It’s Time to Make Chasunahs Meaningful Again

Chaim Shulem · 10 November 2026

What happens when the joy of marrying off a child becomes a lifetime of financial pressure? Perhaps it’s time to rethink what makes a chasunah truly beautiful.

Something has been hurting my heart for a long time.

So often, after davening in shul, somebody stands up and tells everyone that they’re marrying off a son or daughter in a few days. They’re struggling financially. They’re still paying off previous weddings. They simply don’t have the money to make another chasunah. And so they’re asking for help. Please give whatever you can. Please help us marry off our child. People give. People care. Everyone tries to help. And my heart goes out to them.

Recently, a young chosson himself stood up in shul. He explained that his parents have a large family. They’ve already married off several children, and they’ve told him that they simply cannot afford his wedding. So now he’s going from shul to shul, collecting money to pay for his own chasunah.

A young chosson.

At a time when he should be preparing for one of the most meaningful moments of his life, preparing to build his own home, he’s going around trying to raise money for his wedding.

It hurts my heart.

I would love to be able to fill his pockets. To take away his worries. To give him and his parents everything they need. But I keep coming back to one question.

Is that really the solution?

Or are we simply helping people survive within a system that desperately needs to change?

The Conveyor Belt We’re All Riding

There are so many beautiful things about our Heimishe Yiddishe lives. But there are also things that seem to happen almost automatically. Like a conveyor belt.

Things keep moving because that’s how they’ve always been done.

And when it comes to chasunahs, we’ve developed an extraordinary list of things we apparently have to have. We have to have a hall. We have to have a band. We have to have a singer. We have to have flowers. We have to have food. We have to invite everyone. We have to have this. We must have that. Have to. Have to. Have to.

Even when we’re trying to make a simple wedding, there’s still this enormous list of things that are considered the absolute minimum.

But who decided that? Who decided what a wedding must look like?

And more importantly: Why must we spend money we don’t have to make it happen?

We’re celebrating one of the most beautiful moments in a family’s life. A son or daughter is getting married. Another Yiddishe home is being built. Baruch HaShem!

Yet how many parents walk home from that beautiful simcha with a heavy heart?

The music has stopped. The guests have gone home. The hall is empty. And now comes the reality. The bills. The debts. The money they borrowed.

Perhaps they’re still paying off the previous two or three weddings. Instead of being able to sit back and enjoy the beautiful new chapter in their child’s life, they’re faced with years of financial pressure.

Is that what a simcha is supposed to leave behind?

I Remember the Weddings During Corona

I was living in England during COVID. It was a strange and difficult time, filled with uncertainty. But there was something about the weddings during that period that has stayed with me.

I remember a close friend and neighbour marrying off his daughter. The chuppah was in their back garden. The chasunah was in their home. It was small. It was intimate. It was family.

No enormous production. No hundreds of guests. Just the people closest to the chosson and kallah, sharing one of the most meaningful moments of their lives.

There was something so beautiful about it. Everyone knew one another. Everyone belonged. People were

present. They weren't simply attending another wedding. They were experiencing a simcha together.

Of course, I don't miss COVID or the enormous difficulties that came with it. But I do miss something about those weddings. Their simplicity. Their closeness. Their meaning.

And I wonder. Have we confused making a beautiful wedding with making a big wedding? Because they're not the same thing.

If You Have the Money, Enjoy It!

I want to make something absolutely clear.

If you have the money and want to make an enormous, magnificent wedding, go ahead! Make the most beautiful chasunah imaginable. Have the singers, the musicians, the flowers, the food, the dancing. Enjoy every moment. Invite me! I'd love to come too!

There's nothing wrong with enjoying what HaShem has blessed you with.

But let's recognise something. Much of what we're spending that money on is something we want. And that's perfectly fine.

But when we don't have the money, why are we doing it? Why are we borrowing money we don't know how we'll repay? Why are we placing ourselves under such enormous financial pressure? For whom? For what?

So hundreds of people can come and eat a meal? So we can provide an evening that everybody enjoys and then moves on from?

And how much of that food ends up in the dustbin? How much money is spent on things that nobody will remember a week later?

A wedding comes and goes. A few hours. And it's over.

Hopefully, we have beautiful photographs to remember it.

But what if some of that money could instead help the chosson and kallah begin their lives?

A little furniture. The things they need for their kitchen. The basic necessities of setting up a home. Wouldn't that be a beautiful gift?

And wouldn't it be wonderful for the parents to walk home from their child's wedding with hearts full of joy, rather than minds full of financial worries?

Are We Actually Living Our Lives?

I was speaking to a friend recently. He told me that the reason he's constantly working so hard, looking for more business, creating more opportunities, and trying to earn more money is because he needs to marry off his children.

And I thought to myself: What are we doing?

We get married. We build a family. And then we spend twenty years running, chasing, working, and worrying so we can afford to marry off our children. And then they get married. And they begin the same journey. And their children will do the same.

But when are we actually living? When are we enjoying our marriages? When are we enjoying our wives, our husbands, our children? When are we experiencing the beautiful lives HaShem has given us?

We're so busy preparing for tomorrow that we hardly get to experience today.

We're constantly running. Running to earn. Running to pay. Running to keep up.

But with whom? And for what?

So that somebody else can come and enjoy a meal that we're going to spend years paying for? Surely there's another way.

What If We Started Again?

I don't believe the solution is simply finding a cheaper band or negotiating a better price with the caterer. Those things might help.

And of course, helping families who are struggling today is an enormous mitzvah.

But we're dealing with something much deeper. We need to rethink the whole experience of making a chasunah.

What if, instead of beginning with a list of everything we're expected to provide, we began with a simple conversation?

The parents of the chosson and kallah sit down together. Openly. Honestly. Without expectations. Without embarrassment. Without comparing themselves to anyone else.

And they ask: What do we have? What can we genuinely afford? What can we happily contribute?

Perhaps one family has more than the other. That's fine. Perhaps neither family has very much. That's fine too.

Let's take what we have and create a beautiful wedding with it. Not according to what everyone else is doing. Not according to what people might say. But according to what we actually have. And let's make it meaningful.

Imagine a Different Kind of Chasunah

Imagine, for example, that here in Beit Shemesh, we created a beautiful place for weddings. Perhaps a lovely shul with a hall. Somewhere simple, warm, welcoming, and affordable.

The chosson and kallah arrive. Their parents are there. Their siblings. Their grandparents. Their closest family. The people who know them, love them, and genuinely share in their simcha.

There's a beautiful chuppah. There's music. There's dancing. There's a lovely meal together. Perhaps it's catered. Perhaps it's homemade food prepared by family. Whatever works.

And everyone is present. Everyone knows everyone. There's time to laugh, to talk, to dance, to connect.

The chosson and kallah aren't just the centre of an enormous production. They're surrounded by people who genuinely love them.

And afterwards? Let's open the doors!

Invite the friends, neighbours, and community. Everyone who wants to wish them mazel tov.

Have an hour where people can come. Some kugel, some cholent, something simple to eat. A l'chaim. Some dancing. Warm wishes. Mazel tov!

What could be more beautiful?

People can participate in the simcha without the family having to provide an expensive meal for hundreds of guests.

And the families get to actually experience the wedding. Not spend the evening worrying about the production. Not spend the following years worrying about the bills. Just experience their simcha.

Of course, this is only one idea. There may be many others. And I'd love to hear them.

It's Not About Making Weddings Cheap

It's about making them meaningful. It's about remembering what we're actually celebrating.

Two people coming together to build a new Jewish home. A home, Bezras HaShem, filled with love, connection, Torah, kedushah, and the presence of HaShem.

What a beautiful thing! What an extraordinary reason to celebrate!

Why should that beautiful beginning be buried beneath pressure, financial worries, and expectations?

Why should parents feel that unless they provide a particular kind of wedding, they've somehow let their children down?

And why should a chosson or kallah feel that a smaller, simpler wedding is somehow less special?

Perhaps it's the opposite.

Perhaps there's something so much more beautiful about a wedding where everyone is genuinely present. Where the joy is real. Where the celebration is personal. Where the parents walk home happy.

And where the chosson and kallah begin their new lives knowing that their simcha hasn't left their parents drowning in debt.

Can We Create Something Different?

I know this isn't simple.

There are expectations. There are traditions. There are dreams. There are children who have imagined their wedding looking a certain way. And there are parents who feel they have no choice.

I'm not judging any of them.

I understand how difficult it is to step away from something everyone around you is doing.

But that's exactly why we need to begin having this conversation.

Because the conveyor belt isn't going to stop itself. Somebody has to be willing to question it.

I don't know if my idea is the right solution. Perhaps there's a much better one.

But I would love to see people come together to create a real alternative.

Perhaps we start here in Beit Shemesh. Find one place. Create one beautiful, meaningful, affordable option for families. A place where people can make an extraordinary chasunah according to what they can genuinely afford.

And perhaps, over time, there could be more places. More options. More families experiencing the freedom to celebrate without financial fear.

I would love to be part of making something like this happen. And I'd love to hear from others who feel the same.

Because somewhere, right now, there's another father worrying about how he'll marry off his daughter. Another mother lying awake at night. Another young chosson going from shul to shul, collecting money so he can get married.

And it hurts my heart.

It really does.

I don't want to take anything away from the beauty of our chasunahs. I want to bring the beauty back.

I want parents to walk home after marrying off their children with hearts overflowing with joy. I want the chosson and kallah to experience the people who love them.

I want us to celebrate marriage without sacrificing years of our lives to pay for the celebration.

Not less joy. More joy. Not less beauty. More meaning. Not smaller simchas. Fuller hearts.

It's time to make chasunahs meaningful again.

If these thoughts resonate with you, I'd love to hear from you. Perhaps together we can begin creating something beautiful.

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Shvil MeHatzad — שביל מהצד