

The Wedding of
Lisa Carole Sanger
and
Eric Schlachter

November 9, 1997
9 Cheshvan 5758



WELCOME!

Welcome to our wedding. We are excited that you have joined us to share in our *simcha* (joyous celebration). The Jewish wedding ceremony is an ancient one filled with many rituals. We offer the following explanation of the traditions in the hope that it will add to your appreciation and enjoyment of our *simcha*.

INTRODUCTION

Weddings are one of the happiest times in Jewish life. Prior to and throughout the event, the emphasis is on the happiness of the bride and groom. Traditionally, the community treated the bride and groom as queen and king on their wedding day, as the importance of and happiness for betrothal placed them in an exalted position in Jewish life.

We have asked Rabbi Denebeim to perform our marriage ceremony. Rabbi Denebeim is a member of Chabad, an orthodox sect. While many of the elements of our wedding are common to all Jewish weddings, certain elements are specific to orthodox weddings.

PRE-CEREMONY RITUALS

THE KETUBAH: Before the ceremony, Eric and two witnesses signed the *ketubah* (marriage contract). The tradition of the *ketubah* is one of the oldest elements of the Jewish wedding, dating back over 2000 years. The traditional *ketubah* is a legal document, written in Aramaic, which details certain marital obligations.

BEDEKEN (veiling of the bride): After Eric signed the *ketubah*, Eric was escorted to Lisa. During the *Bedeken*, Eric lowered the veil over Lisa's face and blessed her. One interpretation of this ceremony arises from the biblical story in which Jacob married Leah when he intended to marry her younger sister Rachel. He could not tell that he was marrying the older sister because she was already veiled. Learning from Jacob's experience, Eric will make sure he is marrying the correct bride before he lowers Lisa's veil.

PROCESSIONAL TO THE CHUPPAH: After the *Bedeken*, we proceed to the *chuppah* and begin the ceremony. A *chuppah* is a marriage canopy with four poles symbolizing the new Jewish home we will create. It is open on all sides to represent a home in which guests are always welcome, and to encourage the couple to reach out to the community.

At each corner of the *chuppah* stands a "chuppah holder." The chuppah holders represent all of the Jewish people surrounding and supporting the new couple.

As our parents approach the *chuppah*, they will carry candles. It is customary for those who lead the couple to the canopy to light the way with burning candles. Light is a symbol of G-d's presence.

CIRCLING: When Lisa arrives at the *chuppah*, Lisa and the parents will circle Eric seven times. The circling may be seen as establishing a seven-fold bond between Lisa and Eric and our families. Lisa and the parents circle seven times because the number seven holds great significance in Jewish tradition. The world was created in seven days, and marriage is a seven-days-a-week act of creation. With marriage, seven of the bride's relatives are forbidden to the groom. There are seven wedding blessings. Also, Jewish mystics believe circling is the way Lisa enters Eric's *s'ferot* – the mystical spheres of his soul that correspond to the seven lower attributes of G-d.

THE WEDDING CEREMONY

The wedding ceremony has two parts: *erusin kiddushin* (betrothal) and *nissuin* (nuptials). The two parts differ in function and feeling. The *erusin-kiddushin* forges the legal connection between bride and groom, the *nissuin*, which can mean "elevation," connects a husband and wife spiritually.

ERUSIN KIDDUSHIN: The *erusin kiddushin* begins with two blessings. The first blessing is said over wine, the traditional symbol of joy. The second blessing expresses the sacred nature of marriage. These blessings are followed by the presentation of the ring.

Under Jewish law, the giving and accepting of the ring in the presence of witnesses is the most important part of the ceremony. When Eric places the

ring on Lisa's finger he will recite a prayer called the *haray aht*. The *haray aht* contains 32 letters. In Hebrew, the number 32 is written with the letters *lamed* and *vet*, which spell the word "heart" – *lev*. The groom thus gives his heart as he recites the words. Eric will place the ring on Lisa's index finger according to a 1000 year old tradition which stems from the ancient belief that the index finger is directly connected to the heart by a special artery.

Only a simple band (without any engraving or adornments such as stones) is used. The ring's absence of incursions represents the hope that the marriage, like the ring, will be free from blemishes or obstructions that might destroy its perfect "roundness." Under traditional law, only the groom presents a ring to the bride. If the bride gave a ring to the groom, it would be a transfer of value to the groom, canceling out the groom's gift to the bride. Lisa will give Eric his ring after the ceremony.

After the presentation of the ring, the rabbi reads the *ketubah* aloud and Eric presents it to Lisa. The reading of the *ketubah* separates the *erusin kiddushin* from *nissuin* that follows.

NISSUIN: The *nissuin* consists of the *sheva brachot* (the seven blessings) of marriage. The first blessing is over wine. The next three blessings praise G-d's creation of the world, humanity, and marriage. The fifth blessing affirms our faith in the rebuilding of the Israel and Jerusalem. The sixth blessing expresses thanks for the personal joy of Lisa and Eric. The seventh blessing is a celebration of joy, love, harmony, friendship and peace for the bride and groom as a unified couple.

BREAKING OF THE GLASS: The ceremony concludes with Eric smashing a glass under his foot. This act has several meanings to us. The fragility of the glass suggests the frailty of human relationships and the need for love, respect and understanding to keep the marriage whole. Breaking the glass also commemorates the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and the subsequent suffering of the Jewish people, as well as all suffering in the world today. The act reminds us that even in our most joyous times, we must remember our responsibility of *tikkun olam*, the repairing of the world. As the glass is broken, many people shout "Mazel Tov!" or congratulations.

YICHUD: After the ceremony, as the guests make their way to the reception, we adjourn to a private room for the *yichud* (period of privacy). Two guards stand outside our door to ensure our privacy. This period of

seclusion symbolizes the new intimate relationship we share and reinforces the importance of privacy to our marital relationship.

THE SIMCHA!

SE'UDAT MITZVAH (the wedding meal): After the *vichud*, we will join the celebration. At a Jewish wedding, it is a *mitzvah* (good deed or commandment) to increase the happiness of the bride and groom by dancing, singing, eating, laughing and rejoicing. The *se'udah mitzvah* begins with a *motzi* (blessing) over the challah.

At the *simcha*, everyone will be invited to dance traditional Jewish dances. Part of the tradition includes hoisting the newlyweds onto chairs. We will also have many of the traditional American rituals at the *simcha*, including the toasts, the couple's first dance, the cake cutting, and modern dancing to the funky tunes of the Sound Co.

THANK YOU

We thank our parents Barbara Sanger, Howard Sanger, Gail Schlachter and Stuart Hauser for their constant love and support throughout the years. There are not enough words for us to express our love and gratitude to them.

We also thank all of our family and friends for making the effort to celebrate this *simcha* with us. Each of you has enriched our lives in unique ways and your presence makes this evening complete.

Finally, we remember our grandparents who are no longer with us: Gladys Friedman, Jack Friedman, Lillian Friedman, Helen and Lewis Goldstein, Irving Krasner, Carroll Sanger, and Max Schlachter. Jewish folklore tells us that the ancestors of the newlywed couple descend temporarily to attend the marriage celebration. We hope they are sharing our joy with us today.