the state of Florida must obtain for a marriage license. Marriage licenses are issued by counties and you can apply for your license at any [County Clerk’s Office](http://www.usmarriagelaws.com/marriage-license/florida/clerks-recorders/office-requirements.shtml#clerk). You can get married in any county in Florida, regardless of where you obtained your marriage license.
* Clergy are prohibited by Florida law from officiating at a wedding unless the couple has a marriage license or have already been married in a civil ceremony.
* The fee for a marriage license is $93.50 and there is a three (3) day waiting period for Florida residents; there is no waiting period for non-residents. Florida residents who have completed a premarital preparation course and can provide completion certificates will only be required to pay $61.00 and the three (3) day waiting period will be waived. ALL MARRIAGE LICENSES MUST BE PAID IN CASH; NO OTHER FORMS OF PAYMENT ARE ACCEPTED.
* Both parties are to appear in the [Clerk’s Office](http://www.usmarriagelaws.com/marriage-license/florida/clerks-recorders/office-requirements.shtml#clerk) and sign the application.
* The legal age for marriage without parental consent is 18 years of age.
* The legal age for marriage with parent’s consent is 16.
* You must both present Photo ID to obtain a marriage license (Driver’s License, Passport or State ID with picture).
* Both parties must be prepared to give their Social Security numbers.
* No blood tests are required.
* Wedding ceremony must take place no later than 60 days after the license is issued. After 60 days the license expires and the couple will have to obtain a new one.
* Make sure to bring your marriage license to the wedding ceremony! Two witnesses of your choosing will sign the license, and the officiant will also fill out and sign a section of the license. The rabbi or *hazzan* is responsible for mailing the license back to the County Clerk’s office for processing. You will receive a Certificate of Marriage from the State of Florida within several weeks of the wedding. Please keep it in a safe place – it is a document you will certainly need for all kinds of future transactions.
* Be sure to contact your local [County Clerk’s Office](http://www.usmarriagelaws.com/marriage-license/florida/clerks-recorders/office-requirements.shtml#clerk) well in advance of the wedding to find out on what days and during what hours the Clerk will be in the office. Some locales will require an appointment. Here in Jacksonville you will need to contact:

Duval County Courthouse - Downtown
501 West Adams Street, Room 1048
Jacksonville, FL 32202
(904) 255-2000
Hours: 8:00am - 5:00pm

**OR;**

Duval County Courthouse - Beaches Branch
1543 Atlantic Blvd
Neptune Beach, FL 32266
(904) 255-2000
Hours: 8:00am - 4:30pm

**The Ketubah**

The *ketubah* (plural: *ketubot*) is a Jewish marriage contract. It does not replace the civil license required by the state.

The rabbis instituted the *ketubah* more than 2,000 years ago as a form of protection for a Jewish wife, stipulating the husband’s marital obligations and ensuring her financial security in the event she is widowed or divorced. While tradition is appreciative of love and romance, Judaism wisely recognizes that these emotions best flourish when they are built upon a foundation of reciprocal commitment and binding obligation. In recognition of the egalitarian society in which we live, the Conservative movement’s *ketubah* text adds language which speaks of a wife’s obligation as a partner in the building of a Jewish home together.

The *ketubah* remains an integral part of the Jewish wedding ceremony, but its use today is largely symbolic, inasmuch as a couple’s finances, including monetary obligations that might result upon the dissolution of marriage, are handled exclusively by the civil courts.

The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards has formulated an equivalent to the traditional *ketubah* for same-sex couples. Known as *brit ahuvim*, “a covenant of love,” its language commits both spouses to a relationship of exclusivity and mutual commitment. Its preparation, signing, and reading during the ceremony parallels the use of the traditional *ketubah*.

You have several options for obtaining a *ketubah*. If you choose, the synagogue will provide you with the *Fruit of Israel Ketubah*, designed by artist Jonathan Kremer. The tri-fold certificate comes with blank spaces, which the officiating clergy will fill-in. There is no cost to the couple for a synagogue-provided *ketubah*.

Many couples, however, choose to purchase a lithograph to hang as work of art in their new home. Websites such as [www.ketubah.com](http://www.ketubah.com) feature a variety of designs that can be ordered and even completed online. This is generally the most convenient way to obtain a *ketubah* (beside the one the synagogue furnishes). These *ketubot* typically run several hundred dollars, depending upon the artist and design. Once you make your selection, fill-in your information, and the officiant completes the clergy section (all done electronically), you may expect to receive the document in 6-8 weeks. Please keep this in mind to ensure its arrival in advance of your wedding day!

For those who desire a one-of-a-kind piece of art, you may also opt to commission a Judaic artist to create a *ketubah* whose imagery reflects the unique aspects of your relationship, families, and background. It is worth remembering the cost of any piece of commissioned art can be quite expensive, and may take months to complete – plan accordingly.

The Jacksonville Jewish Center uses the *ketubah* text of the Conservative movement, which largely adheres to the traditional Aramaic text with several modifications. These include the use of egalitarian language regarding the partnership of spouses in establishing a Jewish home, and the *Lieberman* clause, which ensures that, in cases of civil divorce, both partners agree to accept the authority of the Conservative movement’s *bet din* (religious court) to arrange for a *get* should one spouse or the other request it. At the time the *ketubah* is signed, both spouses will sign an English language “Letter of Intent” signifying that the officiating clergy has explained to them the nature of the Lieberman clause; that they understand its purpose and inclusion in the Aramaic text; and that both agree to abide by its terms if called upon to do so at a later point in time.

Your *ketubah* will be signed before the wedding ceremony by two witnesses (Hebrew: *edim*). Because it is a legal document from the standpoint of Jewish law, several requirements determine the eligibility of those who may serve as witnesses:

* They must be Jewish and Shabbat observant.
* They need to be able to sign their names in Hebrew.
* They cannot be related to either the bride or groom[[1]](#footnote-1), or to one another.

As an egalitarian community, the Jacksonville Jewish Center accepts the eligibility of both men and women who meet the above requirements to serve as witnesses for the *ketubah*. A number of Conservative rabbis and synagogues, however, continue to adhere to the requirement that only men may serve as witnesses. The couple is encouraged to discuss this issue with the officiating clergy if they have any concerns about the acceptance of their *ketubah* in other communities.

In cases where none of the guests fit the above requirements, the rabbi(s) and *hazzan* are always available to sign the *ketubah* as valid witnesses.

**Aufruf**

On the Shabbat preceding your wedding ceremony, it is customary to invite family and friends to attend the *aufruf*. If that Shabbat is inconvenient, it may take place on a weekday when the Torah is read or on an earlier Shabbat, so long as it is within proximity of the wedding date.

The word *aufruf* comes from the Yiddish meaning “to call up.” The couple is called to the Torah for an *aliyah*. The custom probably originated in medieval France or Germany. Communal leaders of that time were responsible for ensuring there were no legal impediments to the validity of a proposed marriage. The most effective way to accomplish this was to announce the wedding publicly in synagogue on a Shabbat before the ceremony.

The *aufruf* also has the important function of associating the act of marriage with Torah. When the celebration commences with the couple being called to the Torah, it sets a sacred mood, one that hopefully extends to the wedding day itself.

At the Jacksonville Jewish Center when we call a couple to the Torah for a joint *aliyah*, one person recites the blessing before the Torah reading, while the other partner the closing blessing – please note the couple does not recite the blessings in unison.

After concluding the *aliyah* blessing, the rabbi will share with the congregation a few words about the couple and the significance of this sacred moment. The couple then recites a brief prayer in English, after which the rabbi offers a *mishabeyrakh*, a special prayer expressing the hope that the couple will build a Jewish home filled with love and companionship. When the *mishabeyrakh* is concluded, members of the congregation shower the couple with soft, kosher candy to symbolize the sweetness that we hope they will experience in the sharing of their lives.

Please contact Danielle Berke, our clergy assistant, six weeks prior to the Shabbat on which you plan to hold your *aufruf*. You will need to give her your full Hebrew names (both partners’ Hebrew names + both sets of parents’ Hebrew names).

As a large congregation we are frequently blessed to celebrate multiple life cycle events on any given Shabbat. Additional honors for family and friends (beyond the *aliyah* for the couple) may or may not be available, depending on whether or not there is a *bar/bat mitzvah* that weekend. If you would like to co-sponsor or enhance the congregational *kiddush* following services in honor of your *aufruf*, please contact Lori Schoettler, Director of Finance and Operations.

**Other Wedding-Related Practices and Customs**

**Mikveh:**

One beautiful practice associated with weddings is immersion in a *mikveh*, a ritual bath prior to getting married. Immersion in water symbolizes renewal and transformation, and underscores the fact that marriage is the doorway to a new stage in life. We encourage both men and women to consider using the *mikveh* before their wedding.

There are two *mikva’ot* in Jacksonville. It is necessary to make an appointment before going, and there is a modest fee for use of the *mikveh*. The actual immersion takes only a few minutes. Women use the *mikveh* in the evening, men during the daytime – couples do not immerse at the same time! One *mikveh* is located at Etz Chaim Synagogue, 10167 San Jose Boulevard – please contact Rina Hovey at (904) 635-0226 for more information and scheduling. The other mikveh is located at Chabad Lubavitch of Northeast Florida, 10129 Haley Road. Please call (904) 469-8770 for more information and scheduling.

To prepare for the *mikveh,* one removes all makeup, nail polish, jewelry, hairclips, acrylic fingernails, and dental prosthetics (if removable). One showers before immersion. There are a number of traditional and contemporary meditations that can be recited at this time to add yet another dimension of meaning to this sacred, private act. Please ask our clergy if you would like more information about the liturgical options.

**Fasting:**

Jewish tradition encourages bride and groom to fast from the time of awakening on their wedding day until they first sip wine under the *huppah*. In some ways, the day of marriage is likened to *Yom Kippur*. Just as on *Yom Kippur* we seek to begin life anew with a clean and fresh slate, so, too, marriage represents a new start for a couple. After the ceremony, the couple will break their fast during *yihud*, the brief private period they spend with one another immediately following the ceremony.

When a marriage takes place on a Saturday evening after Shabbat, or on other joyous occasions such as *Rosh Hodesh* or *Hanukkah*, we do not observe the custom of fasting.

**Not Seeing One Another Before the Wedding:**

Some couples choose not to see one another for a period of time prior to the wedding, or at least on the day of the wedding prior to the ceremony, i.e., the *ketubah* signing and veiling. This practice adds an element of suspense and excitement to this special day, but requires planning and forethought. You may also opt to forego this particular custom, especially if it makes more sense to schedule picture-taking before the ceremony.

**Invitations**

As a life cycle event with specific Jewish meaning, adding Hebrew to your wedding invitation connects your celebration to our people’s past and the larger Jewish world. Inclusion of the Hebrew date, the name of that week’s Torah portion, and even an appropriate quotation from Scripture are ways to lend a spiritual dimension to your invitation. Our clergy will be happy to assist with the selection of appropriate Jewish texts and checking for correct spellings of Hebrew names and/or listing of dates on the Jewish calendar.

**Wedding Rehearsals**

Couples are welcome to schedule a rehearsal for the ceremony in the sanctuary at times when it is not otherwise in use. Please contact Lori Schoettler, our Director of Finance and Operations, to schedule a rehearsal. While couples, their families, and friends are welcome to attend Shabbat morning services and, following *Kiddush*, hold a rehearsal in the sanctuary, we do not open the building on the Jewish Sabbath for rehearsals at other times of day when the building would otherwise be closed.

During wedding rehearsals we kindly ask that you not move the podiums or the microphones.

**Before the Ceremony Begins**

There are two approaches to the prenuptial rituals that precede the actual wedding ceremony. One is more traditional, the other more private. Your choice should reflect your vision for the events leading directly to the ceremony itself. You may also mix or modify elements of the two to create a hybrid version that best serves your needs.

**The Traditional Option:**

Each member of the couple “hold court” in separate rooms for a specified amount of time, prior to the start of the prenuptial rituals. This is referred to as *Kabbalat Panim*, a time to greet guests face-to-face. All guests are invited to attend the *Kabbalat Panim*, which is listed separately on the wedding invitation itself.

 In very traditional weddings, the bride is visited only by other women, while the groom is visited only by other women. Often refreshments are served to the guests (though not to the bride and groom who would customarily be fasting). You may opt, of course, to have men and women visit both bride and groom.

In the groom’s room, there is a “*hasan’s tisch*”, literally “groom’s table” at which family and friends are seated. It is customary for the groom to offer a *d’var Torah*, a few words of Torah about the significance of the occasion, which is constantly interrupted by those present with jokes and songs, since no one expects the groom to be able to focus on the delivery of a serious speech just before his own wedding! Should the bride wish to conduct a “*kallah’s tisch*” in her room and offer a *d’var Torah* interrupted by those present with jokes and songs, she is certainly welcome and encouraged to do so.

Approximately 30 minutes prior to the ceremony, all of those at the *hasan’s tisch* dance the groom to his bride to the accompaniment of joyous song. All those invited to wedding watch as the prenuptial rituals are completed, including the *bedeken*, the veiling of the bride. At the completion of the veiling, guests who do not belong to the wedding party make their way to the sanctuary for the ceremony, while the wedding party gets ready for the processional.

**The Private Option:**

Some couples limit attendance at the prenuptial rituals to the wedding party and other close family and friends. In such cases, the general wedding invitation should indicate the start of the actual ceremony time; arriving guests who are not invited to the prenuptials will be directed toward the sanctuary. Accordingly, there is neither *Kabbalat Panim* nor a *“tisch*” *per se*.

Approximately 30 minutes prior to the ceremony, the various prenuptial rituals will begin in a private room such as the Portnoy Bridal Lounge or a larger space depending on the number of invited guests. At their completion, the wedding party will get ready for the processional just outside the sanctuary’s main doors.

**Pre-Nuptial Rituals:**

Regardless of whether one chooses the traditional or private options, the pre-nuptial rituals remain the same. The following represents the order of these rituals:

1. The officiant will ask your civil witnesses to sign the marriage license. The signed application to marry will be mailed by clergy to the appropriate county office; it is not returned to the couple.
2. The officiant will ask to see the respective rings and ask in the presence of your *edim* (Jewish witnesses) whether or not you own your respective rings and are therefore free to give them unconditionally to whomever you choose.
3. The “Letter of Intent” which accompanies Conservative *ketubot* (see page 12 for more information) is signed by bride, groom, and clergy.
4. The groom takes upon himself the terms of the *ketubah* through “*kabbalat kinyan*,” an action in which the officiant asks the groom to take hold of a small object, like a pen or handkerchief, and draw it toward himself to symbolize his agreement to abide by the stipulations of the *ketubah*. Since Conservative *ketubot* contain provisions binding both groom and bride, the officiant will perform *kabbalat kinyan* with both members of the couple. The *edim* witness this action, i.e, the agreement of bride and groom to accept the obligations of the *ketubah* which pertain to each respectively.
5. The *ketubah* is signed in Hebrew by the *edim*. A separate English version which sets out the basic provisions of the *ketubah* is signed by the *edim* in English.
6. *Bedeken* – After the signing of the *ketubah*, the groom veils the bride (please note: a veil is used only when it is the bride’s first marriage). The word *bedeken* means “to cover” or “to veil.” The act dates back to the biblical story of Rebecca and Isaac. When our matriarch first saw her husband-to-be from afar, she placed a veil over herself as a sign of modesty (see *Genesis* 24:62-67). One of the characteristics that have distinguished Jewish families is the modesty and humility that husband and wife are expected to display toward one another.

The *bedeken* ceremony offers an opportunity to express our greatest joy and most heartfelt wishes. We do so liturgically in the form of a blessing. Parents are also welcome to offer their own words of blessing to their children at this liminal moment.

With the completion of the *bedeken* (or after the *ketubah* signing when not a first marriage for the bride), the couple and the wedding party prepare for the processional. Your wedding ceremony is about to begin!



**The Wedding Ceremony**

**Photography and Videography during the Ceremony:**

The opportunity to record this most memorable of days is truly a blessing. Those hired by the couple to photograph or tape the ceremony, however, must remember they are NOT there to stage the wedding or deflect attention away from the event in any way. During the processional and recessional, photographers may use flash and stand in the aisle to capture the wedding party’s faces. Once the couple is standing under the *huppah* and the ceremony has begun, we ask photographers to use zoom lenses and limit their movements to the periphery of the room; they may not stand anywhere between the guests and the wedding party or in proximity to the *huppah*. We also ask that they refrain from using flash or spotlights during the ceremony. True professionals should have no problem using a light meter to adjust exposure time and shutter speed given the amount of light. Couples are asked to apprise their photographer and videographer prior to the ceremony; clergy will also reiterate the above guidelines the day of the wedding itself.

**The Processional:**

The wedding party may enter in any order, either alone or in pairs, and stand in any formation. Non-Jewish family and friends are welcome to participate. Having a wedding coordinator to assist you in planning the order of the processional can be helpful. When the clergy participate in the processional and recessional, they are the first to walk down the aisle and the last to leave.

Although there is no order fixed by Jewish law, traditional practice is for each partner to be escorted by his/her parents, with the groom preceding the bride. In the case of parents who are separated, divorced and/or remarried, creativity and sensitivity is warranted regarding who will escort the couple down the aisle. As a rule it is always better to be inclusive.

***A WORD ABOUT DRESS:*** The bride (first marriage only) must be veiled during the wedding procession. The shoulders of the bride and the women in the wedding party should be covered and the décolletage reflect modesty. All male guests and men in the wedding party must wear *kippot*.

**Circling:**

Before the couple enters under the *huppah*, it is customary for the partners to circle one another to symbolize the unbroken exclusivity of a relationship in which their lives will revolve around each other. While the most traditional understanding of the custom directs the bride to circle the groom seven times (a number reflective of the days of creation, according to the Torah), there is a variety of alternative practices.

A couple may opt to eliminate the custom of circling from their wedding (its inclusion is certainly not a requirement of Jewish law); when it is incorporated into the ceremony, however, as an egalitarian community we encourage both partners to circle one another. The following are some of the options from which you may choose:

* each partner circles the other seven times;
* each partner circles the other three times;
* each partner circles the other three times and then together walk in a circle, making for a total of seven circles;

After the couple completes the circling, they enter under the *huppah* (the wedding canopy) together, with the bride standing at the groom’s right as they face the clergy. The parents stand at the side of the *huppah* nearest their child, symbolizing the formation of a blended and extended family.

**The *Huppah*:**

The wedding canopy symbolizes the Jewish home the couple will establish together. Sometimes a couple will use as the canopy a *tallit* (prayer shawl), perhaps one that has been a part of the family for many years. With loops sewn into its corners it is attached to four poles, which are then either held by friends and relatives or secured to the ground. A *huppah* may also be constructed out of other material and decorated with flowers or vines. The only requirement for this symbolic Jewish home is that it must have a “roof”, i.e., a canopy of some kind on top.

**The Liturgy and Ritual of *Birkat Erusin*:**

The Jewish wedding ceremony of modern times is actually an amalgamation of two separate rituals. Originally, the bride and groom would become engaged in a ceremony called *erusin* (betrothal). This engagement period, which could last for a number of months, afforded the bride and her family a period of time in which to prepare for her marriage and subsequent move to the groom’s home. The marriage of the couple would then be consecrated in a ceremony known as *nisuin*. That we continue to use two cups of wine at a Jewish wedding is a reminder that these rituals were once discrete elements, separated from one another by a period of time. The *ketubah* is read between *erusin* and *nisuin* to also serve as a way of separating the two parts of the wedding ceremony.

Wine is used in virtually all Jewish ceremonies of Jewish and celebration. Bride and groom drink from each cup. If you wish, you may use your own *kiddush* cups to make the ceremony more personal. Many couples select cups that have been a part of prior life cycle events in their respective families. The couple may select any type of wine they wish, so long as the bottle carries a symbol certifying rabbinic supervision. It is a good idea to use white wine – in the event of clumsy clergy or wedding party members with butterfingers, you do not want to risk red wine stains! Should either partner not like the taste of wine or have health issues precluding the consumption of alcohol, kosher grape juice may be used instead.

Under the *huppah*, the ceremony begins with a brief prayer chanted by the *hazzan* welcoming the couple. The rabbi will also offer an opening prayer in English.

The blessing over the first cup of wine takes place, and *birkat erusin*, the blessing of betrothal follows:

***Praised are You, Lord our God, who rules the universe and has sanctified us with God’s commandments, commanding us to draw boundaries around our most intimate relationships, and guiding us to fidelity through the wedding canopy and the sacred rites of marriage.***

The bride lifts her veil (or is assisted by the maid of honor or a parent), and both bride and groom drink from the cup.

**The Ring:**

The exchange of rings is an essential highlight of the wedding ceremony, for through this act the couple commits itself to one another. With its circular shape the ring symbolizes the hope of love without end even as it suggests that marriage is a closed circle of intimacy in which each partner pledges fidelity to the other.

There are three requirements concerning a ring which a groom gives a bride:

* The groom must own the ring.
* The band must be made of plain metal, customarily gold (silver, white gold or platinum are also fine).
* The ring cannot be set with stones, semi-precious or precious.

If the groom plans to use a family heirloom, he must first purchase the ring from its current owner. It is the bride’s acceptance of the groom’s ring, when accompanied by a legal declaration of the latter in the presence of two witnesses, which makes the marriage binding in Jewish law. The bride should be wearing no other rings (e.g., an engagement ring) during the ceremony.

The groom recites the following declaration to the bride in Hebrew and English:

הֲרֵי אַתְּ מְקֻדֶּֽשֶׁת לִי, בְּטַבַּֽעַת זוֹ, כְּדַת מֹשֶׁה וְיִשְׂרָאֵל.

***Harei at mekudeshet li b’taba’at zo k’dat Moshe v’Yisrael.***

**By this ring you are consecrated to me as my wife in accordance with the laws of Moses and the people Israel.**

He then places the ring on her right index finger (i.e., first or forefinger). The bride responds with the words: “By accepting this ring, I pledge you all my love and devotion.”

In the egalitarian spirit of our community, we encourage couples to have a double ring ceremony, i.e., one in which partners exchange rings. It should be noted, however, that it is the bride’s acceptance of the groom’s ring, when preceded by the foregoing legal declaration in the presence of witnesses, which makes the marriage binding in Jewish law. Were the bride to offer the exact same words (grammatically adjusted for gender, of course) to the groom they would not achieve the same effect in religious law. Accordingly, the bride may prefer to make a declaration more consonant with the meaning of the ring she gives the groom:

הֲרֵי אַתָּה מְיוּחַד לִי, בְּטַבַּֽעַת זוֹ, כְּנָהוּג בְּעָם יִשְׂרָאֵל.

***Harei atah m’yuhad li b’taba’at zo, k’nahoog b’am Yisrael.***

**By this ring you are made exclusive to me as my husband in accordance with the practices of the people Israel.**

Alternatively, the bride may opt to accompany the bestowal of her ring with an appropriate verse from Scripture, such as one of the following:

**I.**

כִּי אֶל־אֲשֶׁר תֵּלְכִי אֵלֵךְ וּבַֽאֲשֶׁר תָּלִינִי אָלִין. . . כֹּה יַֽעֲשֶׂה ה' לִי וְכֹה יֹסִיף כִּי הַמָּוֶת יַפְרִיד בֵּיני וּבֵינֵֽךְ.

***Ki el asher telkhi aylekh, u’va-asher talini alin . . . Ko ya’aseh Adonai li v’kho yosif, ki hamavet yafrid beini u’veinekh.***

**Wherever you, I will go, and wherever you lodge, I will lodge. I vow before the Lord that nothing but death could part me from you.**

**- *Ruth* 1:16, 17**

**II.**

 וְאֵֽרַשְׂתִּיךְ לִי לְעוֹלָם וְאֵֽרַשְׂתִּיךְ לִי בְּצֶדֶק וּבְמִשְׁפָּט וּבְחֶסֶד וּבְרַֽחֲמִֽים. וְאֵֽרַשְׂתִּיךְ לִי בֶּאֱמוּנָה וְיָדַעַתְּ אֶת־ה'.

***V’erastikh li l’olam, v’erastikh li b’tzedek u’v’mishpat u’v’hesed u’v’rahamim. V’erastikh li b’emunah v’yada’at et Adonai*.**

**I will betroth you to Me forever. I will betroth you to Me with righteousness, with justice, and with compassion. I will betroth you to Me with faithfulness, and you shall know the Lord.**

**- *Hosea* 2:21-22**

**III.**

שִׂימֵנִי כַֽחוֹתָם עַל־לִבֶּךָ כַּֽחוֹתָם עַל־זְרוֹעֶךָ.

***Simeinu khahotam al libekha, kahotam al zro-ekha.***

**Let me be seal upon your heart, like the seal upon your hand.**

**- *Song of Songs* 8:6**

**IV.**

אֲנִי לְדוֹדִי וְדוֹדִי לִי.

***Ani l’dodi v’dodi li.***

**I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine.**

**-*Song of Songs* 6:3**

**V.**

מָצָאתִי אֵת שֶׁאָֽהֲבָה נַפְשִׁי.

***Ma-tzati et sh’ahavah nafshi.***

**I have found the one my soul loves.**

***-Song of Songs* 3:3**

As each partner gives his/her ring, the other one responds: “In accepting this ring, I pledge you all my love and devotion.” While both members of the couple should familiarize themselves with the Hebrew and English declarations they will make, there is no need for memorization since each will repeat word-by-word after the rabbi. When the bride receives her ring, she raises her veil.

**The Ketubah:**

After the ring ceremony the rabbi read aloud the *ketubah*. The rabbi will hand the *ketubah* the groom, who in turn will transfer its possession to the bride. The bride will hand it back to the rabbi. This “hand-off” of the *ketubah* symbolizes the couple taking possession of the contract which governs the responsibilities of matrimony.

It is usually at this point in the ceremony that the rabbi will share words of Torah and personal encouragement as part of a wedding charge to the couple.

**The Liturgy and Ritual of the *Sheva Berakhot*:**

We know recite seven blessings of marital consecration over the second cup of wine. When the cantor co-officiates with a rabbi, it is the former who generally chants the *sheva berakhot*. There is a Sephardic custom of draping a large *tallit* over the shoulders of the couple at this point in the ceremony. Because the *tzitzit* remind us of God’s covenant, we symbolize the couple’s embrace of God and *vice versa* through the establishment of a home suffused with sanctity. Non-Sephardic couples may choose to incorporate this custom. Families will sometime use a *tallit* that has been a part of the family for generations; alternatively, they may also use a brand new *tallit* that one spouse has given the other as a wedding gift.

The following is the translated text of the *sheva berakhot*, the seven blessings of marital consecration:

1. **Praised are You, Lord our God, who rules the universe, creating the fruit of the vine.**
2. **Praised are You, Lord our God, who rules the universe, whose glory is evident in all creation.**
3. **Praised are You, Lord our God, who rules the universe, maker of man and woman.**
4. **Praised are You, Lord our God, ruler of the universe, who created male and female in the divine image, that together they might perpetuate life. Praised are You, Lord, creator of man and woman.**
5. **May Zion rejoice as her children return to her in joy. Praised are You, Lord, who causes Zion to rejoice in her children.**
6. **Grant perfect joy to these loving companions, as You did for the first man and woman in the Garden of Eden. Praised are You, Lord, who creates the joy of bride and groom.**
7. **Praised are You, Lord our God, who rules the universe, who created joy and gladness, bride and groom, pleasure, song, delight, laughter, love and harmony, peace and companionship. O Lord our God, may there always be heard in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem voices of joy and gladness, of happiness, voices of bride and groom, the jubilant voices of those joined in marriage under the wedding canopy, the voice of young people feasting and singing. Praised are You, Lord, who causes the groom and the bride to rejoice together.**

After the *sheva berakhot* are recited, groom and bride drink from the cup in turn. From this point on the bride’s veil remains up until the end of the ceremony.

**Breaking the Glass:**

After a closing prayer and the recitation of *birkat kohanim*, the priestly benediction found in the Torah (*Numbers* 6:24-26), the wedding ceremony ends with the smashing of a glass. Tradition teaches that Jews must remind the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple even at our happiest moments. As the Psalmist writes, “If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand lose its power; let my tongue cling to my palate if I cease to consider you, if I do not keep Jerusalem in my memory even at my happiest hour” (*Psalm* 137:5-6). The rabbis interpret the phrase, “even at my happiest hour” as a reference to one’s wedding day.

This act reminds a couple at the height of their personal celebration, not to ignore or forget the Jewish community and is long history. To build a Jewish home is to recognize a couple’s responsibility to the preservation of the past as well as the needs of the present.

A more contemporary view of the breaking of the glass understands it as a symbol of the fragility of our relationships and the necessity for spouses never to take the durability of marriage for granted. A couple must proactively safeguard the sanctity and well-being of their sacred partnership lest it break through inattention and carelessness.

**Yihud:**

Following the conclusion of the ceremony and the recessional, the couple is required to spend a few minutes together, without the presence of family or friends. At the synagogue, yihudtakes place in the Portnoy Bridal Lounge. The clergy or *edim* (witnesses) will attest to the fact that the couple is truly alone in the room. During the ten minutes or so of *yihud* they will also “stand guard” at the door, and prevent others from entering.

Although it takes place after the ceremony, *yihud* is a ritual requirement of Jewish marriage. Long ago when wedding receptions lasted an entire week, a couple would consummate their marriage immediately following the ceremony, and might not appear at the celebration until much later or even the next day. While *yihud* no longer serves this purpose, its insistence that a newly married couple spends some time alone immediately following the wedding ceremony affirms that the couple’s own celebration of marriage takes precedence over the joyous whirlwind of well-wishers waiting to congratulate the couple.

During *yihud* it is customary for the couple to share some food together, especially if they have fasted prior to the wedding. After approximately ten minutes, one of the *edim* or the clergy outside will knock on the door to alert the couple that they may leave the room and others may enter.

***SEUDAT MITZVAH* – ADDING GOD TO THE GUEST LIST**

On page 7 of this Wedding Guide it was explained that the reception following a Jewish wedding is considered a *seudat mitzvah*, a celebration with deep religious significance in its own right. This is why we encourage engaged couples and their families to consider serving kosher food at reception.

It is for this reason we also urge couples to begin their celebratory meal with *Ha-motzi*, the blessing recited when partaking of bread, and to conclude with the beautiful and special Grace after Meals (*Birkat Hamazon*) recited only at weddings. This special form of Grace includes blessing two separate cups of wine, which are then mixed and given to both partners to drink, symbolizing the blending of their lives. In the course of a full reception with a cocktail hour, a multi-course meal, lots of dancing, cake cutting, and toasts, including a few mintes to express gratitude to God for the blessing of shared happiness with family and friends adds, rather than detracts, from the sense of celebrating a special occasion.

If your wedding is at the synagogue, we can furnish you with copies of the *benschers* (Grace after Meal Booklets) owned by the synagogue. Many couples, however, choose to order *benschers* (Grace after Meal booklets), and customize the covers of these inexpensive booklets with the names of the couple, the date and place of the wedding, and, as applicable, the logo used on the wedding invitation and program. For more information on ordering personalized copies of *B’kol Echad*, the *benscher* of the Conservative Movement, which also includes various songs and Shabbat prayers, please contact: <http://www.haggadahsrus.com/BKol.html>

Judaism has always maintained that joy shared is joy multiplied. We encourage you, therefore, to share your joy with others by making a charitable contribution in honor of the celebration. You may wish to consider *Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger*, which suggests a contribution equal to 3% of the cost of the meal. Doing so enables you to symbolically share your *simhah* with those who are in need. For more information, contact *Mazon* directly:

MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger

10495 Santa Monica Boulevard, Suite 100

Los Angeles, CA 90025

(800) 813-0557

hello@mazon.org

**CREATING A JEWISH HOME**

As important as the wedding is, it is but a prelude of a few hours to life as a married couple. To create a Jewish home it is helpful to acquire ritual and ceremonial objects to observe the precepts as a family that sanctify the Jewish rhythms of time. Couples will often include such objects on their registry, which is a great way to build one’s Judaica collection while affording family and friends to assist a couple in enhancing the Jewish character of the home they seek to fashion. The Judaica shop of the Jacksonville Jewish Center will be able to create such a registry with you. In addition you will also find myriad resources on line as well. Here are some of the items to acquire:

* *Mezuzot* (affixed to each doorpost in one’s home, other than closets or bathrooms)
* *Shabbat/*Festival candlesticks
* *Kiddush* cup(s)
* *Hallah* plate, knife and cover
* *Havdalah* set (includes candlestick, cup and spice box)
* *Seder* plate
* Elijah’s cup (for Passover *seder*)
* Handwashing cup (*netilat yadayim*)
* *Hanukiyah* (menorah for the festival of *Hanukkah*)
* Judaic artwork
* *TaNaKh* (Hebrew Bible in English and/or Hebrew)
* *Siddur* (prayer book for Shabbat and weekdays)
* *Haggadot* (to hold a Passover *seder*)
* *Benschers* (small booklets with Shabbat table liturgy, songs, and Grace after Meals)

**BOOKS/ONLINE RESOURCES ON JEWISH WEDDINGS & MARRIAGE**

To further help you plan, understand, and appreciate your wedding, we encourage you to make time for additional reading. The following is a short list of some of the resources available to you:

**Berkowitz, Miriam. *Taking the Plunge: A Practical and Spiritual Guide to the Mikveh***

 -Written by a Conservative rabbi about the use and place of the *mikveh* in Jewish marriage.

**Boteach, Shmuley. *Kosher Sex***

 -The work of a popular Chabad rabbi, the title says it all.

**Cowan, Paul and Cowan, Rachel. *Mixed Blessings*; *Overcoming the Stumbling Blocks in an Interfaith Marriage*.**

**Diamant, Anita. *The New Jewish Wedding***

***Guide to Jewish Interfaith Family Life,* edited by Ronnie Friedland and Edmund Case**

 -A comprehensive guide for intermarried couples who plan to raise Jewish children.

**Lamm, Maurice. *The Jewish Way in Love and Marriage***

**Lamm, Norman. *A Hedge of Roses; Jewish Insights into Marriage and Married Life***

 -Written from an Orthodox perspective, but very thorough and informative.

**Olitzky, Kerry. *Introducing My Faith and My Community; Guide for the Christian in a Jewish Interfaith Relationship***

**Sasso, Sandy Eisenberg and Schram, Peninah. *Jewish Stories of Love and Marriage; Folktales, Legends and Letters***

 -A treasury of tales that speak to the challenges and blessing of love with stories from a variety of sources, including the Hebrew Bible, Talmud, Midrash, Jewish folktales and the thoughts of contemporary writers.

**Wiener, Nancy. *Beyond Breaking the Glass; A Spiritual Guide to Your Jewish Wedding***

<http://www.mayyimhayyim.org/Using-the-Mikveh/Marriage>

[www.Myjewishlearning.com](http://www.myjewishlearning.com)

[www.InterfaithFamily.com](http://www.interfaithfamily.com)

<http://www.keshetonline.org/resources/marriage-project/>

 -Keshet is an important resource for same-sex couples contemplating marriage.

**BRIDE’S AND GROOM’S CHECKLIST**

 **Immediately following Engagement:**

 \_\_\_\_ Contact synagogue/clergy to set up date and initial meeting

 \_\_\_\_ Place engagement announcement in newspaper

 \_\_\_\_ Book reception venue

\_\_\_\_ Send out “Save the Date” postcard

**6-9 Months before the Wedding:**

 \_\_\_\_ Ketubah: If you are having a calligrapher prepare one, meet with him/her. Remember – a specific text must be used. Ask the calligrapher to contact the officiant, who will supply the text.

 \_\_\_\_Order bridal and attendants’ gowns

 \_\_\_\_ Hire a florist

\_\_\_\_ Meet with caterer and discuss menus

 \_\_\_\_ Book musicians for ceremony and reception

 \_\_\_\_ Create bridal registry. Do not forget about the synagogue’s own Judaica shop!

 \_\_\_\_ Hire a photographer

 \_\_\_\_ Hire a videographer

**3 Months before the Wedding:**

 \_\_\_\_ If you plan to invite guest clergy to (co-)officiate, please check with the Center’s clergy, who will then extend the invitation

 \_\_\_\_ Meet with the Hazzan regarding music for ceremony

\_\_\_\_ Contact clergy office to schedule aufruf

\_\_\_\_ Purchase rings (please check with clergy to make sure they conform to the requirements of Jewish law)

\_\_\_\_Make arrangements for pre-nuptial events (if desired)

\_\_\_\_ Stuff and address invitations

**2 Months before the Wedding**:

 \_\_\_\_ Purchase kippot (and tallit for groom/bride)

\_\_\_\_ Make housing arrangements for out-of-town guests

\_\_\_\_ Make arrangements for groom’s and groomsmen’s attire

\_\_\_\_ Purchase gifts for bridesmaids and groomsmen

\_\_\_\_ Mail invitations

\_\_\_\_Schedule rehearsal time for sanctuary with Director of Finance and Operations

**4-6 Weeks before the Wedding**:

\_\_\_\_ Final meeting(s) with clergy

\_\_\_\_ Make final arrangements with the caterer, florist, photographer

\_\_\_\_ Make appointment for the mikveh

\_\_\_\_ Purchase glass to break under the *huppah*

\_\_\_\_ Obtain marriage license

**Week of Wedding:**

 \_\_\_\_ *Mikveh*

\_\_\_\_ Conduct wedding rehearsal

**Day of Wedding:**

\_\_\_\_Bring rings, marriage license, *ketubah* to the synagogue or other wedding venue

\_\_\_\_Bring *kiddush* cups (if using your own) to the synagogue or other wedding venue

**JACKSONVILLE JEWISH CENTER**

**WEDDING POLICY AGREEMENT**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and

(Couple’s First and Last Names – please print)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

have scheduled a wedding to take place on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

 day of the week / month / day / year

We have read the foregoing wedding guide and agree to abide by all the religious and institutional polices of the Jacksonville Jewish Center. Specifically, if ours is a Saturday night wedding at the Jacksonville Jewish Center, we understand and that our ceremony will begin no earlier than one hour after the end of Shabbat, the time of which is determined by the synagogue’s clergy. If ours is a Saturday night wedding held at a venue other than the Jacksonville Jewish Center, we understand that the ceremony will also begin no earlier than one hour after the end of Shabbat, and further understand the potential need to factor in additional time for clergy to travel to the venue after the conclusion of Shabbat.

We also understand individual members of the synagogue’s clergy may opt to officiate at Jewish weddings, regardless of whether or not the couple plans a kosher reception. Because Judaism views the celebration following a wedding as a religious celebration, however, the clergy are committed to attend life cycle receptions as guests only when the food is prepared under kosher supervision; or, if held at a non-kosher venue, when the menu is free of non-kosher meat or shellfish, i.e., comprised solely of dairy or vegetarian dishes, and/or fish with kosher characteristics. We understand that this policy reflects religious principle, and does not depend upon whether or not special arrangements for individual kosher meals are available.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Groom/Partner Date

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Bride/Partner Date

1. This includes all blood relationships and many relationships by marriage. If you have specific questions about the latter, please speak to your officiating clergy. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)