

Jewish Weddings:

A Field Guide

By Haia R'nana Bchiri

PERSON A opens an envelope: it is an invitation

They gasp, cheesy infomercial-like.

COLE enters

COLE

So, you've been invited to a Jewish wedding. You're probably wondering: what's next? Hi, I'm Cole – Cole Sasson. Today, I'll be your guide through the ins and outs, dos and don'ts, manners and mishegas, of attending an Ashkenazi Jewish wedding.

JINGLE (this is always to the tune of "Od Yishama"):

Wardrobe

COLE

First, let's talk about what to wear.

PERSON A holds up a formal dress,

one that is either a sheath or mermaid and thus tight in the legs

COLE

You're right, this is a formal occasion. But don't forget: it's a *simcha*. You're going to want to be able to move, because you will be Dancing.

PERSON A pulls out a dress that flows more.

COLE

Good choice!

PERSON A puts on a pair of heels

COLE

Those will look great with that dress – but be sure you’ve brought some flats to change into!

JINGLE:

Dancing

PERSONS A and B are simcha dancing.

PERSON B stops, dizzy.

COLE

Do you suffer from motion sickness? Try packing an alkaseltzer or two – you’ll be running in circles all night. Literally.

PERSON A

Can we get some strong men to lift the chairs?

COLE

Oh, dear. Now, you might have heard about the tradition of lifting the newlyweds in chairs. You might even have heard of the hysterical strength attributed to parents saving their children. But what you might not be prepared for is the supreme surge of power that comes with uttering those fateful words. Be prepared for the way that’ll activate the strongest women in the room to go into full Wonder Woman mode

PERSON B lifts a chair (with a bride or groom in it)

like a superhero raising a car above their head

COLE

But hey, we don’t waste any food or hurt any birds by throwing rice-

(PERSON B continues dancing the chair in the air with gusto)

We just throw the newlyweds.

*PERSON A and PERSON B pick up plates,
one for every type of food mentioned,
increasingly struggling to balance them*

COLE

And now it's time to eat.

Well, eat again. First, you eat at the smorgasbord, passed hors d'oeuvres or appetizers or sliders or pizza or noodles or salads or salatim or finger sandwiches or falafel or, most likely, a combination.

(COLE pauses to catch their breath

PERSONS A and B sigh in relief

But then:)

And then there's the sit-down dinner, of course. You must start with bread, then salad or soup, next comes the main which probably has a couple of options and sides, and you must have dessert – cake, cookies, cupcakes, chocolate fountain, maybe ice cream (depending on whether the meal was meat or dairy), and some fruit to finish it off.

(COLE pauses to breathe again

PERSONS A and B are relieved again

But then:)

Unless you stay until the end, at which point there might be some junk food or takeout like burgers or barbecue or pasta or donuts or a candy buffet or...

This is only cut off by the

JINGLE:

Jewish Geography

PERSONS A and B are at the table eating

PERSON A

Where did you go to college?

PERSON B

Out East.

PERSON A

Oh.

*PERSON B goes back to eating,
ending the conversation.*

They freeze

COLE

Well, that didn't go quite right. Jewish Geography is a conversational staple. Let's take a look at how it's done. Jewish Geography: Speed Round –

The following gets faster and faster as it goes on

PERSON A

Where did you go to college?

PERSON B

Out East, at Brandeis.

PERSON A

Oh! Did you know anyone named Katz?

PERSON B

I think so. First name David?

PERSON A

Yes! He's my stepbrother's partner's elementary school friend!

PERSON B

Wait, did you grow up in Chicago?

PERSON A

Evanston, near Northwestern

PERSON B

Ida Crown?

PERSON A

CJ

PERSON B

Aaron Kerev?

PERSON A

My neighbor!

PERSON B

My cousin!

They hug and chat happily

COLE

Much better.

JINGLE:

Schtick

PERSON A is finishing doing something

that makes the couple laugh,

then steps aside, centering PERSON B unexpectedly

PERSON B has a morsel or glass to their lips

They panic and do something weird

Record scratch

COLE

Caught unprepared? Didn't expect the whole wedding party to go bananas with napkin jump ropes and odd inside jokes? Weren't counting on interrupting the dancing for that odd little tradition called "schtick?" Well, we've got just the thing. While you're packing your flats and safety pins, grab the brand new Schtick in a Box!

PERSON B picks up the box

and takes out items as they're mentioned

COLE

Featuring the velcro hat, a repurposed costume piece from *Fiddler on the Roof* to which you can affix any recycled bottle for a crowd-pleasing bottle dance.

Sporty couple? Try the dry-erase jersey – just fill in their favorite team and wave it like you're baiting a bull.

Nerdy newlyweds? Grab a pair of collapsible lightsabers and our handy diagram for a duel in their honor!

And, when all else fails, deliver them a takeout container from "that funny story" at their favorite restaurant.

PERSON B uses items from the box to perform something

to uproarious laughter

COLE

Much better

JINGLE:

Schmoozing

COLE

It wouldn't be a wedding without a little small talk —

PERSON A

So, nu, when are you going to get married?

COLE

Or big talk, as the case may be.

(PERSON B starts to stammer a response)

Now, in this scenario, there are a few ways to extract yourself.

First, the Diploma Diversion:

PERSON B

Actually, I'm planning to get my doctorate before my MRS

PERSON A

(laughs)

Oh, how wonderful! Where are you studying?

COLE

See? Simple, straightforward, diverted.

Of course, that only works if it's true – everyone knows who's kid is going to be a doctor.

For a more universal approach, try the Debate Bomb:

PERSON B

Hm? Oh, I'm sorry, I was just thinking about that politician who did that thing on that news station recently.

PERSON A

You know, I think they had some very good points. But on the other hand, they also had some very bad points. Let's discuss...

COLE

Like they say: two Jews, three opinions, one surefire deflection.

And, if all else fails, there's always the Romantic Redirection:

PERSON B

Speaking of marriage, do you know if Daniel and Dana are engaged yet?

PERSON A

You know, I don't know. They have been dating for quite a few years. I should ask them...

COLE

Takes the attention off of you in no time. But the Romantic Redirection comes at a cost, so play it with care.

JINGLE:

Traditions and tidbits

COLE

A few pieces of parting advice:

(PERSONS A and B demonstrate like flight attendants)

When the situation calls for a kippah, be sure to fasten it tightly to the top of your head using a minimum of two clips.

If you're going to wear makeup on your face, top it off with some strong setting spray to protect against cheek-pinching-induced smudging.

Be prepared for some sudden noises: there are a couple of times we take a moment out of the celebration to break some dishware. 2000+ years of trauma, you've got to find creative ways to let it out.

Speaking of trauma, you might notice that the festivities kick off in a couple of separate rooms, joining up at the Bedeken when the bride's veil is lowered by her fiance. There was this incident

with a couple of sisters switching out via the veil a few thousand years ago, and we've been a little paranoid ever since.

But once we're sure it's the right person under those layers of tulle, it's time to really get the party started! With a decades-old tune for ancient lyrics, of course. Why don't you give it a try?

Sing along with us to a song that's sung newlyweds down the aisle for generations.

Teach the audience "Od Yishama"

Just as they're getting it, interrupt them for a moment to add in:

COLE

Oh, just one more thing – all of this is for *Ashkenazi* Jewish weddings. Purchase our full set of tapes in case you're invited to Sephardi, Mizrachi, Ethiopian, or Yemenite Jewish weddings!

Revive the singing and play out with a track of "Od Yishama"

One of the actors or the SM enters with a broom

PERSON WITH A BROOM

You're still here? It's past midnight! We need to clean the dance floor