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In this revised edition of *Beyond Breaking the Glass*, Nancy Wiener updates her informative guide to Jewish weddings to reflect changes that have occurred within the more liberal American Jewish communities and the larger United States society since the book’s original publication one decade ago. According to Wiener, the evolution in how rabbis, especially those associated with Reform Judaism, have addressed interfaith and same-sex marriages prompted the updated version. The guidebook, and its title, serves two purposes. First, it is meant to aid engaged couples in understanding the spiritual significance of marriage or the period “beyond breaking the glass” (xiv). It also represents the diversity in Jewish wedding traditions across time and space. Couples, provided with a multitude of examples, can choose to borrow or modify various wedding customs, especially those “beyond breaking the glass” (xv).

To underscore the book’s focus on Jewish ritual innovation, Nancy Wiener begins by providing a concise overview of Judaism’s evolving responses to Jewish customs and the diverse societies in which Jews have lived. The Babylonian exile in 586 B.C.E. necessarily caused Judeans, and later Jews, to live in a variety of locations. This dispersion hindered communication between Jewish communities and led to differing interpretations of Jewish law. The existence of the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds, with their conflicting Jewish legal decisions, further exemplified how location influenced Jewish communities’ *halakhic* interpretations, despite a shared reliance on the Torah and Mishnah. Wiener argues that each subsequent generation of Jews has studied these commentaries, while simultaneously amending them to account for changes in contemporary society. Thus, *Beyond Breaking the Glass* contends that the modern traditions and innovations it surveys are actually a continuation of the long history of Jewish legal and cultural interpretation.

Wiener then describes Jewish wedding rituals as they have transformed throughout history, from the biblical period to the late twentieth-century. Despite the many changes that have taken place, most Jews continue to follow, to some extent, the ritual choreography of Jewish weddings that developed during the medieval period. These rituals include using a *chuppah* (wedding canopy), circling of the groom by the bride, holding separate or combined *kiddushin* (betrothal) and *nisuin*...
(marriage) ceremonies, reciting a blessing over wine, signing and reading the text of the *ketubah* (Jewish marriage document), exchanging rings and vows, chanting the *sheva b’rachot* (seven blessings traditionally recited at a marriage ceremony or celebratory meal(s) following the wedding), and of course, the breaking of a glass. Wiener excels in her discussion of the *halakhic* and cultural significance of each ritual, allowing readers to make informed choices as to which rituals they would like to include in their wedding ceremonies.

The author’s sensitivity to gender neutrality will be appreciated by couples interested in altering the inherently gendered nature of the Hebrew language when they recite their vows. Although traditionally only a man recited the vow consecrating the union with the exchange of a ring, egalitarian couples in today’s society may choose to each recite this declaration. In this case, Wiener provides the grammatically correct formulation of the vow for both a man and a woman. Several vow substitutes are also included. For example, the verse “I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine” from Song of Songs 6:3 serves as one potential alternative to the standard statement, “Behold, you are consecrated for/to me, with this ring, according to the religion/tradition of Moses and Israel” (53, 49). Wiener further notes that “the words you choose can link you to age-old traditions, or they can intentionally distance you from aspects of the tradition with which you are not comfortable or to which you cannot easily relate” (50). The inclusion of a variety of vow formulations, written in English, Hebrew, and English transliteration, allows couples to design a ceremony that reflects their interests and level of Jewish knowledge.

A brief chapter on pre-wedding rituals highlights the guidebook’s focus on the spiritual aspects of a wedding ceremony. To further mark the relationship transformation a couple will undergo when they marry, Wiener suggests incorporating additional rituals into the overall wedding planning. Examples include the use of a *mikveh* (ritual bath), fasting, an *aufruf* or *Shabbat chatan* ceremony (respective Yiddish and Hebrew terms for the calling up of a groom to recite blessings before and after the Torah reading on the Sabbath prior to the wedding ceremony), and a henna ceremony where family members apply dye to their skin as a symbol of good luck and protection. Although many of these rituals focus on the couple, the author recommends that the sharing of meals or the creation of new rituals may also help to unite future in-laws.
Beyond Breaking the Glass concludes with a practical discussion of the non-ritual aspects associated with wedding planning. Will a rabbi officiate at your wedding and if so, how do you select the rabbi? Will the rabbi officiate an interfaith or gay marriage? How do you approach the subject of fees with your officiant? Are there preferred or proscribed dates on the Jewish calendar associated with when to marry? How will the mood and theme of your wedding be reflected in the food, music, or photography you select? These are some of the questions Wiener deftly addresses to walk couples through the process of planning a ceremony and reception. In addition to the subject of photography and videography, an additional section on the use of social media in capturing wedding moments would have been a welcome addition to this revised version. Should couples create a wedding website with information about how they met and details about the ceremony? Will they encourage or discourage guests from sharing photographs of them on social networking sites and how should they communicate these wishes with their friends and family? In this age of hyper-digital activity, a discussion of how or if social media can advance the spiritual nature of a Jewish wedding would advance the historical discussion regarding ritual adaptations based on location and time period.

The guidebook’s eight appendices contain invaluable information for engaged couples, such as a month by month planning checklist and a list of online retailers who create chuppot (wedding canopies) and design ketubot (Jewish marriage documents). The appendix on how to create a wedding booklet is especially noteworthy because it recognizes that not all guests at a Jewish wedding will necessarily understand the rituals taking place. A booklet can therefore serve as a “tour guide” to the various aspects of the ceremony, providing explanations of the rituals and cueing guests when and if they should participate in any of the blessings (126). The eight-page glossary also provides easily accessible supplementary explanations about the terms used throughout the book.

Beyond Breaking the Glass is an informative, easy read for engaged couples interested in incorporating some aspect of Jewish ritual into their ceremonies. Wedding guests, as well as individuals interested in the history and customs associated with weddings, will also find Nancy Wiener’s updated guidebook a useful resource.