




---

Prepared by Rabbi Mordechai Tzion

Visit our blog: [www.ravaviner.com](http://www.ravaviner.com)

## Honoring Rabbis at Weddings

[From a talk in the Yeshiva during Lunch]

**Question:** Should we honor our Rabbis by inviting them to weddings to recite blessings under the Chupah?

**Answer:** What honor is there in this? When I was a small child, I was taught to recite blessings. When guests came and saw that I knew how to do it, that brought me great honor. But a Rabbi knows how to recite blessings, so what honor are you bestowing on him when you ask him to recite a blessing? And not to mention the problem of the long pauses that develop between the blessings under the Chupah, which some sources say is a problematic interruption. In some communities, it is customary for the groom to recite all the blessings without pause.

Someone once told me that he wanted to honor me with a blessing. I told him that I don't chase after honor, and in any case this doesn't honor me. He then told me that he wanted me to bless him so that *I* would honor *him*. Now he was speaking the truth. He wanted me to come in order to honor him. Obviously, I want to honor everyone, but perhaps this indicates a bad trait in him, as he is pursuing honor.

As is well-known, Rabbis don't play tiddly-winks all day. They barely have any spare time. They also have families. For some of them, their rabbinic salaries do not suffice, and they have to do other work as well. So why are you forcing them to come to a wedding, to waste two or three hours, just to say a half-minute blessing? Because you are chasing honor. You should consider well before inviting Rabbis and wasting a lot of their precious time. Especially considering that, for some unknown reason, weddings always start late.

When I got married, I said that the wedding should begin at such-and-such a minute, and it began at that minute. I appointed a friend to take a cab and have it arrive ten minutes before the Chupah at the home of Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Yechezkel Abramsky, who officiated at the wedding. I also told him, "After the Chupah, stay with the Rabbi, get a cab and bring him home."

I told another friend: when you bring Rabbenu Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Kook, be at his house a half hour before the appointed time, and bring him back as well." Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Shlomo Min-Hahar preferred to come on his own, and arrived five minutes early. The wedding started right on time. Why start late and waste people's time? I told all the guests and friends that the Chupah would start on time. My wife, as well, told all her friends and family the same, and so it was.

You might ask: Aren't people happy to have an evening out? It could be, but Torah scholars don't have the time.

If you invite a Torah scholar to a wedding, you have to take care to transport him there and back. Many times I've been invited to weddings where they have forgotten to arrange to bring me home. You must take care of a Rabbi's transportation and not waste his time. The further the wedding is from his home, the more you have to consider whether it is justified to make him miss time learning Torah. If you decide it is, take care of his transportation. Pick him up exactly on time and place someone in charge of taking him home directly after the Chupah. Many times I've looked around after the Chupah to find who is taking me home, and everyone refers me to someone else. It should not be that way! If you invite your Rabbi, arrange decent transportation for him: both ways.

One person invited his Rabbi and told another Rabbi to take the first Rabbi home. He turned that second Rabbi into a cab driver. Of course, being a cab driver in Eretz Yisrael is a wonderful thing, because with every four cubits of travel he merits the World-to-Come (Ketuvot 111a). All the same, however, don't turn Rabbis into cab drivers. You must think all these things through. At stake is wasting a Rabbi's Torah-learning time. One has to be very careful regarding a Torah scholar's time.

Once time Ha-Rav Shimon Shkop was ill, and Rabbis contributed their Torah learning to his cure. One Rabbi contributed half-an-hour. Another contributed fifteen minutes and the Chafetz Chaim contributed one minute. People asked him, "Rabbi, is that all?!" and he answered, "Yes. You don't understand the worth of Torah learning. If you understood it, you wouldn't be puzzled."

A major rule is that you don't put pressure on Torah scholars. A Rabbi knows all the considerations. If he says he cannot come, then he cannot come. There's no need to pressure him. You shouldn't pressure anybody, let alone a Torah scholar. At my own wedding, I gave an invitation to Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Natan Ra'anan, and he didn't come. I don't know why he didn't come, but I didn't ask. Yet he sent me a letter with a blessing.

You're allowed to invite your Rabbi to your wedding, but you don't have to invite all the Rabbis of the yeshiva. Even as far as your own Rabbi, you should ask him if he wants to come in such a manner that it won't be unpleasant for him to say no. "If you come, I'll be very happy, but if you're busy, that's perfectly fine." When you ask someone something, you have to ask in such a manner that it will be ok for him to turn you down. Don't pressure anyone, let alone your Rabbi.

There are loftier ways to honor your Rabbi than giving him a blessing under the Chupah. There's no law that a student has to follow his Rabbi's path. He can follow another path, but if he thinks that this is the Rabbi who made him what he is, he has to find the avenues to increase his Rabbi's honor. Ha-Rav Yoel Kahn, one of the closest disciples of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, admires his Rebbe and wants to increase his honor. He therefore works to spread his Torah, so that people read his ideas and learn from them. That's called increasing one's Rabbi's honor. I don't know if he ever kissed his Rebbe's

hand. Doing that doesn't increase his honor. Dedicating his life to teaching his Rebbe's Torah is what increases his honor

Likewise, Rabbenu Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Kook is my Rabbi. That's why I published his talks. Otherwise, people would forget what he said. This took hours, days, months, and a lot of money. Five volumes of Rav Tzvi Yehuda Kook's talks on the Torah cost half a million Shekels. I took the money from my own book sales. In this way, I did my utmost to disseminate his Torah. Also, for years I collected all of his tapes. Having learned them, I wanted to honor him so that his words would spread. But I never kissed his hand. One day when he was eating, a crumb of bread fell on his trousers. I moved my hand to clean him off and he hit my hands. "How dare I..."

If someone truly loves his Rabbi, honors him, and wants to increase his Rabbi's honor, he must come up with ways to truly honor him, not via external gestures but via genuine paths to honor.



**Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim** P.O.B. 1076 Jerusalem 91009 Tel.02-6284101 Fax.02-6261528  
[www.ateret.org.il](http://www.ateret.org.il) To subscribe, send e-mail to: [toratravaviner@yahoo.com](mailto:toratravaviner@yahoo.com)

