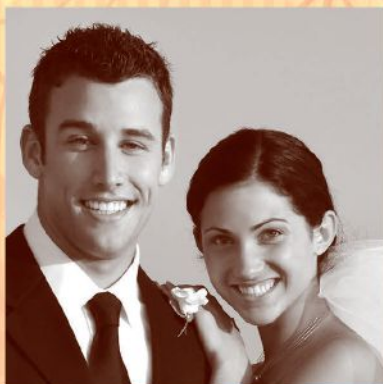


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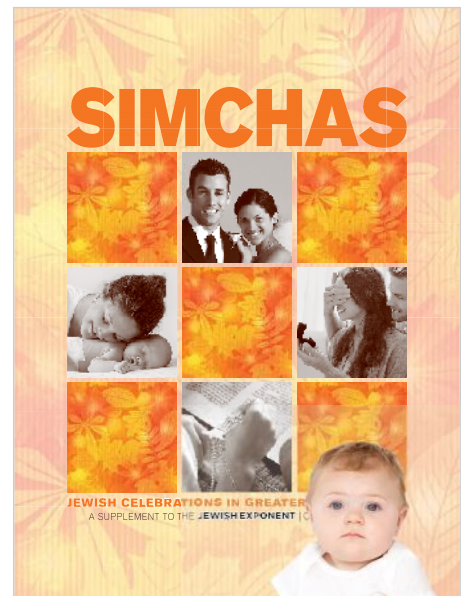
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# WHAT'S *in a* Name?

LIZ SPIKOL | JE STAFF

There are few occasions more joyful than the birth of a baby. But in the nine months leading up to that glorious day, there are many pragmatic decisions to be made, from which kind of stroller to buy to which color to paint the nursery.

New parents have to consider so many variables, and there's no shortage of advice from experts, friends, relatives and even mommy bloggers: Should we do cosleeping or let the baby cry it out? Should we use disposable diapers or cloth? Should we get a standard crib or convertible? It's overwhelming.

There is one decision, though, that's a bit more personal than whether to go with Aviary Blue or Adriatic Sea on the walls — and it also tends to be more permanent: the baby's name.

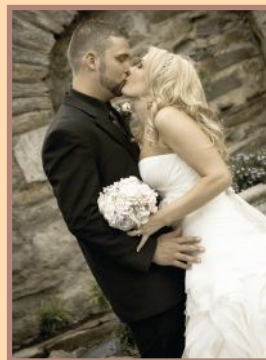
For Jewish parents, the question of a name can get pretty complicated, as many Jewish children have both a secular, American name as well as a Hebrew name. So aside from the typical choices — such as whether the child will have a middle name — some Jewish parents

See Name, Page 10



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# Kayden Asher Abigail Charlotte Sadie Ava Levi Ezra Ethan Elizabeth Elijah Logan Kylie Bro

## Name

Continued from Page 8

have double the trouble when it comes to choosing a name — or double the pleasure, depending on your point of view.

As with other aspects of Jewish practice, baby-naming traditions vary widely depending on degree of observance and affiliation, but whether a name is American or Hebrew, it most certainly won't be the same as that of a living relative if the baby is Ashkenazi. There are both religious and superstitious justifications for this, which explains why there aren't too many Ashkenazi Jewish Juniors.

See Name, Page 12



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# Name

Continued from Page 10

The Jewish website Kveller reported a few months ago on the top five most popular Jewish baby names for 2016 so far. For girls, they were Charlotte, Ava, Sadie, Elizabeth and Abigail. For boys, they were Ezra, Asher, Levi, Elijah and Ethan.

But the *Jewish Exponent* birth announcements recently featured new arrivals with less conventional names: Brody, Kylie, Fiona, Jordyn, Kayden, Presley and Raegan —not exactly shtetl names. There were two Logans, too.

One of those Logans — Logan Milo Baill, born Aug. 22 — was named for a relative, but not in the way you might think. His great-grandfather, Morton Goren, had a deep connection to the neighborhood where he grew up — the Logan section of Philadelphia.

“My poppy Morton Goren was very proud of his childhood in Logan,” explained Liz Baill, Logan’s mother. “He had a group of childhood friends that called themselves the Logan Boys. In junior high, they formed a basketball team — the Logan Sparks. They took a photo of the original five basketball teammates as kids and continued to take a photo in the same formation, with my poppy crouching down in the middle of the front row, whenever they were together. This continued throughout their lives, so we have years of Logan Boys pictures, and we always knew who Pop’s Logan friends were.”

Goren passed away almost a year ago; Liz and her husband, Andrew, found out they were having a baby shortly thereafter.

“We like to think of [our son] as the next of the Logan boys,” Baill said. “The Logan Boys shared a very special, lifelong bond, and we hope that love lives on through Logan.”



The Logan Boys



Logan Milo Baill

Logan’s middle name, Milo, pays tribute to three grandparents with M names: Marion, Morris and Mort.

Morton Goren’s daughter, Pam, said the remaining Logan boys — who have stayed local with one exception — were thrilled by Liz and Andrew’s decision to name their son after the neighborhood.

“My dad was the first of the group to pass away, but is surely smiling from above,” she said.

And at least one decision was easily made for Liz and Andrew Baill when they were decorating their home in honor of their new baby’s arrival: “We have one of the early Logan Boys photos in our son’s nursery,” Baill said.

No word, however, on the color of the walls. ■

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# Newlywed Game

## MUCH DIFFERENT THAN THE TV VERSION

JON MARKS | JE STAFF



Bob Eubanks really had no idea.

To the host of *The Newlywed Game*, being just-married was all fun and games, which was evident in the questions he asked.

“What’s the most outrageous thing your husband or wife ever said to you in bed? What’s the most embarrassing thing they’ve ever done in public?”

Well, here’s what viewers never seemed to get: Being a newlywed is anything but a game.

It’s dealing with life’s situations on a daily basis, trying to be supportive of each other without giving up your individuality.

And when you’re dealing with Jewish couples, that inner circle seems to tighten since it seems like wherever you go or whoever you meet, they know someone who knows one of you.

“The joke is that the rest of the world needs six degrees to connect,” laughed Greg Smith, who married Maxine Barish Smith on Nov. 9, 2014. “Jews need two.”

They’re just one of five couples married within the past two years finding out that once you say “I do” and break the glass, things are never quite the same.

Here’s a look at their stories.

### *Engaged* IN A PARKING LOT

Things have been a bit crazy since Greg Smith and Maxine Barish Smith tied the knot almost two years ago after meeting on JDate.com.

Since then, they’ve moved from a Mount Laurel townhouse to a house in Marlton. Greg Smith left his job building large computers to go out on his own, then got bought out by Dell. His wife helped him deal with his mother’s sickness around the time of the wedding and her death eight months later.

And that was all before Natalie was born on Jan. 8.

See Newlyweds, Page 14





## Newlyweds

Continued from Page 13

"It feels like more than two years," said Maxine Barish Smith. "We've been through a lot in two years. Having a baby changes your life. But I find we have a lot alike as we continue to be married. It was actually better for us to wait until we were older.

"We're both more mature. More financially secure. Luckily, we have a lot of the same philosophy. We both come from the same Jewish tradition and agree about most things, especially parenting. But every day's a new adventure."

Sharing those adventures with his wife makes it more special.

"I wouldn't have been able to get through losing my mom without her," Greg Smith said. "She was there for me.

"People think that you wait until you know someone and are sure they're the right one. But one thing I've learned is you'll find out reasons on top of reasons on top of reasons why you married the person you did.

"But you won't find them out for years."

Perhaps by then she'll appreciate the way her husband proposed.

"My wife plans everything in advance, and I'm definitely not that way," he explained. "But I had this whole thing planned, which got messed up at first because of her.

"So we spent the day in Newtown at the park, then I drive to Cherry Hill to start retracing our steps from our first couple of dates. We finally go to the coffee shop where we had our first date, then to the place where I first told her I loved her, the parking lot at Ponzio's.

"I asked her to marry me there. I thought it seemed romantic, but she tells people, 'He proposed to me in a parking lot.'"

## *A Speed Date* THAT LASTED

Having been through the ups and downs of dating, Bill Furman never thought he'd get married. Deena Freedman was accustomed to single life, too, and wasn't eager to give it up.

Both were in their late 30s when they met on a "speed" date, one of those singles' events where you talk to someone for a few minutes, then move on to the next person.

Who'd have guessed it would last so long?

"I had a longtime girlfriend pass away and didn't think I'd ever get married," said Bill Freedman, who works for an auto collection company. "Because we were older, we didn't let our parents influence us. Even for our wedding [on June 14, 2015] we did what we wanted."

Being older and more set in their ways gave them a better perspective.

"I'm still continually surprised I found someone I wanted to marry," said Deena Freedman, a high school math teacher. "I told people for years I was very happy being single.



Their cake topper, depicting their baseball team preferences



Bill Furman and Deena Freedman





"I did what I wanted when I wanted to and didn't have to answer to anyone. But I like having someone to share things with. From the beginning, I don't think we had any secrets. We both expressed our paths, so there were no real surprises."

But there are compromises. Deena Freedman keeps a kosher home, with five sets of dishes. One of them is for her husband, who doesn't keep kosher and eats treif.

He's also a Mets fan, while she follows the Phillies.

### "Keeper" IN THE (JEWISH) RYE

Rina and Michael Ehrlich named their 5-month-old son, Holden, after the main character in one of their favorite books, J.D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*.

Since he came into the picture following their Nov. 15, 2014 wedding, much has changed.

"Everything before goes out the window," explained Michael Ehrlich who, as a 13-year-old, once attended the same Bat Mitzvah as 11-year-old Rina. "It's all for the baby."

"You put yourself last, as it should be. Otherwise there haven't been a whole lot of surprises. ... But being able to watch Rina grow into a bride, wife and mother has certainly grown my feelings for her."

Those feelings are mutual for the woman he proposed to at the end of a long scavenger hunt.



Michael, Rina and Holden Ehrlich

See Newlyweds, Page 16

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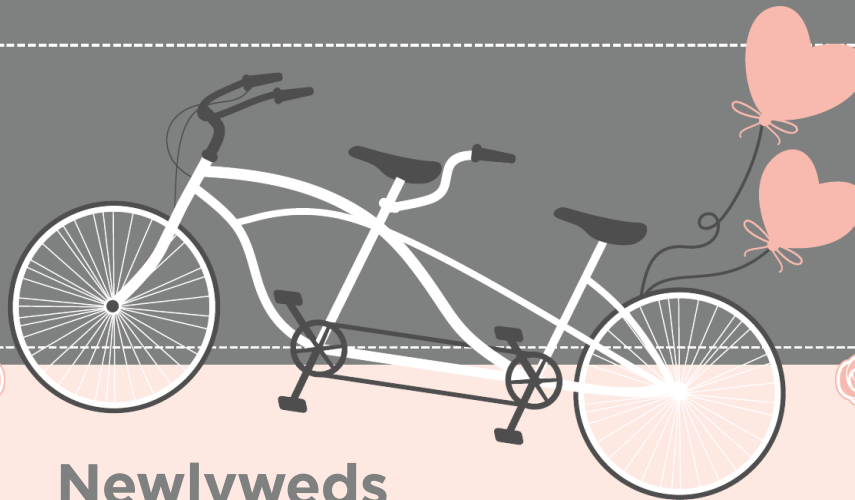


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## Newlyweds

Continued from Page 15

"It takes a lot of teamwork," Rina Ehrlich said. "We used to be great at treating ourselves first. Now [Holden's] needs are first."

As for her husband, she sensed early on he was Mr. Right.

"I met him right around when I turned 30," she said. "We started dating a couple of weeks before my birthday."

"I already had a weekend getaway planned with my girlfriends in Atlantic City. He found the restaurant where we were going and had wine and champagne sent to our table. Everyone knew then he was a keeper."

### *Beshert* 35 YEARS LATER

Ami Amada and Stephen Kardos say they were meant to be together. It just took them a long time to find out.

Soon after going to the prom together at Northeast High School in 1981, they went their separate ways.

She went off to Tyler School of Art, then discovered she was a "Dead-head," and followed the Grateful Dead to concerts in 38 states. Eventually she returned home, became an arts and humanities teacher and got married twice, having a son and daughter with her second husband.

While that was going on, Kardos was trying to find himself. He enlisted in the Army, which gave him a sense of purpose along with some skills. He now works as a credit analyst for an automotive lender.

He, too, settled down, got married and had a son before getting divorced.



Ami Amada and  
Stephen Kardos





Fast-forward to 2010.

Within months, Amada lost her brother-in-law and her sister to cancer. Kardos found out and emailed condolences both times.

"We've pretty much been together since then," Amada said. "I'd like to believe my sister and brother-in-law somehow guided me to Steve, because I have never been happier than I am right now. Having been married twice before, I never knew what a partnership was or could be."

"It's different on a lot of different levels" said Kardos, who's built a relationship with his wife's children. "Different relationship from before. Different understanding."

"I'm a very different person. It's taken me a lot of years, for lack of a better term, to grow up and come to grips with a number of things that have happened over the course of four decades."

"I've often heard Stephen say [how he's different] to other people," Amada added. "We truly bring out the best in each other."

### *Fireworks* AT MY WEDDING

The Fourth of July wouldn't work, so Lauren Green and John Sacks came up with the perfect alternative.

They got married on New Year's Eve at the Top of the Tower in Center City.

"I wanted fireworks at my wedding," said Green, who attended Abrams Hebrew Academy and JCC day camp at the same time as Sacks, although they don't recall meeting until 11th grade at Penns-



Lauren Green and John Sacks

bury High School. "The wedding was at 6:30 and went through until midnight when there were fireworks."

From there, it was off to a three-week honeymoon through Australia and New Zealand before they returned to their Spring Garden neighborhood home.

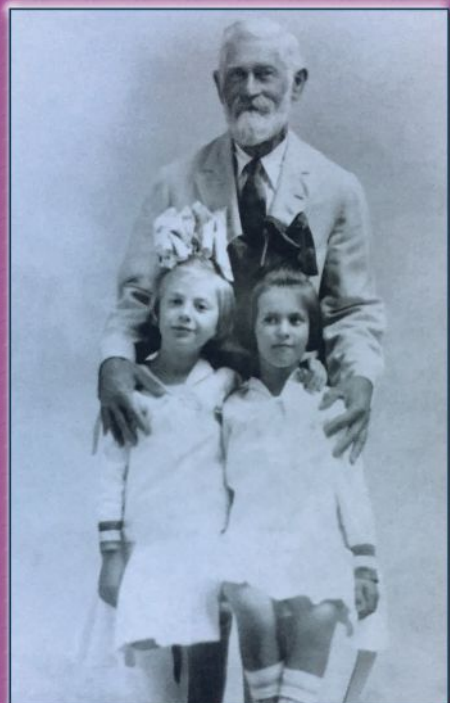
Ten months later, they say everything's been great so far.

"It was perfect timing," said Green, a healthcare marketing specialist, whose husband runs a property management business. "We had gone through some other relationships that didn't work out for one reason or another."

"We knew within a date or two it felt right. Within two months, we're already talking about what it'll be like when we're 80 years old."

"No matter how crazy or silly or whatever your significant other wants to do, you should always support each other," Sacks said. ■

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# THE SECRETS *to a Long and Happy Marriage*

MARISSA STERN | JE STAFF



SO FAR, 2016 SEEMS TO BE A BAD YEAR FOR LOVE — AT LEAST IF YOU'RE A CELEBRITY.

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BUT NEVER FEAR — WHILE 2016 WAS MARKED WITH HEARTBREAK IN HOLLYWOOD, THESE PHILADELPHIA-AREA COUPLES ARE HERE TO REMIND THOSE WITH EVEN THE MOST JADED AND CYNICAL OF HEARTS THAT LOVE DOES SURVIVE.

FOR THESE COUPLES, THIS YEAR MARKED MAJOR ANNIVERSARY MILESTONES, AND THEY'RE HERE TO SHARE THEIR SECRETS TO A LONG AND HAPPY MARRIAGE. HOLLYWOOD, TAKE NOTE.

Alvin and Rae Foreman celebrated their 75th anniversary in September in Naples, Fla., where they've lived for the past 14 years.

"We enjoyed our anniversary," said Alvin Foreman, 98. "Our family took us out to a very nice restaurant, and we all enjoyed the evening."

He and Rae, nearing 97, met when Alvin and a friend went to a party at Rae's house — without knowing her.

"I heard they were having a party at my wife's house who was not my wife then — I didn't even know her," he recalled. Alvin added no one invited him and his friend, but they asked to stay anyway.

Rae, however, joked that's putting it gently.

"He crashed my party; he made it sound nice," she laughed.

That party eventually led to their first date and 75 years later, they're still happily together.

"A couple weeks later I called her up for a date and everything went on from there," Alvin said. "I think about a year and a half after

that we were married and lived happily ever after."

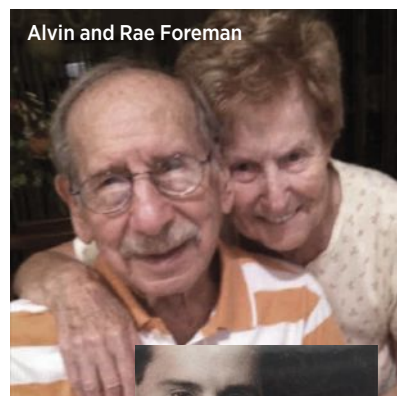
They were married at a temple in Philadelphia

"FIRST OF ALL, YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER. YOU HAVE TO TAKE THE GOOD WITH THE BAD, AND SOMETIMES IT'S BEST TO JUST KEEP QUIET."

— ALVIN FOREMAN

and, 10 days later, Alvin went into the Air Force, as he had been drafted.

He later became a master sergeant and Rae, an avid singer and former athlete, came down to Washington, D.C., to join him. They lived in a tiny



Alvin and Rae Foreman





apartment in Maryland for a few years and made many Jewish friends, Alvin recalled.

“We used to meet every Saturday night in each other’s home,” Rae remembered. “It was like a hole in the wall — one big room, living room and kitchen and everything all in one room, then a very small bathroom. The bedroom was even worse.

“I don’t know how we did it all those years,” she laughed.

They later made their way back to Philadelphia and lived in the Northeast before moving to Florida where their son, daughter-in-law and grandchildren live.

For their 75th anniversary, they received a card from President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama congratulating them on their anniversary, which Rae framed and suspects was the result of some online magic by their son.

For Alvin, the secret to a long marriage is understanding.

“First of all, you have to understand each other. You have to take the good with the bad, and sometimes it’s best to just keep quiet — I’ve found that out,” he chuckled.

For some couples, long-term love has taken them overseas.

Rona and Aaron Michelson celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in July with their children and grandchildren in Modi’in, Israel.

Rona Michelson grew up in Philadelphia and met her future husband while the two were both at Camp Ramah in the Poconos in 1961. Rona was a camper and Aaron was a counselor.

“We were just friends and after camp we wrote letters until one day he wrote me that he got engaged and so I stopped writing,” Rona Michelson recalled via email. “A couple of years later, I saw that he had been assigned as a chaplain to Fort Knox, Kentucky, so I wrote him a letter and said, ‘Hi,’ assuming he was already married with

See Secrets, Page 20



Rona and  
Aaron Michelson



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# Secrets

Continued from Page 19

children. He wasn't."

In that year, everything changed.

"I was attracted to him as a camper, but it was in the year that we wrote to each other that I began to really value who he was and what he believed," she wrote. "I was attracted not only to his looks, but to his character."

They were married at the Oxford Circle Jewish Community Center and now, 50 years later — and with five children and 30 grandchildren — they travel together and commemorate their love, though not always with flashy anniversary celebrations.

"We usually don't do anything particularly special for our anniversary," she said. "Fortunately, we have a good life and don't feel the need to mark a special day because truthfully, pretty much every day is a good day."

For Rona Michelson, a marriage and family therapist in addition to a tour guide, the secret to their 50 years of happiness, as well as a happy, long marriage in general, has to do with several attributes.

"Mutual respect, shared values, a good sense of humor and stubbornness," she said, "so that even when difficult times come along,

Jack and Elaine Barbash



a couple needs to press on and stick together and get through them together — even if the individuals are not at that point feeling loved and supported."

After 65 years, you can still hear the love between Jack and Elaine Barbash, who live in Northeast Philadelphia and celebrated their milestone wedding anniversary on March 18.

The two met on a blind date after Elaine's cousin gave Jack her number, and the rest is history.

While they don't remember where exactly they went, Elaine recalled that "when he walked in, I knew he was the one because he was dressed so meticulously."


"And from that minute on, we were, you know, we went together," Elaine said.

For them, a key ingredient to a long, happy marriage is teamwork and looking out for each other, whether it's getting each other somewhere they need to go or the fact that when Jack gets up for ice cream, he always asks Elaine if she wants some, too.

It's also the little things, like when they're out taking a walk and 97-year-old Jack, a World War II veteran, proudly points Elaine out to a stranger: "See that woman there? We're married 65 years!"

As with all marriages, they have their ups and downs, but they don't let that deter them.

"We're there for each other for everything, we talk to each other,




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Elizabeth and Edward Marks



we do things together, we're together a lot at this point in our lives," said Elaine, now 87. "My motto is, live today because you don't know what tomorrow brings."

They also never let their age deter them. "Age never mattered with us," Elaine said, adding with a laugh, "He keeps up with me."

For their anniversary, rather than have a lavish party, they went out for a nice family brunch at the William Penn Inn with their children, grandchildren and even great-grandchildren.

They both said they feel truly blessed.

"Elaine always says she'll take another 65 years," Jack said, to which Elaine responded, "I sure will."

For some, relationship origins can be summed up in a song.

Edward Marks started singing "Standing on the corner watching all the girls go by ..." from *Pal Joey* when Elizabeth Marks recalled how the two met. It's a fitting song, since that's pretty much how Edward noticed Elizabeth in the beginning.

"We met in South Philadelphia," Elizabeth Marks recalled. "My husband-to-be was standing on the corner with his boyfriends be-

cause that's what boys did — there were no malls to go to. He would see me walking to my grandmother's house. He noticed me and followed me home one day and asked me for a date. That was our first getting to know each other."

For their first date, they went to the now-defunct Woodside Amusement Park to celebrate his birthday. They began "courting" but got interrupted when Edward went into the Army in the early '40s, though they exchanged letters and kept in touch.

When he returned, he went back to his studies in electrical engineering at Drexel University, while Elizabeth studied secondary education at Temple University. They were married April 13, 1946.

Now they have three children, eight grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren and have made 38 trips to Israel to visit their daughter and family.

Their daughter had been a music major in high school, switched gears to study nursing and then "decided to take time off and go to Israel to help pick grapes, and she picked a husband," Elizabeth said with a laugh.

That daughter has been married 38 years, and the Marks have taken the same number of trips to visit her, so until last year, they never had to miss a wedding or a simcha because of the distance.

Now living in Willow Grove, Edward and Elizabeth credit love for the not-so secret to reaching their 70th anniversary.

"I'd say love — getting us through problems, arguments, situations but underlying of all of it is a deep, abiding love," she said. "Love and respect for each other. We're thrilled with what we have, thrilled with each other and thrilled with what we produced." ■

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# *What* NON-RELIGIOUS *Jews* CAN EXPECT *at a* RELIGIOUS *Wedding*

**RACHEL KURLAND** | JE STAFF

Five years ago, I coerced my non-religious, sushi-eating, bar-hopping best friend to join me on a Birthright trip to Israel.

This past summer, she got married in a traditional Orthodox wedding.

As the first of my closest friends to tie the knot — and the first time I joined a wedding party as the maid of honor — it was a bit of a shock that she embraced her religious side and made such a huge life change in just the past year, especially knowing her Jewish upbringing involved a Bat Mitzvah and nothing else.

Part of me was surprised that my friend jumped into a drastically different lifestyle. But on the other hand, she has always been spontaneous and passionate, and I knew that anything she wanted to do, she set her mind to, and I was always by her side along the way.

That said, it was definitely a mind-boggling switch from spending time with her eating buffets of sushi and Chinese food to reading all the labels for the kosher “U” stamp.

After recovering from the overall bafflement of finding out about the man in her life through a Facebook engagement post, I focused on the ceremony, planning table arrangements and dresses (somehow I got away with a backless purple number) rather than facing the tough questions of a lifelong commitment.



So pausing “Sunrise, Sunset” and putting the shock behind me, I had to address another issue after her quick engagement led to an even faster wedding: What would an Orthodox wedding be like?

I had never been to one before — or many weddings in general — and I was aware that this wedding probably wouldn’t include American traditions like throwing the bouquet and garter or a silly choreographed dance with members of the wedding party (I was very OK with eliminating that one).

I grew up in an active Reform community, but the traditions differ greatly from Orthodox communities.

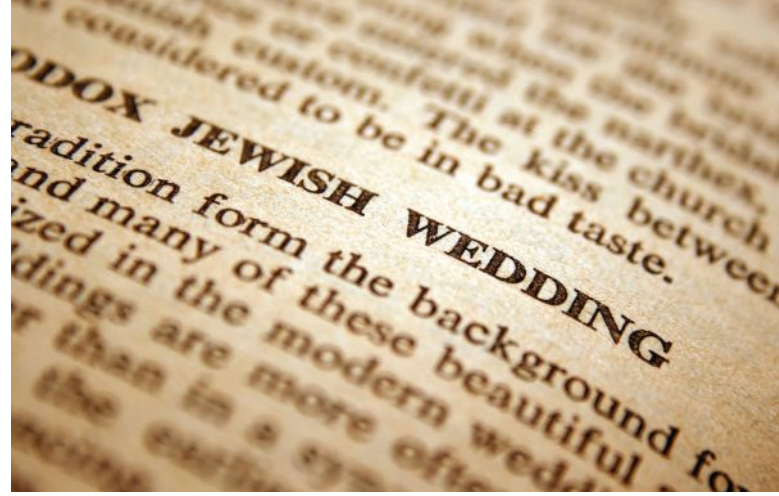
Based on their backgrounds — both husband and wife in this scenario were raised pretty Reform or non-religious — a lot of their secular Jewish friends and family members had a lot to learn as well.

Most of us tried to understand the Orthodox customs and avoid insensitive questions like, “Am I allowed to rip toilet paper on Shabbat?” or “Why are you wearing a wig?”

To start, there were a bunch of words and phrases I didn’t know.

The bride and groom (or *kallah* and *chosson*) acknowledged that this was a new experience for everyone, providing a brief summary on “Orthodox Weddings for Dummies,” in which they explained terms like *bedeken*, the veiling of the bride, or the *yichud* room, where the couple share their first moments alone as husband and wife.

Traditionally, the couple doesn’t see each other or communicate for a week prior to the ceremony, building anticipation. Then for a



Most of us tried to understand the Orthodox customs and avoid insensitive questions like, “Am I allowed to rip toilet paper?” or “Why are you wearing a wig?”

week after, the celebrations continue and they don’t leave each other’s side, generally sitting at their own table during Shabbat for *sheva brachot*, or the seven blessings said post-nuptials.

The *sheva brachot* are the same ones recited under the chuppah, proclaiming blessings from God for the newlyweds.

See Wedding, Page 24



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## Wedding

Continued from Page 23

The typical schmoozefest of cocktail hour was time for all the ladies to approach the bride, who sits next to her mother, grandmothers and mother-in-law to receive a *bracha*, a blessing.

This can be a lot of new information to take in, so I learned that it's important to be respectful, but still embrace the moment for what it is — a wedding, after all!

That doesn't mean you should reach out to the groom for a big bear hug or expect any shrimp cocktails at happy hour; be aware of your surroundings, like how men and women dance separately during the reception, for instance.

And when it comes to the dancing, it really all goes back to tradition (how many *Fiddler on the Roof* references can I make?). With all the excitement, the dancing was more like jumping in a mosh pit at a rock concert, which is not an easy task in heels.

On the men's side, the groom's friends are supposed to "entertain" the couple through wacky synchronized dance moves (also thankful I got out of this one).

After the wedding, I spent Shabbat with my friend and her family, among others. We have celebrated Shabbat together before, so I remembered a few traditions or customs when it comes to prayer, like not speaking after the washing of the hands until you break bread. For some other attendees, the information was less straightforward.

But I had to remember that although my friend was following a

whole new life path, she's still the same person. So there was no shame in asking questions — how else do you learn?

I had no feeling of embarrassment asking, "What does this prayer mean?" "Why are we standing?" or "Why are we taking shots of whiskey at lunchtime?"

My friend now goes by her Hebrew name, which wasn't exactly the easiest change for her family and older friends to embrace.

But even with all the changes, not much has changed at all.

With all the excitement, the dancing  
was more like jumping in a mosh pit  
at a rock concert, which is not  
an easy task in heels.

We danced like our old ram-bunctious selves. We laughed at the stupidest old jokes (some of which were truly never funny). We cried with joy that this moment that we'd talked about for so long — usually while watching TLC's *Say Yes to the Dress* — had actually come and gone.

I discussed this all at length with many of her family members — that although she may have a new outlook on life, a new name, a new man, she's still the same person.

Case in point: I learned that in the *yichud* room, in that first private moment that husband and wife can share alone together, they decided to joyously feast on the kosher orange chicken that was left over from cocktail hour, which they raved about for the rest of the night.

Some things never change. ■

Contact: rkurland@jewishexponent.com; 215-832-0737





# THE Mother of the Groom TELLS ALL

ELLEN TILMAN | JE FEATURE

When my son announced that he was planning to ask his girlfriend to become his wife, my husband and I were ecstatic. We had waited a long time for this moment and quickly made arrangements to join the couple for the formal engagement.

Upon sharing my happiness with friends whose children had long been married, I saw sly smiles and heard knowing guffaws — “you are going to be the Mother of the Groom. Just wait.”

They provided advice: Don’t expect to be involved in the wedding planning. Your job is to wear beige and say yes to everything. Just smile and write checks. You can’t have any opinions. They told me wedding horror tales, too.

One groom-to-be had only one request for the wedding: kosher food so his family could eat. The mother of the bride quickly replied that she had already signed a contract with her desired venue and that kosher catering was not an option. The groom’s family and other friends ate packaged kosher airline food.

See Mother, Page 26

# Mother

Continued from Page 25

Another friend told me that on the day of her son's wedding she was waiting in the hotel lobby to be driven to the beauty salon for her hair and makeup appointment. After more than an hour beyond the designated time, she called the bride. Her call was greeted with giggles. In her excitement, the bride had forgotten to pick up the mother of the groom. Ignoring the insult, the mother of the groom called a taxi and joined the other women.

Someone else told me about a father of the groom who, the day before the wedding, was practicing his planned remarks. One of the bride's parents asked what he was doing. When he told them, they informed him there was no time at the wedding or reception for him to speak. This father remained outwardly calm, took a long walk, and delivered his speech at the rehearsal dinner.

When planning our son's wedding, we used the horror stories as examples of what not to do. But I also heard stories of cooperation and understanding between the bride's and groom's families.

For one wedding, the families maintained a joint spreadsheet on which every wedding expense was recorded and a notation was made to indicate which family paid the bill. After the wedding, the expenses were equally divided.

For another, both families had decided in advance how much the groom's family would contribute. Upon seeing the lavish nature of the wedding, the groom's family volunteered to contribute additional funds. This offer was declined. Several months later, the groom's family learned that the bride's family had taken a second mortgage on their home to pay for the wedding.

Not surprisingly, I've found the most frequent question for the parents of the groom is: "How are the wedding expenses divided?" There are many answers. Every wedding is different.

Within the Orthodox Jewish community, the groom's family traditionally pays for FLOPS (an acronym for flowers, liquor, orchestra, photographer and *shaytel*). But these days the bride and groom often pay for their own wedding, with minimal assistance from the parents. Many wedding websites say the groom's family is responsible for the orchestra, rehearsal dinner and post-wedding breakfast.

The best advice I received while planning my son's wedding was to remember that you are entering into a long-term relationship with a family you barely know. A wedding is the first of many shared experiences that are meant to be enjoyed by both families. This is the time to get to know each other and accept differences.

Rabbi Joel Seltzer, the director of Camp Ramah in the Poconos, explains that a wedding is really a marriage of four parties: the bride and groom to each other; the bride and groom to their new in-laws; and both sets of parents to each other. Of the four marriages, only one is voluntary.

## SO IS THERE A ROLE FOR THE MOTHER OF THE GROOM AT A JEWISH WEDDING?

The answer depends upon which wedding customs are included in the ceremony. At most Jewish weddings, the groom is escorted to the chuppah by both of his parents. They usually walk on either side of him. At some Orthodox weddings, however, the groom is escorted by both fathers, while the bride is escorted by both mothers.

Many observant grooms choose to wear a *kittel* on top of their clothing. This white cotton robe is a sign of purity. One wears it on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur; for a Passover seder; during a wedding; and sometimes for burial. If the groom is wearing a *kittel*, both of his parents help him put it on and button it.

At traditional Jewish weddings, one might see a ceremony called



## THE DAY OF HER SON'S WEDDING

she was waiting in the hotel lobby to be driven to the beauty salon for her hair and makeup appointment. After more than an hour beyond the designated time, she called the bride. Her call was greeted with giggles. In her excitement, the bride had forgotten to pick up the mother of the groom.

*tenaim*, or engagement. This is a legal agreement between the parents of the bride and groom. The *tenaim* concerns the timing and financial arrangements for the marriage.

The signing of *tenaim* takes place prior to the actual wedding. It may be on a separate day, usually with a small party for the couple and their parents, or on the day of the wedding prior to the signing of the ketubah. The *tenaim* is read to all present in Aramaic, and then the mothers of the bride and groom break a china plate, signifying the completion of the engagement agreement.

At a Jewish wedding the groom must own the ring that he gives to the bride; even a family heirloom must be owned by the groom. So at an engagement party for my son and future daughter-in-law,



I sold my mother-in-law's wedding band to my son for \$1 (he is named after this grandmother). I told him that I hoped he and his bride would include his grandmother in their wedding ceremony by using her ring.

I asked everyone there to be part of a *bet din*, a Jewish court of law, and witness that I gave the ring to my son and received \$1 in payment. Both the lawyers and rabbis present agreed that a binding contract had taken place.

As it turned out, my son's wedding was beautiful. It was elegant and warm. We shared the occasion with friends and family, both old and new. Our in-laws were gracious, thoughtful and loving to our son and to us. We ate delicious kosher food. I enjoyed having my hair and makeup professionally done. My husband delivered a meaningful toast to the bride and groom at the reception. I wore a long gray dress. Everyone had smiles on their faces.

Was I both happy and proud at the wedding? Yes. Will I remember that day for the rest of my life? Absolutely. In particular, I will never forget the smile on my son's face as we danced to a song that he had selected.

My advice for a mother of the groom is to enjoy the planning and preparations. Volunteer to help. Recognize that the bride is the one responsible for the wedding plans.

When I became agitated during the wedding planning, my single daughter assured me: "Don't worry — at my wedding, you can do all the planning and make all the arrangements." Knowing my strong-willed and independent daughter, I doubt that this will happen. But I can dream. ■

Ellen Tilman is the director of library services at Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel in Elkins Park and the chairperson of the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee of the Association of Jewish Libraries.



## I ALSO HEARD STORIES

of cooperation and understanding between the bride's and groom's families. For one wedding, the families maintained a joint spreadsheet on which every wedding expense was recorded and a notation was made to indicate which family paid the bill. After the wedding, the expenses were equally divided.

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**TALK OF THE WALK**

# FIVE APPS TO HELP TIE THE KNOT

JUSTIN KATZ | JE FEATURE



There's no getting around the fact that wedding planning is a big job. But as with most things today, there are apps to help you out. Here are five to start your search for the perfect app to plan the perfect wedding.



## Wedding Wire

Stores: iOS, Android, Web

With a database of 200,000 professionals, from bands and photographers to florists and planners, the Wedding Wire is hard to beat, especially if you are still in the first steps of planning. If you're looking for some inspiration, it has a photo gallery so you can check out other users' weddings. If you're into crowdsourcing, the community forums let users bounce

ideas off each other. Lastly, its checklists are designed to allow you keep things prioritized by date to ensure you're always focused on the most pressing decisions.

## Zola

Stores: iOS, Web

Who doesn't like to do a little window shopping?

Zola is a wedding registry app that makes it easy to select, manage and maintain you and your intended's





wish list. Visitors can organize your registry by item category and price range. The app will give real-time notifications when gifts are purchased and provide options for shipping or transferring purchases for cash funds. Items will also have a nifty green check mark if someone else has already fulfilled your request.

For iPad users, the app gives a 360-degree virtual tour of the products, so you can get an idea of how they'll look in your home.

And if you haven't already started a countdown clock, Zola provides one for Apple Watch users.

## Wedding Happy

Stores: iOS

If you're serious about walking down the aisle without the help of a wedding planner, this one is a must-have. Wedding Happy is an all-in-one app that will help you organize every detail from selecting floral arrangements to managing your budget. Wedding Happy keeps tabs on your spending, provides a customized schedule based on your needs and will notify you as deadlines approach. Whether you need to talk to the caterer about what kind of fondant you prefer or you're researching the question of band or DJ, this app has you covered.

## Appy Couple

iOS, Android, Web

With technology becoming less a luxury and more of a way of a life, wedding websites are practically a given. While there are plenty of apps out there to help you design a website, Appy Couple has a wedding in mind. From group messaging and travel plans to coordinating emails and invitations, Appy Couple helps you create a central hub for all things wedding.

Beyond that, it encourages guests be involved, whether it's sharing opinions in polls or compiling photos.

## TripIt

iOS, Android, Web

The big day is not over just because the guests have gone home. There's still the honeymoon



flight to catch. That's where TripIt comes in. It will sync your plans with other digital calendars, let you access your information using the closest device and keep travel documents together. The destination is up to you, but TripIt will keep the details organized whether you're traveling domestic or going abroad. N'siyah tovah! ■

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# INTERFAITH COUPLES

## *Find Meaning in the Ketubah*

GEORGE ALTSHULER | JE FEATURE

At their 2014 wedding, Jessica and Drew Ginsberg served focaccia as an homage to where they met — a California Pizza Kitchen in Bethesda, Md. Jessica and Drew, now 30 and 28, said they wanted the details of their wedding to have significance.

The Ginsbergs focused a good amount of thought on one item in particular — their ketubah, or marriage contract. Like many interfaith couples, they chose to customize this ancient document and give it personal meaning.

“We wanted to design our ketubah so that it was a reflection of us and our relationship,” said Drew Ginsberg.

The Ginsbergs’ ketubah includes the line “our home will be built on the foundation of our faith and values” and is surrounded by a colorful watercolor design.

Rabbi Sarah Tasman, the director of Interfaith-Family in Washington, D.C., said she sees the desire to personalize ketubot as part of a larger trend of couples customizing their weddings. Increasingly, couples are choosing nontraditional kiddush cups and modifying the customary seven blessings recited during the ceremony, she said.



**Top: Kirsten and Jonathan Sidell pause after signing their ketubah in October 2015.**

Photo provided

**Above: Other couples opt for reproductions of historic ketubot, like this one from 1614 from Venice, Italy.**

Courtesy of Ketubah.com, an authorized reproduction from the permanent collection the Jewish Museum of New York

“The biggest trend I see in the weddings I do is that people want the Jewish tradition to feel personalized,” said Tasman.

Traditionally, the ketubah is a prenuptial agreement that establishes a husband’s obligations to his wife and protects her in the case of divorce or the death of her husband. Today, while some couples stick to the traditional Aramaic text and Jewish designs, others choose to modernize their ketubah with new versions of the text and artwork that doesn’t contain Jewish imagery.

With interfaith marriages becoming more common — a 2015 Pew Research Center study showed that 39 percent of Americans who married since 2010 had a spouse who belonged to a different religion than they do — people are seeing the ketubah as a means of consecrating their marriage, even if they aren’t Jewish.

An article in *The New York Times* stated that “such sentiments have been reshaping the market for ketubot in the past decade.”

Tasman believes that deviating from the conventional Aramaic text reflects “a more ancient tradition of variation among ketubah texts.” The earliest extant ketubah is from around 440 BCE and was found in Egypt, according to ketubah.com.



Tasman said the standardized version of the ketubah didn't appear until several hundred years later and that the artwork on ketubot has also changed throughout history.

"I see the variety of ketubot available as an example of the longstanding tradition of innovation and creativity within Jewish ritual and Jewish liturgy," she said.

Michael Shapiro, the founder and CEO of ketubah.com, said that more people are choosing artwork for their ketubot that isn't directly connected to Judaism.

"Twenty years ago, the designs that sold best had very specific Jewish imagery," he said. "Now it's common to see couples focusing on designs because they are beautiful art."

Shapiro's site offers a wide range of texts, including Orthodox, Reform, egalitarian and secular humanist versions, as well as the option to write a custom text. The site offers designs that range from "zen coloring" to reproductions of 17th- and 18th-century ketubot found in the Jewish Museum of New York City.

Ketubah.com also offers interfaith texts, and Shapiro said that interfaith ketubot now account for approximately one third of his sales.

Interfaith couples choosing between adaptations and writing their own document face the same questions as all couples who decide to deviate from the traditional Aramaic text: whether to mention God in their text, how much of their personal vows to include, what type of artwork to choose and how many witnesses they want to sign the document.

But interfaith couples also face other decisions, like whether to state that they intend to create a Jewish home, how much to emphasize Judaism, and whether or how much of the non-Jewish partner's faith tradition to include.

Another interfaith couple, Jonathan and Kirsten Sidell of Silver Spring, Md., chose to include the phrase, "We shall strive to build a home that honors our families' unique stories and weaves our commitment to the Jewish faith into the fabric of our lives."

Jonathan Sidell, 33, said they based the text of their ketubah on "Jewish texts, secular faith and an emphasis on us agreeing to support one another."

"In looking at all of the sites that are available online, it became apparent that it's not something that has to be done a certain way," said Kirsten Sidell, who is 30.

Like the Sidells, the Ginsbergs borrowed from what they found online, but ultimately felt free to make the text their own.

"A big theme of our wedding is that we wanted it to be ours," said Jessica Ginsberg. "Some people don't like to get too caught up in the details, but we wanted it all to feel like us." ■

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The Ginsbergs' ketubah.

Below: Jessica and Drew Ginsberg at their ketubah signing in 2016.

Photos: Kurstin Roe Photography





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WE'RE SO **OVER** THESE

*5 Wedding Trends to Avoid*

JUSTIN KATZ | JE FEATURE







*Couples should aim to have a wedding that truly represents them — and that doesn't mean it needs to be different from everyone else's wedding.*

**COUPLES PLANNING THEIR WEDDING** take pains to make sure every detail is chosen with precision and purpose. But sometimes you need a reality check. Sometimes you need to listen to the friend who can't help but tell you what they think.

This is one of those times. Here are five wedding trends that you need to avoid. Trust us. We're your friend.

### THE SNOWFLAKE WEDDING

Some couples set out with the goal of having their wedding be one of a kind, and that isn't necessarily the right mindset, according to Ariel Meadow Stallings, author of *Offbeat Bride: Creative Alternatives for Independent Weddings*.

Rather than set out to have a unique "snowflake" wedding, couples should aim to have a wedding that truly represents them — and that doesn't mean it needs to be different from everyone else's wedding.

Stallings thinks if a couple is traditional, their wedding should be traditional. "And if you and your partner are weirdos, then you should definitely have a weird wedding — but the goal for any wedding is authenticity."

### THE SONG EVERYONE EXPECTS TO HEAR

Nothing dates a wedding more than the songs played at the reception. It's time to stop playing the songs everyone else is playing, writes Celina Feng on the QC Event School blog.

"Nothing is worse than your DJ honoring a dozen requests to play different renditions of 'Ain't No Mountain High Enough' in the span of six hours," she says.

She recommends that couples speak with their planner and consider what kind of music matches their personalities. And creating a do-not-play list for your DJ is always an option.

### BELIEVING TELEVISION IS REALITY

If there's one thing that Cara Weiss, of Rockville's Save the Date, sees as overdone, it's the television shows that her clients watch about wedding planning.

Say *Yes to the Dress* and *Four Weddings* often present extravagant weddings and boast that they come with a modest price tag, she says.

"They make it look like you can do a wedding and get a lot of things affordably or for free," says Weiss.

But in reality, the TV couples are cutting costs because their

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# Trends

Continued from Page 33

vendors are providing services in exchange for free advertising. Weiss says that real-life couples then come to her with unrealistic expectations about what they can achieve on a small budget. Then she has to explain that money doesn't go quite so far when it doesn't come with a television crew.

## TOSSING THE BOUQUET

If there's one scene you can count on in every wedding episode of any '90s sitcom, it's the one where all the bride's girlfriends vie to catch the bouquet. (That scene usually ends with it being caught by the least likely character.)

Tossing the bouquet, as if the woman who catches it is destined to be the next one married, needs to stay in the '90s, says Aimee Dominick, a Washington event planner.

"Most brides are getting married in their early 20s and 30s, and are professional, work-



*"If you are going to spend money looking gorgeous for your wedding day, the last thing you should do is mush sugar and icing onto your face."*

— DISTRACTIFY.COM

ing women," said Dominick. "Their friends aren't a bunch of women who are dying to be the woman" who gets married next.

She added that some parents don't realize how dated the tradition is.

## SMASHING CAKE INTO EACH OTHER'S FACES

Smashing a glass is one thing. Heaving a fistful of cake into your beloved's mug is quite another. While doing so may relieve some of the tension of the day, you also run the risk of turning your beautifully planned day into the food fight scene in *Animal House*.

"And if you are going to spend money looking gorgeous for your wedding day," writes distractify.com, "the last thing you should do is mush sugar and icing onto your face." ■

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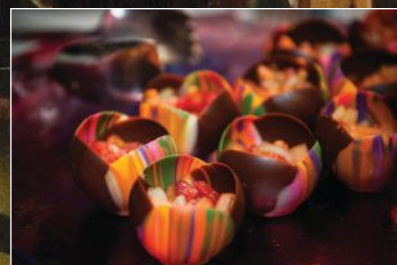
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