

The Wedding

Tuvia Erez

Before the wedding of my youngest daughter to her charming partner last summer, the young couple informed me that I was invited to give a toast the evening of the event.

I debated how to write a toast that would, on the one hand, sound improvised and on the other hand have "each hair in its proper place", as my book says. On the one hand, the speech should be full of messages and emotions, and on the other hand witty and amusing, and mainly short and fascinating. Mission impossible. I sat down, I wrote, I deleted, and changed. In my mind I stood like Demosthenes, the great Greek orator, in front of a fascinated audience of friends and relatives thirsting for every word and every pearl that comes out of my mouth. The speech would flow confidently, reaching every ear and by the end there will be cheers and applause, hugs and kisses and congratulations more for the brilliant speech than the actual wedding. The moment had arrived. At the height of the wedding I was called to the microphone in the center of the hall. I felt like a theater star on stage to perform the part of a lifetime.

I looked around, eager to see the hundreds of guests pushing for a better place to see and hear me. But what I saw was exactly the opposite. Some of the guests are standing in line for the buffet, some sat around tables chewing gleefully and chatting, others standing with wine glasses and their backs turned to me! The noise from the conversations and the background music would overshadow any sound that could have emerged from the microphone I was given.

The only one who looked at me half-heartedly was the host, who hinted to me with his hand gesture to start, and to finish quickly because the guests are hungry.

For a moment I hesitated. I'm used to being at the center of things. But I immediately recovered and delivered my speech quietly and quickly, to, god forbid, not disturb the celebration. Did the guests in general and the young couple in particular miss the speech of the year? Judge for yourself.

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Welcome to all the guests, family members, friends and party-crashers.

There was a discussion backstage previously about the order of speakers. Since I am the oldest of the speakers, the young couple insisted that I speak first so I could get back to the nursing home before lights out.

As an experienced wedding-goer, including my own wedding, I noticed that all weddings have a common structure. They are divided into three parts. The first serious part, the reception; at the entrance the box with the slot and the lock whose key is with the hall owner. The Chuppah, breaking a glass and saying all sorts of vows. There was also an embarrassing moment where I had to kiss the groom's father. I think he has not recovered yet.

There is the third, joyful part: music, eating, singing, dancing and drinking.

And then there is the middle, short part, the transition. When the guests are scattered and looking for their seats, and so it won't be too quiet - a band in the

background. These are the toasts. Like elevator music. Everyone hears, but no one listens. And because no one is listening I can say anything I want.

A few months ago, the four of us met, the parents of the groom and parents of the bride, and made a deal. It was at a small fish restaurant on Ben Yehuda St. in Tel Aviv. The groom's older brother, who is a famous lawyer, joined us to take affidavits. Following the fish and several beers we reached a conclusion and a decision.

The conclusion: both sides are making a great deal here.

The decision: no returns, no replacements.

You touch, you pay. Work hard because we are not taking you back.

But dear bride and groom; do not go suddenly pale. You have come well- prepared to the deal. The groom worked in the fish ponds on the kibbutz and he specialized in quiet slippery animals. The bride, on the other hand, acquired diplomas and experience in special education.

So all you have to do is get in the Porsche, put back the seats, buckled your seat belt, combine gears, press on the gas and embark on a wonderful journey.

Congratulations!

The father of the bride.

*The writer during the speech that no one heard.

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