

❧ Main emphasis of a wedding ❧

By the Grace of G-d
16th of Teveth, 5715
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Blessing and Greeting:

This is in reply to your letter of January 5, in which you ask my advice concerning the frictions that arose with regard to the marriage celebration, planned in March. Let me at once rectify your error in evaluating the situation, which I ascribe to the fact that you are personally involved right in the midst of it, for it is difficult under such circumstances to evaluate a situation more calmly and objectively, as the person who views it from a distance. The error consists in overlooking the fact that the marriage ushers in a new life for the young couple and lays the foundations for the happiness of the entire future life, while the external aspects of the celebration connected with the hall, band, or dancing and the like, are matters of a few hours' duration and of no lasting consequence, thus entirely disproportionate to the real important things which are fundamental.

Needless to say, the most insignificant thing can be blown up to assume tremendous proportions, as people sometimes make a mountain out of a molehill, with the result that it causes anxiety and heartache as if the thing was really significant. But the fact is that what appears to you as a problem of great consequence is in reality nothing that can have any bearing on the future if approached correctly.

As to the question, who is right and who has to give in, I trust that you can answer it yourself even on a little reflection. Consider the issues: on the one hand you have the local convention to make the wedding festivities in a certain way, of which your family is in favor; if your Choson will not conform, and will try to explain why, the explanation may not be accepted, and your family will feel hurt, for a time at any rate. On the other hand, he believes that if he did conform, he will offend the Almighty, going against His will. In addition to the fact that one is always dependent upon G-d's grace, this is something which is of fundamental importance, connected with the very foundations of the entire future. Even if there were only a remote chance or doubt as to its possible effects, it would be prudent to avoid it. Suppose a businessman is offered a transaction which has two possibilities: either to earn a penny, or to lose a million dollars. What a reasonable businessman would do in such a case is obvious. Yet here it is only a question of money, where the difference between a penny and a million can be measured. In your

case it is not a question of relative proportion, for the issues are: following an external convention, and thereby jeopardising the spiritual and material happiness of two young lives who are about to join their lives and fate and build a home together. The choice should not be difficult to make.

Whatever justification there may be for your chagrin at not having been told about it earlier, the set-up of your problem does not change thereby, inasmuch as your Chosson is not motivated by a personal whim, but something which he considers of fundamental importance, as many tens of thousands of other religious Jews do.

So much for the problem, as you describe it in your letter. Actually, there could probably be found a way of arranging the wedding less sumptuously, so that the absence of mixed dancing would not even be conspicuous. The saving of money in this way would undoubtedly come in useful for your personal needs and partly for Tzedoko, and everybody would be happy.

I trust it is unnecessary to refute your argument that there are many, among them such that call themselves 'rabbis', who do not object to, or participate in, mixed dancing. If it were a valid argument to do what others do, or even what the majority does, Jews who are, and always have been, in the minority would have long ago disappeared from the face of the earth, and even within our people, too, those strictly adhering to our Torah and Mitzvoth, Kashruth, etc., are unfortunately in the minority in recent times.

Let me conclude by reiterating what I told you when you were here. The preparations to the wedding and the wedding itself - this is the foundation of your future home among our people. As in any structure, the most important thing is the foundation, for all effort and money poured into a building, into the walls, decorations, interior and exterior, furniture, etc. would be to no avail if the foundations are not strong and lasting, and no chances, however remote, should be permitted to jeopardise the whole structure, especially as it can be so easily avoided.

I trust that you will find the suitable words to explain to your mother the true aspects of the situation, and that from now on there will be no more friction among all concerned, and that you will have only good news to write about.

With prayerful wishes that the wedding take place in a happy and auspicious hour, for a happy future materially and spiritually.

With blessing,