

“What’s the Truth about ... Tuesday Weddings?”

By Ari Z. Zivotofsky

Misconception: The ideal day to get married is Yom Shelishi (Tuesday) because in the Creation story, the phrase “*ki tov*” (for it is good)¹ is used twice on that day.

Fact: Tuesday may be a fine day on which to get married. However, there does not seem to be any basis for the belief that it is traditionally a *preferred* day for doing so. The criteria in choosing a wedding date should be convenience to the couple, minimal delay and avoidance of a *chuppah niddah*.

Background: Not surprisingly, Jewish tradition has something to say about selecting a wedding date.² There are certain dates on which one may not get married; other dates are merely considered inauspicious. There are neutral days and preferred days. Reasons to ban or prefer a certain date may have to do with halachic technicalities, with the nature or mood of a particular day or with *simanei berachah* associated with it.

Halachot and customs exist regarding getting married on particular days,³ months,⁴ seasons⁵ and even parts of the

month.⁶ This discussion will be limited to those concerning the days⁷ of the week.

The Talmud and Codes discuss performing weddings on the various days of the week, and offer preferences as well as days on which weddings may not take place. Weddings may not take place on Shabbat or any other major holiday such as Rosh Hashanah and Pesach, because a wedding involves a legal transaction that may not be conducted on those days; furthermore, it may cause one to write, and thereby desecrate the holy day (*SA, OC 339:4, 524:1 and EH 64:5; MA 339:4*). If a wedding is performed on those days, it is post facto valid (*Aruch Hashulchan EH 26:14*). Some permit Shabbat weddings under extenuating circumstances, such as for a man who was not previously married, or for an orphan bride (*Shu”t Rema [125]⁸ and Rema, OC 339:4*). So as not to embarrass an orphan, Rema actually officiated at a wedding that was scheduled for Friday but was delayed until after nightfall.

This led to a decree in Krakow banning Friday weddings.⁹

The Talmud (*Ketubot 4-5*) discuss-

es various technical reasons why one should not get married on *erev Shabbat* or Yom Rishon. In addition, Sunday weddings were frowned upon because the preparations might lead to the desecration of Shabbat, and, furthermore, it resembles the Christian custom. The concern of “*uvechukotaihem*” is found in the Geonic responsa and is also mentioned by Rema (*Pitchei Teshuvah, EH 64:4*). Today, this is not widely viewed as a concern, and most contemporary authorities permit Sunday weddings (see *SA, EH 64:3; Sidrei Taharah 192:12, at the very end of the section*).

There were many authorities who understood the Talmud’s concern—that making a wedding on Yom Rishon could lead to Shabbat desecration—to be referring specifically to a Saturday night wedding (Saturday night is considered Sunday according to *halachah*); many later authorities therefore forbade Saturday night weddings. When Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef became chief rabbi of Tel Aviv in 1968, he implemented such a ban.

Fear of Shabbat desecration led to a debate regarding Friday weddings (*SA EH 64:3*), and Rambam (*Hilchot Ishut*

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10:14) forbids all Friday and Sunday weddings. But he is in a distinct minority. Tosafot (*Ketubot* 7a, s.v., *vehilchato*) says that in practice there is no concern about Shabbat desecration with regard to a Friday wedding, and Rif, Rosh and Tur all concur (*EH* 64; *Beit Yosef EH* 64). Even though this concern is mentioned in the Talmud, Friday afternoon weddings became the norm in Eastern Europe throughout much of the last millennium because it allowed one to combine the wedding feast with a Shabbat meal, thus obviating the need for a separate, elaborate wedding banquet (*Beit Yosef, EH* 64; *Drisha EH* 64:2).¹⁰ This practice was obviously beneficial to the poor. Explaining the custom practiced in his time, the Aruch Hashulchan (*EH* 64:11) states that in the time of the Gemara, it was the *chatan's* responsibility to prepare for the wedding, while in his time it was the *kallah's*. The Talmud was concerned that a *chatan* might inadvertently desecrate Shabbat while being overly zealous in his efforts to prepare for the wedding, in an attempt to please his *kallah*, who may be particular about these matters. Nowadays, writes the Aruch Hashulchan, when the *kallah* takes responsibility for the preparations, we are less concerned about the possibility of *chillul Shabbat* since she is aware that in general a *chatan* is not that particular about these matters.

There are also midrashic and kabbalistic sources in favor of Friday weddings, such as the Arizal's claim that Yaakov Avinu's weddings took place on Friday, and the observation of the Yafeh Lalev that the world's first wedding, that of Adam and Chavah, occurred on a Friday. Rema notes that the primary reason for permitting Friday weddings is due to the rampant poverty that Jews experience in exile, which prevents many from making weddings on other days. Rema's reasoning would probably not apply in most cases today, and thus Friday weddings are no longer popular.

In summary, Shabbat is out, Saturday night is discouraged, Friday, although initially discouraged, was for

many years quite a popular wedding day but is nowadays uncommon, and Sunday is allowed by most authorities but has no special significance. So which, if any, days are preferred?

The Mishnah (*Ketubot* 1:1) states that *betulot* (virgins) should marry on Wednesday, and widows and divorcees should do so on Thursday; the *SA* (*EH* 64:3) rules accordingly. *Betulot* were encouraged to wed on Wednesday because *batei din* (courts) customarily convened on market days, i.e., Monday and Thursday, and a Wednesday wedding allowed sufficient time to prepare for the wedding and the opportunity to appear in court the following morning should there be any complaints. In addition, a Wednesday daytime wedding enabled the couple to consummate the marriage that night, Yom Chamishi, the day on which God blessed the fish. Here indeed there is a link to the Creation story, but involving Divine blessing rather than mere Divine approval. The Talmud postulates two "blessed" days, Thursday, because God blessed the fish to be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters (*Bereishit* 1:22), and Friday because God blessed man (*Bereishit* 1:28) to be fruitful and multiply and subdue the land and its inhabitants.¹¹

Non-*betulah* nuptials were held on Thursday because it is considered both a convenient and a propitious day for a wedding. It is convenient because it affords the new couple a "long weekend" to celebrate and enjoy each other's company for three uninterrupted days. It is also an auspicious day because it was on the Thursday of Creation that God pronounced His first blessing, when He blessed the fish (and birds) that they be fruitful and multiply. Consummating the marriage on Thursday night is also propitious because that is when God blessed mankind.¹²

So what happened to Wednesday weddings? Ran notes that today, because the two steps of marriage, *erusin* and *nissuin*, are performed one right after the other, the types of grievances the

Mishnah was referring to are no longer applicable, and there is no need to strive for a wedding the day before the *beit din* sits (*Darkei Moshe EH* 64:4; *Aruch Hashulchan EH* 64:6). (In addition, the grievances are not relevant because today everyone gets married older [i.e., *bogeret*] and not as a *na'arah* [*SA, EH* 68:3].) Finally, the Gemara states (*Ketubot* 3a) that if there are no fixed days for the *beit din* to sit, such as is the case today in most places, a *betulah* may be married on any day.

This would indicate that based on legal considerations there is no "right" day of the week on which a *betulah* should get married. Based on extra-legal considerations (i.e., *simanei berachah*), Wednesday and Thursday are preferred days. Tosafot (*Ketubot* 3a, s.v., *ishah*) suggests that the *berachah* reason alone does not suffice to establish either Wednesday or Thursday as a preferred day in *halachah*. However, Pnei Yehoshua (cited in *Pitchei Teshuvah EH* 64:6) expresses surprise that the *berachah* reason is not mentioned in the *Shulchan Aruch* or by Rema. Pnei Yehoshua finds it strange that Rema quotes customs that have no Talmudic source and yet omits the *berachah* reason, which does have a Talmudic basis. He says that although he can justify the Rema's omission, it is nonetheless proper to factor that consideration in when scheduling a wedding date. And, if as most authorities concur, the *beit din* reason for a Wednesday wedding no longer applies, then Thursday should be the preferred day for all weddings. *Nachalat Shiva* (*siman* 12) states that in seventeenth-century Germany the custom was still to make Wednesday weddings, for two reasons. First, a custom does not change even if the reason is no longer applicable. Second, because Jews were spread throughout Germany, weddings were made in the middle of the week so that guests could return home before Shabbat.¹³


Some Yemenites in Israel have the practice of making the first part of the wedding (*kiddushin*) on the night of Yom Chamishi (Wednesday night) and

the second stage (*nissuin*) on the following day (Thursday), such that the consummation is the night of Yom Shishi (Thursday night).¹⁴

There is no special reason to hold a wedding on Monday, nor is there a particular reason not to,¹⁵ even though it is the only day with no “*ki tov*.”

The only day not discussed so far is Tuesday. The Talmud (*Ketubot* 3b) comments that although ideally weddings were held on Wednesday, from the time of the “danger” the Talmud explains the custom was to have them on Tuesday, and the rabbis did not object. (Danger, in this case, refers to Roman generals whose practice was to rape Jewish brides.) However, the Talmud continues, it is not advisable to move weddings back to Monday except under extenuating circumstances.¹⁶ The rabbis were hesitant about Monday and Tuesday weddings because they wanted the *chatan* to have at least three days to prepare the wedding (*Ketubot* 2a; *EH* 64:3)¹⁷; this is less of a concern today when most affairs are catered.

In conclusion, there are no traditional sources that connect the “ideal” day for a wedding to the number of times “*ki tov*” appears on that day in the Creation story. The Creation story is considered relevant for ascertaining which days are “blessed,” leading to weddings on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. The source of the “lucky Tuesday” misconception might be the confusion between God’s active blessing of Creation and His passive approval of His handiwork. Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef advises that one should not delay a wedding to favor a specific day, month or season, especially if the *chatan* is “old” (i.e., over twenty).¹⁸ The *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* (166:3) stresses that a wedding should not be delayed or scheduled so that it will end up being a *chuppah niddah* just to satisfy the custom of marrying during the early part of the month. Thus, when searching for the “right day” to schedule a wedding the factors to be considered are convenience to the *chatan* and *kallah*, the earliest possible date, avoidance of a *chuppah*

*niddah*¹⁹ and, in a small way, keeping in mind as many of the *simanei berachah* cited by *Chazal* as possible. 

Notes

1. *Ki tov* is found in Bereishit 1:4 (Day One), 1:10 (Day Three), 1:12 (Day Three), 1:18 (Day Four), 1:21 (Day Five), 1:25 (Day Six), and *tov meod* is found in 1:31 (Day Six).

2. There are detailed discussions of this topic, with many sources, in Rabbi Josef Lewy, *Minhag Yisrael Torah* (1997), 4:81-97; Rabbi Yitzchak Yosef, *Sova Semachot* (5765), chap. 2; Rabbi Menachem Mendel HaKohen Fakser, *Invei Hagefen* (Jerusalem, 5745), chap. 2; Rabbi Binyamin Adler, *Hanisuin Kehilchatom* 1 (5745), chap. 5 and Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, *Made in Heaven* (Jerusalem, 1983), 35-38.

3. For example, Chol HaMoed is naturally joyous, and yet weddings may not take place then because on Chol HaMoed one is obligated to rejoice specifically because of the festival and not because of a new wife (*Chagigah* 8b), a principle known as *ein me’arvin simchah besmichah*—one may not intermingle two sources of rejoicing (*Moed Kattan* 8b; *OC* 546:1; *EH* 64:6; see Rabbi Chagi Preschel, *Hapardes* 74:4 (July 2000): 23-24, for a discussion on whether this rule applies only to weddings or to other occasions as well). Weddings may take place on Chanukah, Rosh Chodesh and Purim (*Shulchan Aruch*, *OC* 696:8). In some places, Jews even had a custom to specifically hold weddings on Purim, and Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach’s wedding took place on Friday of Purim Meshulash, 5690 (1930) so as not to conflict with the yeshivah learning schedule (Hanoach Teller, *And from Jerusalem His Word: Stories and Insights of Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt”l*, [New York, 1995], 36). Others (Magen Avraham and sources cited in *Nitei Gavriel*, Purim [1986], 170-171) disagree and recommend not holding weddings on Purim day. (Note that it can be derived from the *midrash* that Yaakov Avinu and Leah Imeinu were married on Purim.)

On national days of sorrow, weddings should not take place. This includes “the Three Weeks” between the fasts of the Seventeenth of Tammuz and the Ninth of Av (Ashkenazim), or the first nine days of Av (Sephardim). Regarding a wedding on the night of the Seventeenth of Tammuz, see *Iggerot Moshe OC* 1:168; *Tzitz Eliezer* 10:26 and *Moadim Uzemanim* 8:338.

Another sorrowful period during which weddings are not held is the Omer. There are many different customs, the common denominator being that there is some period during the forty-nine days when weddings are not held.

Regarding other fast days, there are differing opinions about the appropriateness of holding a wedding (see *Hanisuin Kehilchatom* 5:44-45 for sources on opinions in both directions). Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik felt that weddings should not be held on fast days (*Nefesh HaRav*, p. 196).

4. Although some suggest not marrying in Elul, Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef holds that there is absolutely no problem, and in fact, the Sdei Chemed got married in Elul in the presence of most of the rabbinic leadership of the Land of Israel. Some even view Elul as an especially auspicious time to get married. Marcheshvan is another month in which some people have a custom not to get married (see Ari Zivotofsky, “What’s the Truth About ... “Marcheshvan?,” *Jewish Action* (fall 2000): 28-29). Nonetheless, the custom today is to hold weddings in Marcheshvan, and indeed the Chatam Sofer married the daughter of Rabbi Akiva Eiger during that month.

5. For example, some people are hesitant about having a wedding during *Aseret Yemei Teshuvah*, while others recommend it so as to have one’s sins forgiven and to increase one’s merit. See Moshe Harari, *Mikraei Kodesh: Hilchot Yom Hakippurim* (5760), 29-30, note 56.

6. A little-known custom that is not mentioned in the Talmud but is found in the early Rishonim (e.g., *Shu”t*

Ramban 283), is to hold a wedding only during the first half of the month (*Shulchan Aruch* YD 179:2; Rema, *EH* 64:3 and *Minhag Yisrael Torah*, pp. 86-91, for great detail; for a summary and additional sources, see *Torah Loda'at*, Bo [5762/2002]). This is done as an expression of hope that just as the moon waxes larger and larger during this period, so may the good fortune of all new Jewish couples continue to grow. Even though this custom is mentioned by both the *mechaber* and Rema, it is not universally practiced. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (*Iggerot Moshe*, *EH* 1:93; see similarly in *Yabia Omer* 3: *EH*:10:3) points out, without criticism, that this custom, which is regarded as a “*siman berachah*,” is generally ignored, and thus, one should not get bent out of shape about neglecting other *simanei berachah*, such as getting married under the stars. Indeed, the wedding of Rabbi Moshe Soloveitchik, son of Rabbi Chaim Brisker and father of Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, was at the end of a month, Wednesday, Sivan 26, 5661/1901 (*Mipninei HaRav*, p. 213). Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (*Halichot Shlomo* 2, p. 327-328, notes yud daled and 31) advised that people not be married after the twenty-second of the month, and certainly not on the last day of the month, except in the month of Adar. He noted that it is hard to ignore a concern mentioned explicitly in the *Shulchan Aruch*.

7. In general, the Talmud assumes a daytime wedding (*Ketubot* 5a). There is an opinion that one should not get married at night, and that such a marriage may not even be legally valid, despite several explicit *gemaras* that say that weddings may be held at night. The *Knesset Hagedolah* (*bagahot* to Tur *EH* 26:7) discontinued nighttime weddings in his town in deference to this concern and notes that this opinion dates back to Rabbeinu Yishayah Harishon (ca. 1180-1250). Rabbi Akiva Eiger (*Shu"t Rabbi Akiva Eiger*, *Mahadura Tinyana* 71) says that nighttime weddings are valid according to the letter of the law, but when possible the

opinion to avoid them should be taken into consideration. See Netziv (*Herchev Davar* to *Ha'amek Davar*, Bereishit 24:54) that nighttime weddings are standard, modeled after Yaakov Avinu's wedding. On nighttime weddings, see also *Pitchei Teshuvah* *EH* 26:7 and *Otzar Haposekim* *EH* 26:4:16:5. Rambam (*Isbut* 10:14) and *Aruch Hashulchan* *EH* 26:14 explicitly permit it, with the latter noting that such was the local custom.

8. Note that in some editions, responsum 124, a lenient ruling which deals with non-Jewish wine, has been censored out and this responsum is numbered 124.

9. There is a similar case mentioned in Taz *EH* 64:1. See the long discussion on this topic in *Sova Semachot* (not found in the 5758 edition).

10. See, however, Ramban's general hesitations regarding Friday weddings (*Beit Yosef* *EH* 64 and *Mishnah Berurah* 339:19), and reservations of the *Aruch Hashulchan* (*EH* 64:11) regarding weddings on short winter Fridays. According to the biography written by their children and grandchildren (*Iggerot Moshe* 8 [5756], 39), Rav Moshe and Rebbetzin Sima Feinstein were married on *erev Shabbat*, *parashat Naso*, Sivan 13, 5682 (June 9, 1922). The biography parenthetically notes that *erev Shabbat* weddings were the norm and that there were three weddings in the Feinsteins' small town that Friday since it was the first Friday after Shavuot.

11. A third blessing in the Creation story occurred on Day Seven (*Bereishit* 2:3) when God blessed the Shabbat. In order to connect to the triple blessing, some have a custom to eat fish on Shabbat (see Shmuel Pinchas Gelbard, *Otzar Ta'amei Haminhagim* [1995], 178).

12. *Bereishit Rabbah* (8:12) records the same *halachah* as the *mishnah* (*Ketubot* 1:1) but offers an alternative reason—that God gave blessings on those days. Cf., *Yerushalmi Ketubot* 1:1.

13. See *Minhag Yisrael Torah* 4, pp. 82-83, for an additional reason by the Shla for Wednesday weddings.

14. Rabbi Shlomo ben Rav

Yechyei Amram Korach, *Arichat Shulchan* 3, pp. 258-259.

15. See Rabbi Chaim Pelagi, cited in *Darkei Teshuvah* YD 179:11.

16. The Chatam Sofer, (on *Ketubot* 3b and the beginning of *Bechukotai*) explains that Tuesday weddings were problematic because the marriage would be consummated on Tuesday night, a time that witchcraft was prevalent. See *Pesachim* 112b that demons were prevalent on Tuesday night.

17. On the importance of an appropriate wedding feast, see *Shulchan Aruch*, *EH* 64:4 and *Otzar Haposekim* on 64:4.

18. See also Rabbi Shmuel David Munk, *Pe'at Sadchah* 1 (5749), 143, pp. 292-293.

19. See Rabbi Yoel and Dr. Channah Catane, “*Chupat Niddah—Halachic and Medical Aspects*” [Hebrew], *Tchumin* 26 (5766): 427-437.



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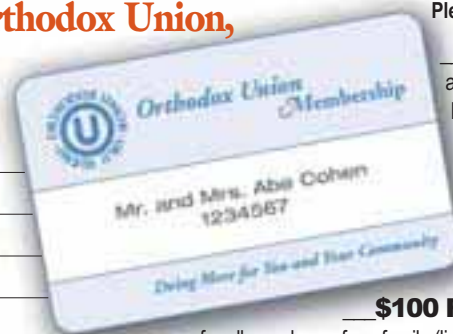
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